

**PART MOON PART TRAVELLING SALESMAN:  
CONVERSATIONS WITH IVAN ILLICH**

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**Lister Sinclair**

Good evening. I'm Lister Sinclair and this is Ideas.

**Ivan Illich**

As interesting as the reflections of modern cosmology might be, I myself accept another model out of which my culture came, the model of contingency, in which God holds creation in his hand, as you can see on any Romanic or Gothic apse painting.

**Lister Sinclair**

Ivan Illich, historian, critic, pilgrim, and to many whom he has met on his way, a friend. He first came to wide public notice in the '60s as a critic of contemporary institutions. In books like *De-Schooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*, he pointed out how institutions, once they cross a certain threshold of size and intensity, turn from means into ends and frustrate the very purposes for which they were established. How schools, in other words, make people stupid and medicine makes them sick. He attacked the power of professions to define people's needs and "the belief," as he once said, "that man can do what God cannot, namely manipulate others for their own salvation." Today, at the age of 62, he is no longer the campaigner he once was, but his concerns have deepened rather than changed. Now, as a historian of the Middle Ages, he searches for the sources of our enslaving myths and uses history to sharpen the senses and undermine the certainties of his readers and students.

**Ivan Illich**

I want those who are willing to study with me to engage in the exegesis of these old texts, to move into this foreign milieu, to move into the magic circle which is surrounded by the dead, who come for a moment to life as shadows. The reason why I lead them there is because I want them to re-emerge with me back into the present, to re-enter, not to abdicate, but to assume fully that destiny, which places me into today, at this desk, in this milieu, to be a visitor to that which has been and is no more and has disappeared forever, in order to sharpen my eye for those few things which emerged and became that which I have to live with.

**Lister Sinclair**

Tonight, we begin a five-part series called *Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich*. The title comes from a poem by Vincente Huidobro which Illich likes to quote as an ironic motto for his own career.

**Ivan Illich**

Je suis un peu lune et commis voyageur. I am a bit moon and a bit travelling salesman, and my specialty is that of finding those hours that have lost their clock. There are hours which have drowned--les heures qui se noient. And there are other hours which have been eaten up by cannibals, and I even know a bird which drinks them, and others have been made into commercial tunes. But I am a bit moon and

a bit travelling salesman, and I look for those which have lost their clock.

**Lister Sinclair**

It is Illich's vocation as an historian to find those hours, and his fate as a modern man to live in an age which makes even its poets and pilgrims into travelling salesmen, though still a little bit "moon." This week on Ideas, we join him on his journey. Our series is written and presented by David Cayley.

**David Cayley**

I first heard the name of Ivan Illich in 1968. I had then just completed a two-year stint with CUSO, the Canadian University Services Overseas, as a teacher in a Chinese school in North Borneo. The experience had perplexed and unsettled me, but I couldn't yet have said precisely why. Then I encountered a talk which Illich had given in Chicago to a group of aspiring American volunteers bound for Latin America, and everything more or less fell into place. The gist of Illich's message was: Stay home, or if you must come, come in all humility as tourists with something to learn rather than as developers and modernizers with something to teach. He explained in clear, bold terms what I had only dimly perceived, that mimicry of Western institutions would eventually prove futile and self-defeating for the countries of what one then still called "the developing world." For me and the few others who had left CUSO with serious doubts and questions, Illich became a guide. Two years later, we were able to persuade him to come to Toronto to address a teach-in we had organized. He spoke about the environment.

**Ivan Illich**

I do believe that the exhaustion and pollution of the earth's resources is above all the result of a corruption in man's self-image, or in other words, of a regression in his consciousness which leads us to conceive man as an organism, ideally dependent not on direct contact with nature and with other persons, but rather on institutions, their services and products and goods. This institutionalization of substantive value, this belief that escalation of treatment by an institution ultimately does give results by making better human beings, leads to a deep interiorization of the consumer ethos. The great national and international programs for this decade, from the Poverty Act to the Pearson Report, do only sustain this trend. They start from the assumption that man is poor and sick and ignorant because he lacks institutional services which might make him rich and healthy and knowledgeable.

**David Cayley**

This was spoken in late 1970. Illich was then in vogue. He lectured widely. His articles appeared in the pages of the *New York Review of Books* and the *Saturday Review*. He was profiled in the *New Yorker* and featured by CBC Television programs like *Take 30* and *Man Alive*. His theme was the one he discussed at our teach-in: the institutionalization of values. He spoke against compulsory schooling.

**Ivan Illich**

I haven't seen anybody who has learned something which was of real value under compulsion. Only people who want to learn, do learn, and they learn at minimal cost, and they learn by themselves, because it is really an alienation to believe that learning is the result of teaching.

**David Cayley**

He called for a revolution, not political but cultural.

**Ivan Illich**

I've said that I call a political revolution the attempt to take control over existing institutions without any real thought of a radical change. I call a cultural revolution one in which people develop a new structure of their demands in which for them education does not mean any more schooling, in which better health does not mean necessarily access to more hours in a hospital, in which desirable mobility ceases to mean maximum speed in comfortable, kind of rolling homes.

**David Cayley**

He claimed this revolution was within the grasp of everyone, right now.

**Ivan Illich**

The de-institutionalization of values is primarily the result of personal decision--I would rather speak about it as conversion--the decision to seek pleasure in leisure, in conviviality, rather than from production and consumption.

**David Cayley**

And he prophesied catastrophe if this revolution should fail.

**Ivan Illich**

If mankind cannot accept limits, disaster will set in within the next generation, on a rather gruesome level. It's amazing what kind of ability people have to defend themselves from looking at the facts which are available, by now also in encyclopedias. You don't have to have access to modern research papers. The upper limits calculated by bureaucrats stake out disaster.

**David Cayley**

Prophesying, provoking, sometimes mocking, always clarifying critical distinctions, Illich shaped an agenda for cultural revolution which he and many others tried and are still trying to live. But gradually, he tired of campaigning. He began to feel, he said, like a jukebox. Press "C-9" and you got De-Schooling Society, "B-6" was Medical Nemesis. He closed the centre in Cuernavaca, Mexico where he had lived and worked for fifteen years, and travelled new roads. He resumed the studies in medieval history which had fascinated and delighted him as a young man. His critique of institutions became a study of the historical conditions under which those institutions could arise in the first place. His longstanding interest in technology shifted from what tools do a society to what they say to it. This question of what

technology says to people about who they are is his preoccupation in latest book, which he wrote co-wrote with his friend Barry Sanders. Called ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind, it examines the ways in which textual literacy has shaped self-perception in Western culture and the ways in which people are now re-shaping themselves in the image of the computer. It was this study that brought Illich to Toronto a couple of years ago to address a conference on orality and literacy which I was covering for Ideas. I had been following his writings with keen interest and I took the occasion of our meeting again to propose that we record a series of conversations for Ideas. It had been fifteen years, he said, since he had allowed any interviews. But eventually he agreed, and last September I spent a week with him in State College, Pennsylvania, where he now teaches for part of the year at Penn State University. Our conversations ranged over the whole of his published work and public career. Tonight, and for the rest of this week, you'll hear excerpts from these conversations and comments from Illich's friends and associates.

Ivan Illich was born in Vienna in 1926. His father was a diplomat, from an aristocratic family, whose home on an island in Dalmatia, off the coast of what is today Yugoslavia, dated back to the time of the Crusades. His mother's family were Jews who had settled in Vienna. He grew up between the homes of his grandparents and wherever his parents happened to be at the time. Then came Hitler and the eventual incorporation of Austria into Germany.

**Ivan Illich**

During the later '30s, my place of ordinary residence was the house of my grandfather in Vienna, where I got stuck as a "half-Aryan" with the diplomatic protection which being the son of my father afforded to protect my Jewish grandfather, until he died a natural death in his own house. In '41, at that time, I had ceased to be a half-Aryan and become a half-Jew, according to the law. And we had to go underground, more or less, slip out of then already Germany, and I spent from the age of 15 on mainly in Italy, in Florence and Rome.

**David Cayley**

With your parents.

**Ivan Illich**

My father was dead by then and I took care of my mother and my two smaller brothers, who are twins, who stayed in Florence.

**David Cayley**

In Florence, Illich enrolled at the university, where he studied chemistry. After the war, he obtained a PhD in history at the University of Salzburg and studied philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he prepared for the priesthood. There he met a man who was to become both his mentor and his friend, the French Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain.

**Ivan Illich**

Maritain entered quite early in my life and became very important for me while he was ambassador in Rome and had a little seminar there. He made me go back to another great friend whom I acquired, in a way, as a friend only through him--Aquinas--because this Gothic approach, both narrow and precise and extraordinarily illuminating, which he had to the texts of St. Thomas, laid the Thomistic foundations of my entire perceptual mode. I don't know if I submit myself to the judgement of Thomists, they would accept this, but I experienced Thomism--no, not Thomism, Thomas--as I discovered him through Jacques Maritain as the architecture which has made me intellectually free to move between Hugh of St. Victor and Freud, and again to Orientals or into the world of Islam, without getting dispersed.

**David Cayley**

Why did you move to the United States?

**Ivan Illich**

I wanted to get away from Rome. I didn't want to get into papal bureaucracy, so I thought I'll do a post-doctoral thesis, you know, what they call "habilitation" in German universities, on alchemy in Albert the Great. There's some very good documents in Princeton, but then on the first day in New York, literally on the first evening, through some friends of my grandfather I heard about Puerto Ricans, these people telling me we have to move out because all these people are moving in here. And then the black cook saying, about her family, old southern blacks, we have to move out of Harlem because Puerto Ricans are coming in. So I spent the next two days up in the barrio beneath the tracks of New York Central, where they had their market, and afterwards went to Cardinal Spellman's office and asked for an assignment to a Puerto Rican parish. And that's how I got stuck in New York.

**David Cayley**

Illich's sudden fascination with the Puerto Ricans was to shape the whole subsequent direction of his life. The Puerto Rican migration to New York was then in full spate, and Incarnation parish, to which Illich was assigned by Cardinal Spellman, was one of the areas whose character was rapidly changing. The older immigrant populations, the Irish, the Italians and the Jews, were reacting to the Puerto Ricans with the same prejudice which they had formerly experienced. Illich was one of a group of young priests who tried to make the church and other local institutions sensitive to Puerto Rican culture. Another was Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, whose lifelong friendship with Illich began in those years. Father Fitzpatrick is a professor emeritus of sociology at Fordham University and he has written a history of the Puerto Rican migration. He says that as soon as Illich arrived in Incarnation parish, he began to try to make the Puerto Ricans feel at home.

**Father Joseph Fitzpatrick**

He went to the neighbourhood library. Now you'll notice the

way this man operated. He went to the library and he asked the librarian what kind of books she had in the library for children who read Spanish, and she said well, we don't have any. And he said well, look, the neighbourhood is becoming Puerto Rican and you simply have to get books that they're going to be able to read and things that they will enjoy. So he began to work with her in building up at the library a whole array of books in Spanish that the children would be able to read, and it became again another centre where the children could gather, and this was years before even the public schools began to respond to this kind of a need of the Puerto Rican children.

**David Cayley**

How was he regarded in the Puerto Rican community, both in Incarnation parish and perhaps, as time went by, in the city more generally?

**Father Joseph Fitzpatrick**

Oh, he was profoundly revered. He became an outstanding figure. The people in the parish just loved him, and the thing that they always remarked was the devotion with which he said his mass. They were most impressed at the evidences of great devotion at his mass. And secondly, you know, he was very much involved in their lives in a way in which very few, I would say very few priests were involved in their lives at that particular time.

**David Cayley**

With the support of Cardinal Spellman, Illich worked tirelessly to integrate the Puerto Ricans into the American church. He urged celebration of their national festival, the Fiesta of San Juan, just as the Irish had their St. Patrick's Day. Masses for the feast day of San Juan were instituted in the cathedral. He was still not satisfied.

**Father Joseph Fitzpatrick**

Illich said, this is ridiculous. You don't have a San Juan fiesta in the cathedral. This has to be an outdoor celebration. So in 1956, we transferred it to the campus of Fordham University and it became an extraordinary event. There was a beautiful mass that the cardinal said, and the procession and so on, and there were 30,000 people on the Fordham campus that day, and it was the first time in the experience of Puerto Ricans that the Puerto Rican community in New York really felt at home. It was quite a remarkable and impressive event.

**David Cayley**

Illich remained in New York for five years. By that time, Cardinal Spellman had already made him the youngest monsignor in his archdiocese. Then, in 1956, at the age of 30, he was offered the position of vice-rector of the Catholic university at Ponce in Puerto Rico.

**Father Joseph Fitzpatrick**

This raised a big question in the mind of Illich and the rest of us. Should he go to Puerto Rico and take that job? We

knew that the Hispanic world was going to come to the United States. The largest, the most rapidly increasing Catholic population in the world was in Latin America. We saw the need for some kind of a bridge or a link between the Latin world and the United States, and we began to think that Puerto Rico would be the ideal bridge and Illich would be the ideal person to carry that off. So, as a result, he told Spellman, he said, all right, I'll be willing to go down and we'll start the Institute of Intercultural Communciation and we'll begin a process of linking together Latin America and North America through Puerto Rico.

#### Ivan Illich

I felt very much attracted to Puerto Rico. It's the only place in the world, because you asked me where my home is, where I would have said to other people, 'Yes, here in Puerto Rico, we--.' I never would say "we Puerto Ricans," but "Here in Puerto Rico, we--." I would never say that in the United States or in Gottingen or in Marburg or in Mexico, or anywhere else. I would say, "Here, people do this." But in Puerto Rico I said, "Here in Puerto Rico, we wouldn't do that."

#### David Cayley

In Puerto Rico, Illich established his institute for the training of American priests and religious. Its primary purpose was to teach Spanish and to teach it always with a certain awe at what is actually involved in learning a new language. "Properly conducted language learning," Illich later wrote in an essay called "The Eloquence of Silence," "is one of the few occasions in which an adult can go through a deep experience of poverty, of weakness and of dependence on the good will of another." Lee Hoinacki, later a close friend of Illich's, then a young priest in New York, was one of the institute's students. He was struck both by Illich's efficiency as an administrator and by the importance he gave to this experience of silence.

#### Lee Hoinacki

The silence one feels coming to a new language and not being able to say something. And with Illich, he took off from this experience, in a sense, to live in a kind of silence before you might say what is, a kind of metaphysical silence, a kind of spiritual silence, a kind of silence that one sees, for example, in the fathers of the desert. On the one hand, there was this great efficiency and this running around and his attention to the details of how one learns a language, and then on the other hand this complete non-activity with the whole matter of being silent before another person in another culture, someone really strange, that this experience of strangeness, when it's obvious in a different culture with a different people, leads to the experience of strangeness before the obvious, seeing the obvious as strange.

#### David Cayley

Illich's years in Puerto Rico brought him into contact, for the first time, with that great modern secular bureaucracy whose pretensions he would one day puncture--the school system.

He sat on the board which governed the island's entire educational establishment and he was exposed to a new and puzzling vocabulary with terms like "development," "human resources," "manpower planning." So, on a visit to New York, he took his perplexity and unease with these terms to his friend Jacques Maritain, then at Princeton.

#### Ivan Illich

I went to Jacques, whose imaginative Thomism meant very much for me. He was an old man already, with a face as Ann Freemantle once said, cut out from a stained glass window in Chartres. As I was sitting there with him--this must have been '57--he had a teacup in his hand and was shaking when I talked to him about the question which bothered me, that in his whole philosophy, I didn't find any access to the concept of planning. And he asked me if this was a different, an English word for accounting, I told him no, and if it was for engineering, I said no. And then at a certain moment, he said to me, "Ah! Je comprend, mon cher ami, maintenant je comprend." Now I finally understand. "C'ette une nouvelle espèce du péché de presumption." It's a new species of the sin of presumption, planning.

#### David Cayley

The idea of planning as presumption, or pride, as a way of defending ourselves against surprise and against dependence on others would be central to Illich's later analyses of all modern systems. At that point, he was just beginning to understand what a school system is. He met a sympathetic American called Everett Reimer, who was then working for the governor, Luis Munoz Marin, and they began a conversation which would lead to the ideas which Illich eventually published as De-Schooling Society.

#### Ivan Illich

It was thanks to years of conversation with Everett that I came to understand what this educational system of Puerto Rico was doing, but I first had also to read my way into the pragmatist and empiricist English tradition of thinkers and philosophers. Second, to ask myself, what do schools do when I put into parenthesis their claim to educate, and thereby was led to a conclusion about the schools in Puerto Rico. Thank God I had the opportunity to ask for data. They had then a machine which was called a computer. It had nothing to do with what you see around now, but it already could gobble up so-called data and organize them. When I looked at the printouts they gave me, it was quite evident that after ten years of intensive--another one of these words--development of the school system in the country which at that moment was a showcase for development, together with Israel, around the whole world, in Puerto Rico, schooling was so arranged that that half of the students who came from the poorer families had a one in three chance to finish five years of elementary education, which were compulsory. Nobody faced the fact that schooling served, at least in Puerto Rico, to compound the native poverty of that half of children with a new interiorized sense of guilt for not having made it. I therefore came to the conclusion that

schools inevitably are a system to produce dropouts, to produce more dropouts than successes, because since the school is open to 16 years, 18 years, 19 years of schooling, it never closes the door on anybody. It produces a few successes and a majority of failures. School really acts as a lottery system in which those who don't make it don't just lose what they had paid in, but for their life they are stigmatized as inferior.

#### David Cayley

A Illich grew increasingly curious about schooling, he began to draw on his own background in ecclesiology, the study of the church as an institution, and in liturgy, the ritual which creates the church. And he began to feel that people's irrational allegiance to schooling, held against the evidence of what it actually does, could only be explained by viewing school as a kind of secular church.

#### Ivan Illich

I began to engage in a phenomenology of schooling. I had to ask myself what am I studying. I am not studying quite definitely what other people told me this was, namely the most practical arrangement of imparting education or of creating equality, because I saw that most of the people were stupefied by this procedure, were actually told that they couldn't learn on their own, became disabled and crippled, and second, I had the evidence that it promoted a new kind of self-inflicted injustice. So I came to the conclusion that this was a myth-making, a mytho-poetic ritual. Max Gluckman, who was my hero at that time, says rituals are forms of behaviour which make those who participate in them blind to a discrepancy which exists between the purpose for which you perform the rain dance and the actual social consequences which the rain dance has. If the rain dance doesn't work, you can blame yourself for having danced it wrongly. Schooling I increasingly came to see as the ritual of a society committed to progress and development, creating certain myths which are a requirement for a consumer society. For instance, making you believe that learning can be quantified, learning can be sliced up into pieces and can become additive, that learning is something for which you need a process within which you acquire it. That in this process, you are the consumer and somebody else organizes the production of the thing which you consume and interiorize, which is all basic for being a modern man, for living in the absurdities of the modern world.

#### David Cayley

Illich's studies of schooling would continue for many years, but in 1960, politics put an abrupt end to his career in Puerto Rico. In the election that year, the Catholic hierarchy on the island made an issue of birth control, which had been supported by the progressive government of Munoz. Illich felt compelled to intervene.

#### Ivan Illich

The two Irish Catholic bishops had gotten themselves into politics by threatening excommunication for anybody who

would vote for a party, for any party, which wouldn't proscribe the sale of condoms in drugstores. This around a month before the nomination of the first Catholic to the candidacy of the Democratic party, Kennedy. It was not that I wanted to support Kennedy. I felt that it was highly unsound to allow a religious issue to creep back into American politics through the only place where two American Catholic bishops had an absolute Catholic majority, in theory at least, as their "subjects." They also with assistance from the papal nuncio responsible for the area, had sponsored the creation of a Christian Democratic-like party on the island. So I felt that I had to do something, since most people didn't take it seriously, and those people who took it seriously didn't want to intervene. I attracted to myself the full odium of exploding that situation and knew that I had sacrificed my possibility for many years to do anything publicly in Puerto Rico without being mixed up with the memories of that political intervention.

#### Father Joseph Fitzpatrick

Because he got into the controversy in the election in Puerto Rico in '60, Bishop McManus told him to leave the island. By that time, we had realized that Puerto Rico could not do what we wanted because the people in Latin America saw it as a little gringo land. So we wanted to get to a place that was more deeply into Latin America, and Illich went to Mexico and set up this institute at Cuernavaca. That's where the dialogue with Latin America started, far more exciting and far more alive than anything we had in Puerto Rico.

#### David Cayley

The new institute was called the Centre for Intercultural Documentation, or CIDOC, and it eventually comprised a language school, a library, a publishing arm, and a sort of free university. It was established in 1961, the same year as John Kennedy unveiled his Alliance for Progress, an ambitious development assistance program for Latin America, the same year as Pope John XXIII called on the North American church to send fully ten per cent of its strength to Latin America as missionaries, and the same year as the Peace Corps was created. The Development Decade was beginning, and Illich set up his centre with the explicit purpose of subverting it. He ridiculed the Peace Corps, called the Alliance for Progress an alliance for the progress of the middle classes, and sowed doubt in the minds of the missionaries who came to him to learn Spanish.

#### Ivan Illich

I wanted to look at what volunteers did, volunteers in development, in a completely different light. I asked myself not about the average bureaucratic little puppet, as most of these missionaries and papal volunteers and Peace Corps people were--people who just seek experience, avoid the draft, look for adventure--but about the serious, the good ones, the responsible ones. They are sent to Peru, come into a village, admirable for everybody, try to live like the people. Four or five wells are dug. After three years, the guy goes home. Very few people stayed three years in the same place,

something like five per cent of the lay volunteer gang. Everybody remembers Johnny or Catherine with whimsical pleasure, but everybody also learns that for digging wells, he knew how to do it because he had gone to Harvard. Therefore the volunteer becomes a demonstration model for high levels of service consumption when you send him to Latin America. I wanted to point out the damage in volunteerism, damage to the person who goes there--sense of superiority, establishment of the saviour complex--to the people down there, and to the image of what poor countries are in the United States, an image now not only dependent on journalists but on people who claim that they report with much more knowledge of local situations in the light of these people needing us.

#### David Cayley

During the years of his campaigns against development, Illich travelled widely in Latin America. A sort of sister centre to CIDOC was established at Petropolis in Brazil. Illich's tutor in things Brazilian was the Archbishop of Recife, Dom Helder Camera. Through their friendship, Illich felt at first hand the violence of Brazilian society in the years after the military coup in 1964. Camera was a man who radiated a sweet and simple goodness, but he was considered dangerous by the military regime, and the dead and horribly tortured body of his closest associate had already been dumped on his doorstep.

#### Ivan Illich

He lived in a little sacristy in a suburb of Recife. He had given the *palacio arçebispo*, archbishop's palace, for some social activities. He lived in a little room. We shared the same room, big enough for two hammocks hung crosswise. I arrived at six o'clock. At six twenty, knock knock knock. He went to the door. He took some pennies. Twenty minutes later, knock knock knock. Same story. What is this? He says to me, "Ivan, ... you look at it tomorrow." And I saw that the street in the evening and well into the morning hours was crawling with extraordinarily ugly cripples. Two days later, I said to him, "Helder, tell me, what is this?" He says to me, "Prisoners they let go from various places and brought here to knock at my door. Two already have told me, 'Sooner or later, I will not be satisfied with what you give me and I'll kill you.'" And Helder looked at me and said, "Deus e grande... God is great." In spite of all his foolishness and his statements which I couldn't agree with, a lesson on liberation and such stuff, Helder is for me one of the great examples one can emulate.

#### David Cayley

Illich did emulate Helder Camera. CIDOC, as a centre of radical thought, also became a magnet for the violence of the Catholic right in Mexico. Illich refused to acknowledge his enemies.

#### Ivan Illich

I take it for granted that people know that during the later

'60s and well into the early '70s we had some ... in Cuernavaca, a lot of violent attempts.

#### David Cayley

I never heard that.

#### Ivan Illich

Well, no need of this. I mean, that's for historians. But everybody very happily survived because I always insisted on discipline with my collaborators. We have no ideas who hates us. We know who are our friends. Never think about who might want to do something evil to you. If you go under, too bad for you. Nobody went under.

#### David Cayley

Lee Hoinacki, then Illich's assistant at CIDOC.

#### Lee Hoinacki

The people who defined us as some sort of enemy usually knew nothing about what we were really doing. There were these illusions people had about what was going on there, and people seemed to operate in terms of those illusions in their estimation and in their actions against us. And we saw that right off, therefore there wasn't any possibility of defence and, as far as I know, Ivan never really tried to defend himself. Why? What was the point? How could you defend yourself against illusions? So we tended to ignore them and because within the church Ivan had friends and within the Mexican government he had good contacts, ecclesiastical and civil authorities who didn't like us couldn't move against us. Their moves were blocked.

#### David Cayley

Illich had his friends and the patronage of Cardinal Spellman, but he was becoming a more and more controversial figure in the Catholic church. Since he had left parish work and gone to Puerto Rico in 1956, he had tried on principle never to confuse his roles as priest and public man, but he was still Monsignor Illich and his demands on his church were radical. In articles like "The Vanishing Clergyman" and "The Powerless Church," later collected in a volume called *Celebration of Awareness*, he asked for nothing less than the de-institutionalization of the church. He had attacked the church's missionary efforts in Latin America and he had withdrawn from his role at the Vatican Council in protest over its political timidity.

#### Ivan Illich

During the Vatican Council, a man whom people then knew, Suenens was his name, he was cardinal of Malienes Bruxelles, and the Pope asked him to be the president of a group of four cardinals to moderate the Council. Suenens had known me through a variety of circumstances much, much earlier and asked me to come to Rome as one of the direct advisors of this committee. We met every day during the second and third sessions. I remember one morning I asked him if we could have a cup of coffee together, Cardinal Suenens, up there at Quattro Fontane, where he was staying

in a little Belgian college. And I said to him, I'm leaving now, since yesterday, you proved to me that this council is incapable of facing the issues which count while trying hard to remain traditional. The day before, in the aula of St. Peter's, the bishops had kind of accepted the fact that the document which would come out on church and world would say that the church cannot as yet condemn that governments keep atomic bombs, for the moment, that is that they keep genocide tools. It was a wise decision, world wise. And I left him with a little caricature which somebody had drawn up for me. In that caricature you see five popes with their characteristic noses, one behind the other, pointing with one finger at two objects standing there, an already slightly flaccid penis with a condom filled with semen hanging on it and an atomic rocket ready for take-off. And the ballon's saying "It's against nature." I am proud to have been and to be associated and loyal to an agency, a world agency, a worldly agency, which still has the courage to say, even today, "It's against nature." The finger might be pointing at the wrong object.

#### David Cayley

Illich's reading of this image exactly captures his relationship to the church. He was deeply loyal and deeply imbued with the church's tradition, but he believed that the church was failing to take the radical stand implied by the Gospels and he never wavered from this view. His superior, Cardinal Spellman, had respected this implacable integrity and defended Illich from the intrigues mounted against him. But in late 1967, Spellman died, and a few months later, Illich was summoned to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Holy Office, in Rome. There he was confronted with an anonymous and tendentious questionnaire, full of rumour and innuendo. It inquired about everything from his relations with Octavio Paz to his views on Limbo. Since he was being asked, in effect, whether he had stopped beating his wife, Illich refused to answer. He returned to Cuernavaca and said nothing about what had happened in Rome. There the matter might have ended. Illich had sinned in neither faith nor morals and his theological views, as he had always insisted, were orthodox, even conservative. Nevertheless, six months later, says Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, Rome moved against Illich again.

#### Father Joseph Fitzpatrick

Because he had not answered the accusations, and so on, and had kind of embarrassed the Office of the Faith, they put an interdict on his Centre. They supposedly sent information to bishops and religious superiors that they were not to send their subjects to Cuernavaca, to the courses or the programs that were available there.

#### Ivan Illich

I received formal documents from the Roman Curia, which as a historian I know because I had the other documents too, were cribbed from CIA reports, leaked to the Holy See. I said because you made a scandal out of me, I will not ever again, in any way, engage in any action which the Roman

Catholic church considers is that of a priest. I refuse any privilege and any duties within the liturgical system of the Roman church, and much more within the administrative, clerical system of that church. Destiny has brought me to a situation where I can't.

#### Father Joseph Fitzpatrick

Illich wrote to the Holy See, to Rome, and he said I am placing myself in a state of voluntary suspension and from now on, I will no longer exercise my priestly ministry publicly, period, end quotes, and that is his status until the present time. He has never resigned from the priesthood. He has never been expelled from the priesthood. He is still a very devout Catholic and whenever I'm with him, we pray together. He comes to my mass and we frequently say parts of the office together. But he will never, as far as I can see, return to the exercise of his priestly ministry.

#### David Cayley

Today, Illich's views on the church are very close to those he expressed to Cardinal Suenens twenty-five years ago. He still thinks that the life of Jesus displays, above all else, a conscientious refusal of power. He believes that in the face of things like nuclear weapons and genetic engineering, the church's tradition requires something more than reasoned arguments. It requires an absolute "no," a questioning of the very foundations of modern life, not merely calling, as the Catholic bishops have done, for a just economics, but questioning the very idea of economics as a way of understanding the world.

#### Ivan Illich

I wish I could serve the Roman Catholic church to think through and express those things which cannot be discussed where majorities count. It's not a question of democracy, it's not a question of committee decisions, it's a question of witness. The Canadian bishops, the U.S. bishops made very interesting statements about the economy. They are certainly of a higher level of decency and intelligence than this absolutely crawling statement by the Pope *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* where he slaps evangelical words, sentences, on the assumptions of modern development economics. Certainly, there is some very intelligent popular education about rethinking economic issues. But what I would expect to come from the message of the Gospel is thinking by people who find in their traditions the strength to look with a spirit of independence at what the bishops seem now to take for granted: mainly that economy runs our lives. By definition, by the very methods used they can't assume the moral stance which corresponds to the vocation implied in the Gospel. This is a time for martyrdom, this is not a time for solemn committee statements.

#### Lister Sinclair

Tomorrow night on Ideas, we'll continue with our profile of Ivan Illich, examining his writing of the '70s, from *De-Schooling Society* to *Disabling Professions*, and his reflections



on those writings today. Tonight's program was written and presented by David Cayley.

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#### Lister Sinclair

Good evening and welcome to Ideas. I'm Lister Sinclair with the second program in our week-long series about Ivan Illich.

#### Ivan Illich

I feel embarrassed, and fascinated, when I look at an old book. With a very pointed pencil, I succeeded to say many things quite well, but the context, the way of saying it isn't what I would do today, so I close the book and put it away. I wrote these books as pamphlets for the moment. It's amazing, in a certain way, that they should still be around. And when I now think about Tools for Conviviality... in the middle of a political struggle in South America, being actually shot at and beaten up with chains because I ridiculed the Peace Corps... I was in a different situation.

#### Lister Sinclair

In the early 1970s, Ivan Illich poured out a flood of books and articles calling for a cultural and institutional revolution. He claimed that contemporary institutions and their professional promoters were creating a dazed and disabled population, cut off from nourishing contact with nature, and other persons, by dependence on packaged goods and services. And he proposed that society adopt a constitution of limits, restricting technology to a natural scale, recapturing culture from economy and replacing unlimited consumption with a more modest and austere way of life, centred on society and celebration. Tonight, we'll explore these proposals in part two of Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich, and we'll hear how Illich views these earlier writings today. The series is written and presented by David Cayley and based on conversations recorded last fall at Illich's house in State College, Pennsylvania, where he teaches for part of the year at Penn State University. Tonight's program begins in the '60s, when Illich directed the Centre for Intercultural Documentation, or CIDOC, in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

#### Ivan Illich

Remember what an atmosphere that was in the '60s. It's difficult to make people today believe that this was not sentimentalism and mere fantasy, and not mere escapism, and not mere anger and hatred. There was a real sense of renewal there and it was not romantic, trying to go back to paradise. It was, for many of the best, not apocalyptic. Of course, there were the Stalinists around, and it was not simply Reich's Greening of America or Esalen. There were people who were searching for renewal, but they sought this renewal through giving themselves totally to make a new society, right now.

#### David Cayley

Between 1962 and 1975, Ivan Illich's Centre in Cuernavaca, Mexico was an expression of this hope for renewal. Housed in a great white house on a hillside overlooking the city, CIDOC became a gathering place for those interested in new directions for a society seemingly bent on self-destruction. It was originally established as a training centre for American priests and religious, and as a forum for dialogue between the United States and Latin America. By the mid-'60s, Illich was also hosting research seminars which attracted friends and collaborators from all over the world. Lee Swenson is an old friend of Illich's who remembers CIDOC during those years.

#### Lee Swenson

CIDOC was a lovely haven for a bunch of friends to come to. And then when you go back and look, I find books all the time, when you look at Lewis Hyde's wonderful old book called *The Gift*, well, in the back you see the first dedication or the first homage of Lewis's is CIDOC. And I have a bunch of books at home, I'd have to think about what they are, but you go back and there was a real rich dialogue that catalyzed seeds that were spread and things that came out years later from that kind of thing. So that place was a wonderful island oasis that one would swim to, or whatever, to go to, to be in, for that kind of rich, intensive dialogue. And the structure of CIDOC itself was that anybody could take or teach a class, and then if people came to your first seminar, and they wanted to stay on, then there was a small cash fee that was charged.

#### David Cayley

So it was a kind of free university.

#### Lee Swenson

Yes, the problem was that then it got confused with the idea that it was free, which people began to think at that time meant no structure, no caring about the little world you were in there. It got abused by the North American invasion and kids coming to look for Don Juan, you know, and wanting to be warriors of the spirit, and all these gooey things that made it painful to be there in certain ways. But then always, there was this other fresh breath of air that was very strong, blowing through the halls of the place in a way.

#### David Cayley

CIDOC could not always defend itself from the callow revolutionary fantasies which were the shadow side of the '60s, but it still remained a free centre of committed and disciplined intellectual inquiry. Both sides of CIDOC are illustrated in a story Illich likes to tell about what happened to his good friend, the American writer Paul Goodman, on a visit to CIDOC.

#### Ivan Illich

Valentina Borremans, who directed CIDOC, had always closed down all other activities, language teaching and seminar activities, given a free hour even to the employees,

and under a big tree, on benches which accommodated up to 300, 400 people, if they wanted it, there was what they called the "daily circus." And Goodman had accepted to give four lectures, and he had chosen as his theme the law, and on that day, he spoke about the majesty of the law. And there was a little red-haired, wooly-headed kid who felt that anarchistic testimony was very important. I had caught him stuffing forks into a toilet.

**David Cayley**

This was anarchistic testimony.

**Ivan Illich**

Yes. I just looked at him and said "Come, let's take them out together," and didn't tell anybody anything. But I knew the guy, and this guy gets up and says to Goodman, "We had expected something else from a man like you. Coming along here and talking about the law at a moment like this!" He said much nastier things which I can't remember and won't repeat. Goodman began to cry. And when finally his tears had stopped, he looked at him and said, "I guess we have come to the point where you have to be an anarchist to understand the dignity of the law."

**David Cayley**

Anarchism, to Paul Goodman, meant not the refusal of law but the refusal of power. Anarchists have a unique appreciation for the dignity of law because it is only they who believe that law is a natural part of human societies and therefore need not rest on coercion. Goodman was often at CIDOC in the last years of his life, participating in the seminars on alternatives in education, which also involved Paolo Freire, John Holt, and many others. In these seminars, Illich shaped and refined the analysis which he would eventually publish as *De-Schooling Society*, the first of his great institutional critiques.

**Ivan Illich (lecture in Toronto, 1970)**

You can design a school to teach reading and writing at any chosen cost. You have to choose the cost and then you can construct the school which makes the teaching of reading and writing that expensive. The cost of education rises with the money available for education, and learning difficulties rise with the amount of money per capita available for education. I made this statement in France, in May, among a group of intellectuals, and I heard only, "Mais non, Monsieur, vous etes fou." I said, "Gentlemen, careful, you are very close to the critical point of \$350 per capita in elementary schooling where reading difficulties begin to develop." They told me, "Non, Monsieur!" I happened to be with the same group three weeks ago, and suddenly, one gentleman, who is a high level employee of the *Ministere De L'education Nationale*, took out a report. You know, it is not for publication, but here we have in these schools which we surveyed, high schools, 23 per cent people with reading difficulties. They had reached the critical amount of investment into education. No wonder.

**Ivan Illich (speaking on CBC TV's Take Thirty in 1972)**

One likes to write education as  $e=s$ , education equals schooling, elevated to a number of y's, years. Through this particular ritual, society is provided with quite a few services, for instance, babysitting, custodial care. Second, people are graded and shaded. As soon as you talk to somebody, you ask him what school did you attend - quality - and for how many years. Then you know how to class him. Third, indoctrination takes place. People are socialized, and I don't know why socialization has to go hand-in-hand with babysitting. And finally, people learn specific codes and their applications. You see the package deal? I am speaking about schooling as the ritual which packages these four functions, and I do believe that in Latin America, this packaged ritual is so expensive, that for the next few years, it will contribute tremendously to what we call the polarization of Latin American society.

**David Cayley**

Schooling, Illich argued, is a lottery in which, by definition, only a few can succeed. It's a system for producing dropouts, not to say outlaws, since most countries, even today, can't afford to give their citizens the minimum amount of schooling they actually require by law. Worse, he said, people are then stigmatized and discriminated against as a result of their failure to make progress in a system in which progress for the majority is clearly impossible. His remedy for this obvious injustice was simple and radical: disestablish school, just as liberal societies once disestablished religion. Make people's schooling, or lack of it, a private matter and make it illegal to discriminate against them on that basis. The political issue, in other words, was not schooling as such, but compulsion, and the manifest injustices which result from it.

**Ivan Illich**

I am against compulsory schooling. I am not in the same way against schools. I know that schools always compound native privilege with new privilege. Only when they become compulsory can they compound lack of native privilege with added self-inflicted discrimination. Schools which are freely accessible give a chance better to organize certain specific learning tasks which a person proposes to himself. Schools, when they are compulsory, as we see at this moment in the United States, create a dazed population, an unlearned population, a mentally pretentious population as we have never seen before. The last fifty years of intensive improvement of schooling here, or in Germany, or in France, have created television consumers.

**David Cayley**

Well, when you wrote about this in 1970, you suggested that, perhaps in the spirit of the time somewhat, that this would change, that it would have to change, and that when it did, it would change quickly.

**Ivan Illich**

I was wrong. At least in the time frame, I was wrong. I did

not believe so many people could be so tolerant of nonsense. Now that I am back in the United States and see something after twenty-five years and again have to deal here and there, not only at Penn State, with student populations, I sometimes am so sad in the evening that I have difficulties falling asleep. Because I see at least the college and university systems have become so much like television, a bit of this and a bit of that and some compulsory program which nobody but a planner understands why its components should be connected as they are, creating students who have utterly gotten used to the fact that what they learn they must be taught, and nothing which they are taught they must really take seriously. I did not believe that people could remain morally tolerant.

#### David Cayley

Illich's great hopes for the rapid and decisive disestablishment of school were not realized, but neither did things remain the same. The compelling, virtually irrefutable case that Illich and other like-minded writers were able to build against compulsory schooling saw to that. People remained tolerant, but they could not so easily remain innocent. What Illich said in 1971 was shocking. Today, it is not. The difference is a measure of current cynicism. *De-Schooling Society* was published in 1971. Two years later, Illich extended and generalized his analysis to include all forms of what he called "radical monopoly," schools being one type. The new book was called *Tools for Conviviality*, and it offered a general theory of technology. Illich stuck to the simpler term "tools," but he used it in the broad sense of any engineered means to an end. So a hammer, a highway or a health care system could all equally well be described as tools.

#### Ivan Illich

Tools, when they grow beyond a certain intensity, inevitably from means turn into ends and frustrate the possibility of the achievement of an end. I tried to establish the concept of counterproductivity, the fact that a given tool, for instance a transportation system, when it outgrows a certain intensity in its intent, inevitably removes more people from the purpose for which this tool was created than it permits to profit from new advantages. Accelerated traffic for commuter purposes, that is, compulsory traffic, inevitably increases for the great majority in society the time which every day they have to spend going from here to there, and only a few people get the privilege to be almost omnipresent in the world. I analyzed medicine as a tool, coming to the conclusion that once you medicalize expectations, experience beyond a certain point, medicine inevitably generates more misery, more pain, more disability, and decreases the ability to engage in the art of suffering or in the art of dying, precisely by its having become counterproductive. That's what I did in *Tools for Conviviality*.

#### David Cayley

*Tools for Conviviality* was as close as Illich ever came to making a programmatic political statement. Politics in a post-industrial society, he argued, must not be mesmerized

by production and consumption. It must focus instead on creating tools which respect natural scales, enhance relatedness and foster autonomy and natural competence. If tools are not controlled politically, he warned, they will end up being managed by technocrats in a belated response to disaster. Shortly after he published *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich also produced two other books in the same vein. The first was an essay on transportation called *Energy and Equity*, originally published as a series in the Parisian newspaper *La Monde*. It argued that high energy consumption inevitably overpowers and degrades social relations, and pleaded for limits to speed. Then, in 1975, came the first draft of *Medical Nemesis*, later revised and expanded under the title *Limits to Medicine*. Calling health "a process of adaptation, defined by an individual's autonomous ability to cope with his environment," he proposed that modern medicine expropriates health by destroying this ability.

#### Ivan Illich

In the period between the early '30s and the mid-'50s, increasingly doctors constituted the patient apart from his consciousness.

#### David Cayley

Constituted the patient apart from his consciousness?

#### Ivan Illich

They brought you to the hospital, they just had discovered these many diagnostic methods, they established a chart. They treated the chart. They changed its parameters. When the chart was healthy, frequently without--I'm caricaturing, of course--without looking at the guy, they told him, "Put on your shoes and go home." Then came a reform movement within medicine, starting in the late '50s and in the early '60s, which made the doctor aware of the necessity of treating the patient rather than his symptoms. Good medicine became identified with teaching the patient, the sick man who came to the doctor, how to recognize disease as a source of his sickness and how to constitute himself as a patient of the doctor, taking co-responsibility with the doctor, co-producing this strange thing which is health. When I wrote *Medical Nemesis*, I was mainly concerned with the medicalization which destroyed or undermined the patient's art of suffering, which undermined people's ability to bear their uniqueness. People began to perceive of themselves according to medical models.

#### David Cayley

In books like *De-Schooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*, Illich first described how professional groups like teachers and doctors acquire the exclusive right to cater to the needs which they have imputed to people in the first place. In 1977, in two essays entitled "Disabling Professions" and "Useful Employment and its Professional Enemies," he examined more closely this question of how professions constitute people in terms of their needs, and he took up the same theme in a lecture broadcast that year on *Ideas*.

**Ivan Illich**

Like Spanish inquisitors, they hold the mandate--just think of a truant officer--to hunt down those whom they shall save. By the monopoly which enables them to preclude you from shopping elsewhere and at the same time from making your own booze, they fit the Random House Dictionary definition of gangsters. But gangsters for their own profit hold a monopoly over basic necessities by controlling supplies. The new professionals gain legal endorsement for creating the need that then by law they alone will be allowed to serve. Their control over human needs tout court distinguishes them from yesterday's liberal professions, in the cloaks of which they usually still appear, that did not go further than imputing a need to an individual who sought help.

**David Cayley**

This distinction between liberal and dominant professions was important to Illich. It identified the watershed between a time when professional services were essentially optional and a time when they became virtually mandatory. And this transition was abetted, he went on, by those who sought to professionalize the roles of consumer and client.

**Ivan Illich**

Professionals could not have become dominant in society unless people were ready to experience as a lack what the expert imputes to them as a need. It is only during the last twenty years that Comfort and Spock and some Nader pupils teach people how to identify and describe to themselves with almost professional competence the needs which professionals have defined for them. To be ignorant or unconvinced of one's own needs thus became the unforgivable anti-social act. The good citizen is he who imputes staple needs to himself with such conviction that he drowns out any desire for alternatives, including the renunciation to needs.

**David Cayley**

Part of Illich's concern with professionalism came from the way in which he saw it substituting for the participatory politics which he hoped to foster. When people begin to think of themselves as clients and consumers, he said, they often cease to think of themselves as citizens, and politics then becomes nothing more than the adjudication of competing claims for professional services. This view Illich shared with his friend John McKnight, the Director of Community Studies at the Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Studies at Northwestern University. McKnight also contributed to the volume on disabling professions. It was a subject on which he and Illich had been carrying on a conversation since the early '70s, a conversation to which McKnight brought a background in community organizing.

**John McKnight**

I was concerned as a person focussed on neighbourhoods and neighbourhood organizations and people who are lower income folks, working class people. I was concerned by the

degree to which there was an effort during the '60s and the '70s to try to lead these folks to believe that their basic problems would be solved by more and more public dollars being spent for service professionals--more social workers, more civil rights officials, more nurses, more doctors, more psychologists, more budget counsellors--that whole thing. And this is something I saw in my own direct experience. I saw how human service professionals were invading neighbourhoods in the name of the war on poverty and leading people who needed to be politically organized into becoming dependent upon the servicers. One aspect of that that had interested me in particular was how neighbourhoods were coming to believe that their health problems could be solved by more medical care, when almost all their health problems were in fact the result of a environment that was unhealthy, which couldn't be changed at all by doctors. And so I had become quite a proponent of not investing in more services, but in looking rather to public investments and citizen action and community organization that changed the nature of the environment, rather than trying to focus on changing the people who had to live in the miserable environment.

**David Cayley**

In the article which he contributed to the book *Disabling Professions*, John McKnight coined a phrase which Illich has quoted with deep relish ever since. "Professionalized care," McKnight wrote, "is the mask of love, and behind that mask," he went on, "hide the needs of the service professionals themselves."

**John McKnight**

If finally you look realistically at the developing professions, they will all use the word "care." They will talk about things like medicare and providing care for the elderly and care for disabled people and health care, that care is the basic symbol for their ministrations and that the reason that they use the word "care" is because care is the manifestation of a feeling, and that feeling is love. And therefore when large systems that are administering services call that "care," what they do is that they carry with them the values of love, the highest value I think that we have. And in the article, I go on to argue that in fact those systems are economic activities that are as clearly economic in their purposes and activities as steel mills or automobile factories, and you can feel that almost literally these days in our big medical institutions. And that they are, on the other hand, not scrutinized or understood the way we would understand General Motors or the way we would understand a large public bureaucracy because they have associated with them the values of love and care. But I argued, in truth they wear the mask of love because underneath they are in fact nothing but large systems, formal structures, designed to provide an economy for the people who are inside the system, and that we need to understand them for exactly what they are, and to do that, we have to take off the mask of love. And I think both Ivan and I understand that care and love are never produced by a system, that systems are ersatz or second rate acts in lieu

of care and love, and that it is in relationships of people and communities that care and love occur. And to steal from the community that most basic of all values and relationships, love and care, is really an ignoble activity. You see, one of the real problems, I believe, about our institutions and systems is that they increasingly have the power to so invade community and community life and the relationship of people to each other, they are so powerful in doing that, that in fact communities grow weak as systems grow strong. So that children won't take care of their parents because they know a system "cares" for old people better than they. Then it seems to me that the idea of a society is lost. What you have is an architecture of institutions, great hollow pyramids and deserts all around.

#### Ivan Illich

When we use the term "care," it is extremely difficult to make it mean love, without demeaning love. Professional care predominates, medical care. John McKnight quite rightly has called care the mask of love. The ugly mask of love. Caring professions usually have very strong public backing. They can establish what "care" a blind person needs as a minimum. They can set standards. They can then "test" all those people who have difficulties with sight and define who are blind. This has been shown twenty years ago. Half of all people in the United States who can't see have not been defined as blind and don't get care for the blind, and half of those people who are defined as blind can read the newspaper every day. It's a fact. My own long dead mother was one of them. She had a black nose because the New York Times rubbed off. So professionals define what constitutes minimal care, who requires it, and then how it will be given, what university certificates people have to have before they are allowed to touch a diseased person or teach this blind person how to walk with a cane. In the setting of care, having become very strongly a commodity when somebody says I owe care to somebody, he says gratuitously I'll generate, I'll make, I'll produce the commodity which really a professional ought to give in that case. So having become very suspicious of care, which is the banner of the caring professions, considering caring professions as intrinsically disabling, when somebody says "Don't you care for the people, for the bloated belly children on their sticky legs in the Sahel?" my immediate reaction is I will do everything I can to eliminate from my heart any sense of care for them. I want to experience horror. I want to really taste this reality about which you report to me. I do not want to escape my sense of helplessness into a pretense that I care and that I do or have done all that which is possible to me. I want to live with the inescapable horror of these children, these persons in my heart. I know that I cannot actively really love them, because to love them at least the way I am built, after having read the story of the Samaritan, means to leave aside everything which I am doing at this moment, at least for ten minutes, pick up that person, take whatever I have with me in my little satchel of golden dinari, bring the guy, as that Palestinian did to the Jew who had fallen under the robbers, put him into an inn, which meant then a brothel, and say,

"Please take care of that guy. When I come back, I hope I'll have made a little bit more money, and I'll bring it back to you for extra expenditures." Since I have absolutely no intention, if I am sincere, to leave this writing desk, these index cards, these files, sell that little antique Mexican sculpture which I bought for a dollar, which might be worth 500, if I find the right antiquarian in New York, take that money to go to the Sahel and take that child into my hands. I have no intention because I consider it impossible. Why pretend that I care? Thinking that I care impedes me first from remembering what love would be; second, trains me not to be in that sense loving with the person who is waiting outside this door; third, stops me from taking the next week off to go to demonstrate in front of some industry which I with my intelligence could identify in New York, chain myself to the entrance door so that there's one little step more made against their shares being bought, by which some ecological disaster in the Sahel is supported.

#### David Cayley

Illich's rejection of professionalized care has been an unshakeable constant in his thought from the beginning of his career until today. But in many other respects, his views have continuously evolved. All the books we have been discussing tonight were born out of the give and take of his seminars at CIDOC, and he has always tested and revised his opinions in the light of both criticism and changing circumstances. The process is very marked in his thinking about education. In fact, he began to question his approach in De-Schooling Society even before the book was published.

#### Ivan Illich

The book was nine months at Harper's, because it takes nine months for a good book to go through the gestation period. During the last month of the prepublication period, I suddenly realized the unwanted side effects the publication of my book could have. So I went to--what's the name of the man, the one who retired to take vitamin C?

#### David Cayley

Norman Cousins.

#### Ivan Illich

Norman Cousins. A friend of my neighbour Erich Fromm, so I had access to him and said, "Norman, would you kindly allow me to publish an article during the next month?" He said, "Yes, but only if you write it in such a way that you can put it as the lead article in the Saturday Review." And I wrote there an article in which I basically said nothing would be worse than to believe that I consider schools as the only technique for creating and establishing and anchoring in people's souls the myth of education. There are many other ways by which we can make the world into a universal classroom. And Cousins was so kind to allow me to publish what I consider the main criticism of my book.

#### David Cayley

As time went by, this criticism seemed to Illich more and

more substantial. Evidence of the coming of the universal classroom accumulated, and he finally concluded that his argument in *De-Schooling Society* had been largely beside the point.

#### Ivan Illich

I had become blind to the fact that the educational function was already emigrating from school, that increasingly other forms of compulsory learning would be instituted. It would become compulsory not by law, but by other tricks, making people believe that we are learning something from TV, compel people to attend in-service training in many forms, making people pay huge amounts of monies in order to be taught how to prepare better for intercourse, how to be more sensitive, how to know more about the vitamins which they need, how to play games, that therefore the idea of acquiring and the compulsion of acquiring an education--not satisfied by schooling--would become a wide market in modern societies. This made me understand that my criticism of schooling, on which I wrote exactly this pamphlet, *De-Schooling Society*, might have helped people like yourself to reflect, but that it was climbing up the wrong tree, that I should ask myself how can we understand better the fact that societies get addicted, like to a drug, to education. And then during the '70s, most of my thinking and reflection, to put it very simply, was the question how should I distinguish the acquisition of education from the fact that people always have known some things, many things, have had many competences, evidently therefore have learned something. And I came to define education as learning under the assumption of scarcity, learning under the assumption that the means for acquiring something called knowledge are scarce. At this point, my reflection wasn't rabble rousing any more. Nobody on the campus discussed it. I tried to bring it into the educational research associations, completely failed, and even five years later, I barely see a little response here and there.

#### David Cayley

The changes in Illich's thinking about education are characteristic of changes in his thought as a whole. From criticizing institutions, he has moved to challenging the mental frameworks in which these institutions make sense. But this is not to say that he now renounces his earlier work or that there are not deep underlying continuities in his concerns. In 1973, when he wrote *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich issued a prophetic call for conversion, for a change of heart and a change of mind and an awakening of hope in one another. He proposed a way of life simple in means and rich in ends, and he warned of the inevitable consequences of failure to set limits, consequences which would involve not just the destruction of the physical world, but also the corruption of human nature. Today, looking back, he sees that much of what he predicted has happened, both for good and for ill, but not quite in the ways he anticipated.

#### Ivan Illich

Many of the certainties by which people lived in the 1973 are

gone, which generates deep cynicism, confusion, inner void among people who live in an intensely monetarized society, like urban U.S., but which creates extraordinary opportunities for a new way of existence which I see emerging, in Mexico, but in a dozen other places in the world, which I think I know somewhat and can make a judgement on them. People realize that they can use the so-called benefits of development for their purposes, not for the purposes for which they were made. They can cannibalize cars, they can use junk. The educational system in most countries has become so corrupt that they can easily buy certificates if they want them for a specific purpose, that they don't have to go to school to learn something, that you would be stupid to go to a hospital when you are sick. Incredible with what speed all kinds of what Americans call quackery, from homeopaths to osteopaths to herbalists to vegetarian restaurants grow up all through Latin America, mainly because they are cheaper. When I wrote *Tools for Conviviality*, I got very deeply disturbed because I foresaw so clearly trends and the convergence of trends which by now are obvious to everybody. I was lacking in trust, for Mexico for instance, in the extraordinary creativity of people to live in the midst of what frustrates bureaucrats, what frustrates planners, what frustrates observers. Mexico has grown in these fifteen years from a city of 4 million to a city of 20 million. A city of 20 or 22 million should not be governable. Still, from all over the world, people come to figure out how Mexico is governed instead of figuring out how come a city like that can survive without government. A city like that should be paralyzed. In 1960, no in 1954, correctly, the U.N.E.S.C.O., at its regional meeting in South America, complained that the main obstacle to education was the indifference of parents to sending their children to school. Fifteen years later, they had to notice that the demand for schooling was seven times superior to the available classrooms. Today, I know from my own experience there is wide cynicism, not among people who are now pretty old and are grandparents or great-grandparents, but among the people who went through school and who don't see any reason why their children should go through the same experience. People see what scientists and administrators don't see.

#### David Cayley

When you wrote *Tools for Conviviality*, you laid out a political program for inverting the structure of tools, as you put it. Now you're saying, I think--

#### Ivan Illich

It happened.

#### David Cayley

That it happened, but not in the way you anticipated.

#### Ivan Illich

It happened in a way which I hadn't anticipated. You can tell me that I was skillful, that almost the last words of that book, if I rightly remember this, I know in which direction things will happen, but what will bring them to that point I

have not the slightest idea. I believed in some big symbolic event, something similar to the Wall Street crash. Instead of that, it is simply hundreds of millions of people just using their brains and trusting their senses.

#### David Cayley

The disillusionment with development which Illich is talking about is now very pronounced in places like Mexico. Illich's friend and colleague Gustavo Esteva represents it as a decision to abandon the remote, institutionally defined goals of development and create instead a new commons, a new space in which people can be together and live right now. Once a high official of the Mexican government, Esteva now describes himself as a "de-professionalized intellectual" and "nomadic storyteller." He works with the groups of peasants and urban marginals who are creating this new commons and he says that Illich's great contribution to them has been to give them confidence in themselves.

#### Gustavo Esteva

Ivan helped us a lot to see things with our own eyes, to trust again our own nose. It was very difficult and very painful for all of us to resist the pressure of the dominant ideas of right or left, and Ivan was really very helpful in that his critique of industrial society was something like to find a very strong, concrete ally for our own views. One of the things we like more in Ivan is precisely what others critique in him, that he really don't give a recipe to do the things. He has not a new religion or a new political proposal, political catechism that you must follow, a, b, c, d, e, to come to a specific utopia. He opened a space, social space, political space, and in that space, you can walk on your own foot. You don't need to follow him. It just gives you the opportunity of thinking with your own self, your own brain, not trying to call the experts to help you, to orient you. Ivan has not that kind of thing. Even in our conversations here or there, all these things that we have about beyond development, that if you personally ask what I must do here or there, you will receive perhaps not only a "no" but an angry man telling you why are you adopting such a position. He is not the guru. He is not the saint. He is not the wise man to ask for the advice. He is a critical man that discovered all these burdens on us and uncovered a land of opportunities and surprises.

#### Lister Sinclair

Tomorrow night on Ideas, we'll continue our profile of Ivan Illich with a program about his work as an historian of the Middle Ages. The series is written and presented by David Cayley.

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#### Lister Sinclair

Good evening and welcome to Ideas. I'm Lister Sinclair with the third program in our week-long look at the career of Ivan Illich.

#### Ivan Illich

There was a time in my life in which I was taken up by campaigns, and during that time at a certain moment I came to feel like a jukebox. Arguments which I had made a year or three years ago on a 33 record, by now were down to a short one, a 45 rpm. And I just had to get in front of my audience, tell the audience, push the right combination of buttons, I'll deliver what you have called me to do here and then let's talk, let's get it over with.

#### Lister Sinclair

Between 1960 and 1975, Ivan Illich was often in the public eye. His campaigns against development assistance, against compulsory schooling and against the medicalization of society influenced the public agenda of that time. Tonight's program is about the time when the campaigns ended and Illich turned his full attention to a pursuit which had always fascinated him.

#### Ivan Illich

I worked on teaching history, some people said using it as if it were a drug. I said no, cultivating disciplined states of altered awareness.

#### Lister Sinclair

It's about the changes that Illich thinks contemporary society is undergoing.

#### Ivan Illich

In a society in which we fantasize, when we speak about genetic engineering, of creating people who look like you, but in fact are not descendants of any parents, we go much further than the last generations, who believed that you could have parents without having communities or households.

#### Lister Sinclair

And it's about the silence which Illich now feels is the only proper response to the horrors of our time.

#### Ivan Illich

I do not want to take part in a conspiracy of gab about peace, but claim the privilege to horrified silence in front of certain things, if I can make my horror visible.

#### Lister Sinclair

Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich is written and presented by David Cayley. It's based on conversations recorded last fall at Illich's house in State College, Pennsylvania, where he teaches for part of the year at Penn State University.

#### David Cayley

During the 1960s and early '70s, Ivan Illich became known to a wide public as a brilliant satirist and critic of contemporary institutions. He sensed in the spirit of the times an opportunity for radical personal and social reform and he seized the opportunity with a series of what he called

pamphlets, polemical books and articles designed, above all, to provoke public discussion. His base in those years was the Centre for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico. When Illich established CIDOC, as it was known, in the early '60s, he was still a Monsignor of the Roman Catholic church, and the centre's main purpose was to serve as a focus for dialogue between the American church and Latin America, as well as a language school and training centre for priests and religious. In the mid-'60s, he overhauled CIDOC and turned it into an institute for advanced studies as well. Through Illich's research seminars, the centre became an international gathering place for writers and thinkers interested in alternatives to the institutions of industrial society. The adventurousness and the intellectual vibrancy of the work which Illich and his friends carried on at CIDOC made it a target of sometimes violent attacks from the Mexican right and led to the centre's being briefly banned by Rome in 1968. Illich suspended his activities as a priest and carried on. Then, in 1973, he decided that CIDOC had had its day.

#### Ivan Illich

I had come to the conclusion that all that I wished to achieve and that could be done had been done, that because of the funny image created, the physical danger to my collaborators had become something which it was difficult to take responsibility for. You must think what Latin America was at that moment. And I also understood that the place would not be able to save itself from university-like institutionalization. Stanford, Cornell and some other universities had groups of three or four professors each who wanted to take over that place, which would have meant that the 63 people who under the leadership of Valentina Borremans actually ran and made the centre, none of whom had a college degree, most of whom had not finished elementary school, would be replaced by a new bunch of internationals.

#### David Cayley

Illich also saw that changes in the Mexican economy could affect CIDOC. The centre had been run on the surplus income generated by its excellent language school and that surplus depended on CIDOC's being able to charge American prices while paying Mexican wages. Inflation of the Mexican economy as a result of the post-OPEC oil boom threatened this arrangement, as well as promising an eventual crash. So Illich called together the 63 staff members and made a proposal.

#### Ivan Illich

I convinced the gang of 63 that it was in their interest to accept my plan. For the next two years, or year and a half, as long as it would take, income above expenditure would not be spent any more on the purchase of books or on airplane tickets for people whom we wanted to gather from Latin America. That had to cease. This money would go into a fund and when the fund would reach one and a half times the salary mass of a year, it would be divided into 63 equal

parts and people would go home, and we would close the institution. We then did it on the tenth anniversary, 1st of April '76, with a huge fiesta at which hundreds of people from town were present. The library went as a gift to the most responsible library, the Collegio de Mexico, and from one day to another, it was over. I then spent several years learning Oriental languages, getting my feet for long times on roads which I walked in Southeast Asian countries, having for a short time the dream that what I really should do would be to describe the history of Western ideas in an Oriental language, far enough away from those languages which I know that I would really get a distance. I found out that my brain was already too used, I was too old, I couldn't do it, and even if I could do it, probably I wouldn't be able to write the stuff which I wanted. I saw that northern India, when I finally got enough into language and people, wasn't far enough away and was already too British to do what I wanted to do. So I moved another step further, into the Middle Ages. I went back to the 12th century, which I always loved, to certain authors like Heloise, like Abelard, like Hugh of St. Victor, like all the names I've been affectionately acquainted with, and began for almost ten years to teach medieval intellectual history, in French and mostly in German, in order to figure out what would happen if I described a transportation system to a very brilliant and adaptable and sensitive monk of the year 1135, and began to play with Latin dialogues in which I explain *De Transportatione*, *De Educatione*, to get a certain distance, to become a migrant between two space times, as Einstein says, "spimes," our certainties and that other world of certainties.

#### David Cayley

Illich concluded that the 12th century was probably as close as he would get to what he was looking for--a fulcrum with which he could lever contemporary people out of their certainties. He sought a position teaching medieval history and ended up at the University of Marburg.

#### Ivan Illich

Marburg, in Germany, an old university where Luther and Zwingli had their big dispute in the early 16th century, a little university town. I rented a small apartment there and taught medieval history there. They offered me excellent conditions for this purpose, particularly 300 students, amazingly, most of whom could follow my Latin text when I interpreted it. I was surprised that I should find this at the most venerable Lutheran theological faculty, while I couldn't find it any more in any humanistic or even Roman Catholic milieu. In my seminar after these lectures, I picked up some excellent--three, four, five--excellent young men who really wanted to do research on the 12th century, studying history as I taught them to study history. I tried to get people to understand how immensely distant the mental world is in which the 12th century authors moved. I do this in order to pull the students out, away from that typewriter, their felt-tipped pen, the telephone which they have to grab, in order to give them the sense of a trip between two space times, ours and that other time. I then try to keep them for a while, becoming aware



how much they are strangers, how little they can use their own concepts, their own modern German or English or French words, to translate these Latin texts, and prepare them then to re-enter the modern world with a crucial question about it. And at the moment of re-entry, to become aware, for a moment, what a different universe they enter when they enter their own certainties, the world in which they feel at home. So I worked on teaching history, some people said using as if it were a drug. I said no, cultivating disciplined states of altered awareness, cultivating daydream states, rooted thoroughly in what has been in the past, recovered by good historical method.

#### David Cayley

The trip into history has two great purposes for Illich. The first is to illuminate the present by showing us how novel, surprising and unprecedented are many of the things which we take for granted. The second is to trace our certainties back to their origins and observe them in the moment of their first coming to be. The early 12th century proved a fruitful source.

#### Ivan Illich

I had always been fascinated during the period of my studies, my philosophical studies, my theological studies, my historical studies, by this particular generation of writers who wrote between 1120 and 1140. It was serendipity which led me there. When already a man consciously beyond the middle of his life, I returned once more to a question of method. How should I reach that Archimedean point outside of the present which I want to look at? I said if I go into history, where should I go? And I was so much at home in the 12th century. So I'm not claiming any special status for the 12th century, but simply a special preference during my life for a lot of authors. Now, the 12th century is a hinge period. It's the historian who constructs the hinge, that's true, but it can be made very credible as a hinge period. And many of precisely those certainties of today which I wanted to explore in order to see how they came into existence, those assumptions which by going unexamined have turned into today's certainties, I can observe so clearly in their emergence in the 12th century.

#### David Cayley

What is one such certainty that you can see emerging?

#### Ivan Illich

Well, you see, for instance, the certainty about the body. In 1100, the crucified Christ, who is one of the most important representations which are left to us of what people thought about the flesh, is still very much the Christ of the first millennium. The first 300 years of Christianity knew absolutely no crucifix. From then on, until the 11th century essentially, he who is on the cross is dressed up as a priest, is a person alive, crowned by the sun. Even if his heart is pierced and the blood flows out, you can see that he's a fully alive person. It's an icon, an ideogram. It is not a body which is represented. In the 9th century, slowly the clothes

of the priest, the king, the columbium, as they call it, disappears from the body and he is represented in his nakedness, but still as a live body with eyes which look at you, even if his heart is opened. By the end of the 12th century, his head is inclined--he's a dead man. His body is shown tortured. Physical pain is represented as acutely as you can possibly represent it. No wonder twenty years later, Francis will go and begin to kiss the wounds of lepers. No wonder Francis of Assisi will feel a new feeling for which there was no real word nor importance, even in Christianity, compassion so strong that the suffering with the suffering Christ will express itself written on his hands and feet as stigmata, and the epidemic of stigmata will appear all over central Europe.

Let me take another body related change. You know what relics are, bones of saints. Now this sounds disgusting and somewhat ridiculous to people today, I have the impression to Catholics as much as to any others, what do you do, running around with old bones? But this is how Christianity started, celebrating the glorious victory of people who had voluntarily accepted ultimate punishment. Call it crazy, that's what it was. Now, by the 11th century, by the 10th century, there is a major trade in relics in Europe. A man who has studied this very well claims that about one-third of all value transported across the Alps were relics. Of course, a value which is also well insured, one would say today, because if somebody steals the relics from you--first of all, nobody would do it--but if somebody steals the relics from you, you go to the next cemetery and dig up a few more bones and say that these are really the bones which you bring back from a Roman catacomb. But what was important is that it was the people themselves, I am not joking, I have just too many evidences for it, who smelled the sanctity of a relic. The odour of sanctity was so much perceived by everybody that at the beginning of that century, there was one bishop in Milan who claimed that he didn't feel it and people asked themselves why did God so punish him or what sin did he commit that he couldn't feel the smell of relics. By the end of that century, there was already an agency which later on became the Office of the Inquisition established to identify bones as belonging to a certain saint, drilling holes through them, plumbing them in the name of the Holy See. This smell of sanctity wasn't perceived any more. At this very time also, for the first time, towards the end of that century, we have evidence that the doctor dares to dispute the priest's place at the bed of the dying. The first intrusion of the doctor was his attempt to watch his patient up to the moment of his death. The dead body, the corpse, becomes very important. The burial of the corpse, just think, the boiling down of important bodies. St. Thomas Aquinas was carefully boiled so that his bones could be distributed among his friends right after his death, you know, like chicken bones.

#### David Cayley

There are other changes in the sense of what a body is in the 12th century as well. A simmering theological debate over

whether Jesus is actually physically present in the bread and wine of Christian communion begins to heat up, a new preoccupation with sex appears, and this new sense of the body is only part of a larger set of changes taking place at this time. One of the most striking to Illich, given his longstanding interest in tools, is the appearance of systematic reflection on the subject of technology. One of the places this reflection first appears is in the work of Hugh of St. Victor, named for the monastery of which he was master in 12th century Paris. In the writings of Hugh, and one other monk of this time, Illich finds something which he believes to be unprecedented, an interest in technology as such, not just as something integral to the various arts of shoemaking or metalworking or what have you, but as a subject in itself. Mechanical science, Hugh of St. Victor calls it. Hugh of St. Victor's thinking has had a strong influence on Illich's own approach to the question of technology.

#### Ivan Illich

Hugh is a totally visual type. He is Flemish and must have travelled as a very young man somewhere to eastern Europe. He got his early monastic training there. By the age of 16, 17, I see him traipsing back to Paris, just when the scandal around Abelard's unmaning had taken place, establishing himself in that relatively new kind of community of canons regular--no more monks, but people who live in community, in town, for the purpose of *docere verbo et exemplo*--to teach by speaking and by giving an example how one lives in a city. And five years later, already being the master of studies in that little cloister of St. Victor on what was then outside Paris, what today would be the left bank. He was an intensely visual type, as I say. Everything resolves into light. When Hugh reads, he is in the search of light, and when Hugh loves, he is enlightened by love. In his doctrine he has three pairs of eyes, the eyes of the body with which he grasps the physical things, and the eyes of the mind with which he understands what's really in them and what really relates them to each other, and the eyes of the heart which must slowly open and with which once he looked into the invisible, unspeakable, unlimited light of God. Now, living with that concentration in all his reflections on light, he feels that the worst thing which has happened as a consequence of disobedience in paradise is an obscuring, a shadow which has fallen between man and creation in which God has placed him, because God has made man so that he fits into a garden. He has made creation in such a way that man would perfectly fit into it. Human beings, Adam and Eve, are the only beings God has created which are not protected by thick fur against the cold and by scales against the thorns, and who don't have good claws, hands made only for fruit picking. But God had told them to behave according to certain, we would say today, ecological rules. There was one tree they were not to break because if they would break it, they would destroy, according to Hugh, the beautiful balance, the harmony of the universe. And what do these two guys do? According to Hugh, Eve, out of curiosity, and Adam, out of love for Eve, whom he wants to cherish, break a branch precisely from that tree and eat that apple. The

consequence, according to Hugh, was foreseeable. The balance of the universe changed and man was left, the human being was left with the body given to him in creation for a being fitting into paradise, into one which was made to bleed by every thorn and needed shoes, into one which felt cold and needed spinning and weaving and woollens. So Hugh develops a philosophical theology of technology in which technology is an activity by which man, thanks to what God has given him in creation, remedies in part what he has lost through his ecological intervention, which was sin. Tools are a search for a remedy, tool making is a kind of penitential activity. It's kind of making the sin with which we are born and which we have inherited a little less unpleasant. When in the early '70s people began to talk about ecology, about living in a world into which man, modern technologists have introduced disorder, I somehow had a faint remembrance that I'd heard a story like that. And very quickly, I had picked up in my edition of the church fathers, the two passages where Hugh presents this idea, and then I began to ask who else has spoken that way, who else has spoken of sin as a destruction of the fit between mankind and nature, who else has spoken more importantly of technology as a recovery, partial recovery, a remedy of that which would have been the destination of man to live in during his whole existence and life. And of course I came back to Hugh.

#### David Cayley

Hugh of St. Victor's modest account of technology as remedy never caught on, nor did his project of making mechanical science a part of philosophy. Theoretical and practical concerns were divorced in the new universities and the trades were degraded and excluded from the academic curriculum. Medicine as an academic subject, for example, excluded surgery. Within a couple of generations of Hugh's death, Illich has written, the purpose of tools had come to be seen as the subduing of nature, and many monasteries had become enthusiastic promoters of this view. But why did Europe and the places to which its civilization spread come to be so dominated by technology? Illich thinks he can find the beginnings of an answer to this question as well in Hugh's writings.

#### Ivan Illich

I have a suspicion that the concept of the tool and the Christian theological concept of the sacrament are intimately related. In fact, Hugh of St. Victor, the first theoretician about mechanical science, *De Scientia Mechanica*, is also the first one who out of the hundreds and thousands of carefully formulated blessings, and at that time even priestly curses against the devil and such things, picked intellectually seven of which he said that they did something totally different from other blessings. The idea of the seven sacraments, neither more nor less, this idea is first clearly spelled out in Hugh of St. Victor. Less than a hundred years later, it's a dogma of the church, the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215. I do believe that the idea of the tool as tool which does what you want it to do and the sacrament which is a sign which God allows men to place, which does what God wants to do, more

or less independently from the ability or the power or even the intention, the full intention, the decency, of the priest who administers it, that these two concepts are characteristically Western and it is silly to speak about the perception of the tool as tool in the same way outside of Western history since 1215. And I have been for decades now involved in analyzing what tools do to society.

#### David Cayley

A Christian sacrament is a material embodiment of God's will, a means which works independently of the will of the person using it. It's a sort of technique, or tool, in Illich's sense. Marriage, baptism, and the rest, are all things a priest can do to accomplish God's will and it's Illich's hunch that this idea is the mold from which our uniquely Western technology emerged. So that even where Christianity is rejected or forgotten, our unreasoning faith in our tools still retains its sacramental character. Tools become, in a sense, the embodiment of God's will. The more Illich has probed the Christian and medieval origins of our contemporary certainties, the more he has become convinced that the evil which he sees in the modern world is a corruption of Christian ideals.

#### Ivan Illich

Notions, normative notions, images, which are very powerful and unprecedented, brought through the Gospel into Western history, have been perverted to become normative notions of a cruelty, of a horrifying darkness which no other culture has ever known. In the Latin adage *corruptio optimi pessima*--there's nothing worse than the corruption of the best--became kind of the theme of my reading and reflection. Most of my concern with the Middle Ages is precisely to observe the process of flipping of a notion which goes beyond what I find in any other culture in bringing out the glory of being you and I, flipping to the attempt by the church of institutionalizing this, and therefore becoming notions more destructive and worse than anything which I can find anywhere else. That's the reason why this summer with this young friend Manfred Werner, I took once more into my hands the attempt to write a history of the--this is one example--of the invention of the marriage bond in the 12th century. Just imagine the idea in the early 12th century of conceiving of a relationship between a man and a woman, both of them so radically equally human that they can make an absolutely bilateral, symmetrical contract saying "yes" to each other, that this creates a bond between them, and then making this into a vow--Christians are not to swear, that's evident in the New Testament--calling God as a witness who transforms this sacramentally into a contractual relationship in heaven, into the sacrament of matrimony. All societies know weddings. You have a daughter, I'm an old man and have a son. Don't you think it would be nice to become in-laws, you and I? Let's use these two guys. We want to join our clans. And by the way, you tell me, I have noticed that they already sleep together. Much better, so we avoid any disasters. That's what typically weddings were, in all societies. Jack Goody, that beautiful English anthropologist

who had classified African marriage, family patterns, kinship patterns, comes back to Europe and says, now after twenty years, I realize there is no precedent for this idea of the contract, that our two children, who have done something together, have been to see a priest, and the next day, they meet you and she says, "Listen, I want you to meet your father-in-law." The idea that such a thing can exist is something revolutionary, but also of unspeakable potential destructiveness. So I am concerned how unprecedented glorious attempts to discover what you and I can do and be, when institutionalized can become of a destructiveness, of an evil which we barely can--which we cannot imagine.

#### David Cayley

Why does Illich believe the appearance of the sacrament of marriage in the early 12th century to be so pregnant with consequences for both good and evil? It seems to me that he's saying that through this sacrament, the church, as an institution, absorbs the power to do what before only families and communities could do--make a wedding--and second, that the man and the woman who marry represent something equally novel. They are no longer members of a family and a community. They are individuals who make a contract with each other. In this tableau of priest and conjugal couple, Illich can see not only the possibility of increased freedom but also the dim outline of our own society, a world of atomized, economic individuals surrounded by a vast architecture of institutions, of which for him the church is always the prototype. In his writings of the early '70s, Illich called on people to dismantle these institutions, to de-school and de-medicalize and learn once again to trust in spontaneous, unregulated social relationships. And he claimed that if this did not happen, that we would eventually break all bridges to the past and become a sort of rootless non-society. Today, he thinks that this break has already happened.

#### Ivan Illich

There has been a catastrophic break between the early 19th century and the century in which I live. The space in which I live, the mental space in which I live is a different one than that of Goethe or of Schiller. The axioms that spin out the space in which I move are not the same axioms which my grandfather still took for granted. What I call the certainties by which in ordinary discourse we can talk to each other without ever mentioning them because they lie, so to speak, beyond the horizon of our attention today are different ones. If you think of the warp and the woof, these "warps" in our perception run in a different direction. We "woof" our conversation into a "warp" which is incomparable to the "warp" of any other period because, so to speak, they are nylon threads out of which that warp is made.

#### David Cayley

An example of one of these unprecedented axioms which, as Illich says, spin out our contemporary mental space, is the notion that there exists in the abstract something called "life," the life that is spoken of in the Right to Life movement, the

life that comes under medical management in our hospitals. It's a subject on which Illich was working with a younger German colleague when I met him last year.

#### Ivan Illich

The young man whom you have met in this house, Dirk von Boetticher and I, following his outline will give a seminar at the University of Chicago in November on the social creation of life during the last hundred years, the creation of the substantive something which people believe is there when they say "a life" and what this does to perception of the human person, the doctor feeling responsible for "a life" from sperm to worm, to use Bob Hope's phrase, from conception or fertilization to organ harvest, rather than for a suffering person. Society reflecting on "a life" being a subject within the state, "a life" being a citizen, discussing what it means when management, in this case, medical management, does not deal with persons, but with a manageable construct, before birth and after brain death. This is just one example of a number of--I don't know if I should call this concepts--of constructs of an epistemologically explosive nature. I should use a simpler term--of deeply corrupting images which I will not allow to enter into conversation except to exorcise them. When the conversation takes place in front of me, I go out and ask people to stop.

#### David Cayley

Illich's refusal of certain words and certain thoughts has led him into silence, not a passive, resigned silence but an active witness to a truth which only silence can finally comprehend. To see what we have become, he says, we must learn to think outside of modern assumptions.

#### Ivan Illich

I do believe that by careful thinking, by very disciplined commentary, interpretation, exegesis, an heuristically appropriate approach to texts and reading of texts, I can still bring students out of the world which they take for granted, show them how our English language is not applicable to translate a Latin text of the 12th century into English, into the English which we speak on the street. To see that they have to go into another language which by now is dead, an English which has at best a marginal existence among us today, which of course makes me very unpopular among many creative authors, in order to make them aware that virtuous behaviour today might mean, differently from any previous time in history, a refusal not only to say certain things, but to use certain words and to permit certain feelings to creep into our heart. I cannot allow to meditate on the atomic bomb device without going under. Reflection on certain things which we take for granted is, in my opinion, acceptance of self-destruction, psychic--psychic's not the right word--burning out your heart. And while it is easy to speak about things which cannot be discussed but only exorcised, such as genetic engineering, such as the atom bomb, there are other things, other realities which, once you accept that there might be intolerable realities, come very close to these destructive devices. Most of what's going on at this moment

in so-called bioethics, what is discussed there, most of the discussions, in my opinion, belong in the area of this apocalyptic randomness. I don't know how I should speak about it. The triumphant--I have an even more horrible one to tell you. Let's imagine an even more horrible situation. I think Lifton's book on the Nazi doctors is important. This book is not about horrors but is about the extraordinary ability of these particular Nazi doctors to split between effective experimentation and administration of death-dealing poisons to the prisoners and kindness and affectionate concern with their daughters and wives. If Danny Berrigan got Lifton right, he wrote that book with the intent of following it by a second book in which he analyzes the same kind of splitting which goes on among contemporary doctors, highly paid and practicing in our hospitals. I welcome that this one man, more competent than anybody whom I know to write this book finally does it. I wanted to do it and didn't have the ability to do it. We cannot be careful enough to refuse to act as splitters, to live a split life in that sense. And yet we cannot avoid, in very many circumstances, to act as economic men of our time.

#### David Cayley

When you speak about atomic devices, you are saying not that we shouldn't consider that they're in the world but that we should refuse--

#### Ivan Illich

What else can you say about one atomic bomb in the world but a shout? This is the reason why, when I began to teach in Germany at the time the Pershing missiles began to be stationed there, I made myself available to young, mostly high school students who wanted to organize protests, and I said they can't protest in any other way but standing there silently. We have nothing to say on this issue. We want to testify to our horrified silence. In horrified silence, the Turkish immigrant washerwoman and the university professor can make exactly the same statement, standing next to each other. Horrified silence. As soon as you have to explain, opposition becomes again a graded, an elite affair, and becomes superficial. I do not want to take part in a conspiracy of gab about peace, but claim the privilege to horrified silence in front of certain things if I can make my horror visible. And I do understand people who go much further and say I can't do anything else but pour gasoline on myself.

#### David Cayley

This danger that we will burn out our hearts, you've said...

#### Ivan Illich

Talking about this does burn out hearts. Discussing about it, arguing about it makes genocide an issue of discussion. Can you imagine anybody willing to discuss the possible uses of concentration camps, or at least their readying concentration camps, extermination camps in 1943? What would you think of a person who would have been willing to engage in a discussion on principle about keeping

concentration camps, extermination camps ready as a threat? And then we see our major churches saying, well, we can't really condemn if a country keeps atom bombs ready.

#### David Cayley

I was thinking not so much of those who approve or even partially approve, but of those who protest but still consent to engage in a discussion about missiles and bombs and what have you.

#### Ivan Illich

I would call to their attention that there are things which do not fit, there are words which do not fit ordinary discourse. Jews have a tradition of not using "His" name because any sentence in which that name would appear wouldn't be a sentence any more. Wittgenstein and such people say that it is silly to say to you, "After my death, I want that this shirt be yours," because after my death, I don't want anything. Philosophy allows me to clarify, step by step, what an exceptional epistemic status of a word means. I think that genocide and many other extreme vanities have similar status as words.

#### Lister Sinclair

Our conversation with Ivan Illich continues tomorrow night. Tonight's program was written and presented by David Cayley.

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#### Lister Sinclair

Good evening. I'm Lister Sinclair and this is Ideas. Welcome to the fourth program in our week-long series, Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich. Beginning about twenty years ago, Ivan Illich became widely known for the trenchant criticisms of contemporary institutions which he eventually published in books like *De-Schooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*. Many people still remember him mainly in connection with the vogue which these works enjoyed, but for Illich, these early writings were only starting points. As his thinking evolved, he became less interested in these institutions as such and more interested in the state of mind which made them possible, and what he noticed above all about this modern state of mind is how completely it is penetrated by the assumptions of economics that resources are scarce and society a domain of endlessly competing values. He began to oppose a sphere of traditional subsistence in which culture still shapes and limits economic life to a sphere of scarcity in which economic values predominate. He redefined development as "the war against subsistence" and education as "learning under the assumption of scarcity." And he announced--this was around the mid-1970s--that his new project would be a history of scarcity which would show the corrosive effects of this idea on culture. Tonight's program is about this turn in Illich's thinking. It's written and presented by David Cayley and it's

based on conversations he recorded last year in State College, Pennsylvania, where Illich teaches for part of the year at Penn State University.

#### David Cayley

Critics of economics can generally be assigned to two schools of thought. One wants an alternative economics, the other wants an alternative to economics. Ivan Illich is emphatically a member of the second camp. He doesn't want to make economics more humane or more sensitive to the environment, he wants to drive it to the margins of social life and he wants to scrap its major assumptions which, roughly defined, are that people are born needy and that the means to satisfy their needs are inherently scarce. Scarcity, to Illich, is the linchpin of economic society. It defines, for example, the modern mania for education. Instead of assuming that learning is innate and depends only on the existence of an interesting and varied world which we learn from by living in it, it makes the opposite assumption, that the means for learning are scarce and therefore must be constantly pursued in specialized institutions called "schools." Scarcity is one of those assumptions that Illich calls "a certainty," an idea of which we are so completely convinced that we aren't even aware of having it. It ties into a whole network of related and equally invisible assumptions, such as that the world is composed of resources, or that human beings are bundles of needs which require for their satisfaction packaged commodities and professional services. It's the assumption of scarcity which makes markets appear to be a natural form. If resources are limited and wants unlimited, how else would you organize economic life? It's the assumption of scarcity which fuels the relentless expansion of the economy, an economy of schools and social workers as much as of cars and computers. And as the economy expands, Illich says, it sucks the marrow from culture and community. People cease to do for themselves what others now do for them, for a price. Natural competence decays, institutions expand. This was a story that Illich had already told in his books of the early '70s. Now, with his proposed history of scarcity, he wanted to ask how it had happened. How could such a society have come into existence in the first place? One of the first thinkers who pointed Illich towards an answer was the economic historian, Karl Polanyi. It was Polanyi's historical research that made Illich aware of just how unusual our modern market-driven economy really is.

#### Ivan Illich

Aristotle tells the story--Karl Polanyi has beautifully analyzed it--that he was shocked by the idea that in recent times, citizens of Athens behaved like *kapelikoi*, which means sausage vendors, fried sausage vendors on the forum. They let the prices go up when there is much demand, and no more fried sausage available, and they let them drop if they want to sell off the last, already slightly burned rests of sausages. He was deeply worried by the fact that decent, virtuous Athenians behaved that way. Polanyi made me understand that there is nothing natural about the law of

demand and supply changing prices, that this is a highly sophisticated technique, that this technique really was invented by Phoenecians, appears in Athens, appears all around the globe, and that marketing must not be confused with trading. Trade, where traders, kind of as diplomats, arrive with products of a foreign land, which they exchange at a politically fixed rate against other goods, is millennia older than merchants who work on markets.

**David Cayley**

Illich understood through Polanyi how sophisticated is the idea of a market which functions on supply and demand and how explosive its social consequences can be, and this led him to formulate a new definition of culture.

**Ivan Illich**

I would see what other people call culture, I would understand as a unique, typical arrangement to a time and place and group, by which marketing relationships, exchange relationships related to things, which when scarce go up and when more abundant go down in their price, are kept limited to certain specific places. You may engage in these activities on Saturday, when the market is open from six in the morning until twelve o'clock. Go down to the brothel or over there at the bar, but otherwise we don't want any of that. For a couple of millennia, since Aristotle, most European cultures remained market resistant. Markets were kept fully regulated and kept in place. The story of homo economicus, the story of commodity production, not simple commodity production, but as Marx would say, industrial commodity production, capitalist commodity production, is the story of the last 250 years. It brought with it a total transformation of perception of space, for instance. The space of one kingdom is different from the space of another kingdom, the measures, the weights are different here and there. When a good passes from one kingdom to the next, it actually changes in nature. The idea of circulation is absent. The idea that something can return to its source without changing its quality is an idea which becomes thinkable only together with vast commodity circulation around 1680. So I'm speaking about a long history during which a certain number of our current certitudes slowly, slowly take shape.

**David Cayley**

As Illich's study of the evolution of market society proceeded, he became more and more aware of how pervasive the idea of scarcity is, how totally, for example, it pervades even our language. And he began to rethink a language he himself had used in his earlier writings, the language of values, which he now came to see as a hive of hidden economic assumptions.

**Ivan Illich**

I became increasingly aware what happened when the good was replaced by values, how the transformation of the good into values, of commitment to decision, of question to problem, in that moment reflects an incorporation of the

speaker into a sphere of scarcity, a perception that our thoughts and our ideas, our time are scarce means which can be used for either of two or several alternative ends, that value reflects this transition. And I wouldn't dare any more in an anthropological reflection on the way of life of people to speak about their values. I would rather ask the aesthetic question about the shape in which we perceive the good, the sound in which we address it, the feelings with which we respond to it. For me, the discourse on values is sadly subjective, sadly detached from nature. It's bringing economics, the economic idea, this is a value, this is a non-value, make a decision between the two of them. These are three different values. Put them into a precise order. This is something totally different than speaking about the good, which is convertible with being, convertible with the beautiful, convertible--the same thing as--the true. Would you say, if I may ask the question, that your wife constitutes a value for you? It would be obscene. When you say "I value my children," the question is "How much?"

**David Cayley**

In Illich's writings, the sphere of scarcity, of values, is opposed by what he calls the vernacular, the domain in which culture still holds economy at bay. One of the first ways in which the vernacular domain is breached historically, he believes, is through the idea that each of us has, or should have, a single language, a mother tongue, which we must be taught in its single correct form. In pre-modern societies, Illich says, vernacular life is marked by the overlapping of many different tongues, none of them privileged and none of them needing to be taught. In fact, he himself acknowledges no mother tongue.

**Ivan Illich**

I didn't have a first language.

**David Cayley**

You had several to begin with. You always spoke several.

**Ivan Illich**

Most people, you see, most people throughout history haven't learned one language to the exclusion of another language. They have learned to speak, and you speak differently to a peasant and to a shoemaker. You speak differently to your mother, who comes from Burgundy, and to your father, who comes from Swabia. As it happens today in India. You can't ask somebody what is your language. One forgets always that until recently most people were still in the privileged condition of a relative small group of us today who had the advantage of growing up in that world which before the war was called the Balkans, who were brought up mentally in the world where the Austro-Hungarian empire, with its 17 languages, bordered directly on the seat of the sultan in Istanbul, in Byzantium, as my aunt called it always, in Czarigrad, the place where the emperor sits in the Russian Slavonic way of referring to it, which also is a multi-people, multi-language empire. The idea of homo monolinguis, one-language man, the idea of children having to grow into one

system before they confuse it with another mental system has just crept into science as a certainty. This idea I'm trying to upset as a historian, claiming that most people in Africa, in Asia don't learn languages, they learn how to speak, and so man is made for this.

I noticed that there was something happening in Rutgers University, at a faculty party after a talk of mine. One professor who looked very serious, somewhat pompous, older than I, asked me for the privilege of seeing me afterwards for a drink. Well I went for this drink with him and hemming and hawing, he said to me, "Mr. Illich, this is a very personal question which I want to ask you. You know I am a psychologist, but you know, you look quite balanced for a man who has been brought up that multilingual." I said yes. So I went to the library on the next occasion and looked a little bit for bibliography on multilingualism and I found out that there were, of course, and there are by now even more thick books giving you citations, quotations, comments to hundreds of articles on the subject. Most of them either deal with multilingualism as a problem or as a privilege which is acquired by people who learn a second and a third language under special circumstances, a privilege which should be shared with the many, completely overlooking the fact that the whole hypothesis that homo monolinguis est, that this assumption about human nature might be a very recent creation related to the creation of nation states.

#### David Cayley

When Illich began to search for the origins of homo monolinguis, he was led to the court of Queen Isabella in Spain in 1492, the very moment when Columbus was setting sail. There Illich discovered a grammarian called Antonio Nebrija, and in Nebrija's proposal to his queen to create a new Castilian grammar, Illich found the origins of a modern language.

#### Ivan Illich

Nebrija approaches the same queen twice whom also Columbus approached twice. Columbus went the first time there, asking for ships and was thrown out, and he came a second time there and got his ships. Nebrija went the first time to the queen and told the queen that he wanted to do something much more important for her reign, namely create out of the many hablas, the many speech forms of the Spanish peninsula a language, as much true language as the three languages we have received from God--Latin, Greek and Hebrew--the three languages, Majesty, you can see hanging on top of every crucifix, where Pilate had the reason for Jesus's death written on a tablet. In order to do this, Nebrija says to the queen, he intends to transform the many valuable bits one can find in the mouths of Spaniards into one artifice which will be the new Castilian, which he intends to create with his grammar. And the queen, through the mouth of one of her assistants, makes him understand that she considers this a glorious undertaking but can't quite see the point in it because she, majestically, is the ruler of many people, each one in perfect command of his habla, of his

speech, of the territory of his speech. Now, she is also the foundress of one of the first nation states. She is the one who had called in the Inquisition to get rid of these useless nobles in her court and replaced them with lawyers and technicians. She wants to create an administrative state. She doesn't want to rule but to govern. The idea of government begins at this very moment, the transformation of rule to government. And so Nebrija says to her, Majesty, in order for your people to obey you as they ought to under these circumstances, you must have a means, an instrument, a tool to address them in one language by which they can hear directly what you say. It is for this reason that with my grammar I will teach them correct speech and also put into your hands a means to give what a ruler owes the people whom he subdues. They need from him law and language, and now with our ships, travelling west, this was written while Columbus was on his way--you must acquire the power to give to these people the Castilian language in which you can govern them, subject them through language.

#### David Cayley

The difference between vernacular speech and an administered modern language is an important one for Illich. It distinguishes a world in which there is still popular sovereignty over the forms of daily life from a world in which scarcity can become a means of social control. Illich elaborated this distinction in a book called *Shadow Work*. There he was concerned not just with the popular speech out of which Nebrija wanted to construct a language, but with the threat posed by development to all the things which people grow or make or do for themselves. "The war against subsistence," Illich called it. He had always feared that the destruction of subsistence would lead the majority into the squalor of what he called "modernized poverty." Now, in the late '70s, he saw a new danger, the vogue that the idea of self-help was beginning to enjoy in international development circles. Self-help, to Illich, was just another way of infecting subsistence with economic assumptions. He illustrated the point with a story in a lecture given in Ottawa in 1977 and broadcast later that year on Ideas.

#### Ivan Illich

U.S. experts in self-help building, last year, during the last nine months, have invaded Mexico like missionaries under Cortez and like Peace Corps members tried and didn't succeed under Kennedy. About two years ago, an MIT assistant professor in architecture came to Mexico for a vacation with his entirely new camera. A Mexican friend of mine, who is also an architect, unfortunately took this man beyond the Mexican airport, where during the last twelve years a new city has grown up. From a few huts, it has mushroomed into a community five times the size of Ottawa. My friend wanted to show off, as an architect, the thousands of examples of peasant ingenuity with patterns, structures and uses of refuse in building never mentioned in architectural manuals. He should not have been surprised that his U.S. colleague took several hundred rolls of pictures of the brilliant inventions that made this 2 1/2 million-person slum

work. The pictures were analyzed in Cambridge. A course in self-help architecture was launched with a degree. By the end of the year, new-baked U.S. specialists in community architecture were busy teaching people of Ciudad Netzalhuacoyotl their problems, their needs and their solutions.

#### David Cayley

Illich's objections to the idea of self-help were one of the things which impelled him to write *Shadow Work*. The late '70s were a time when a new interest developed in what goes on outside the boundaries of the formal economy. Feminists drew attention to the unpaid work done by women. Economists began to calculate the value of work done in the so-called "informal sector," the value added to the economy by people repairing their own homes or looking after their own children. In this "colonization" of the informal sector, as he called it, Illich saw both danger and potential confusion. Characteristically, he tried to make a crucial distinction between subsistence activities, which are not economic at all, and unpaid work which is actually required by a capitalist economy. The second type he called "shadow work."

#### Ivan Illich

Sometime just before the middle of the last century, the idea generalizes that work, which is dignified, is done by employees who get a paycheck. That kind of work is productive. Any other kind of work is something else. It is reproductive or constitutes an exploitation of the person who does it, an extreme form of exploitation. This idea translated in the situation of the 19th century into a social distinction between the poor males compelled to go out for employed work and the females of the species, who have to be protected, being put into a domestic sphere where they can engage in other activity, householding, which people like Marx and so on called reproductive activities, activities reproductive of the labour force. One completely overlooked that during a hundred year period, increasingly certain forms of behaviour became mandatory, obligatory, without which the commodities produced through wage labour and purchased, brought into the family, through the expenditure of wages, from running water to bread, required increasingly more programmed, predetermined inputs in order to become something useful. Commodities were lacking in the labour input which made them into useful things. Water was brought into the house, true. It was rather cheaply brought into the house. By 1920, half of all American families had an inside toilet and shower. One usually thought women didn't have to carry buckets of water up the street any more, and in addition families could use more water than ever before, could be cleaner. But as Mrs. Schwarz-Cowan has shown so clearly, and even better, Mrs. Strasser, the amount of work which women in the household henceforth had to spend in cleaning bathtubs, washing toilets in bathrooms, running the washing machine and perhaps going out to earn the money to buy the washing machine was much larger than

women had consumed for water-related activities expected from them and imposed on them in previous societies.

#### David Cayley

This new type of work was what Illich called "shadow work." He drew attention to it because he wanted to clarify what he saw as a crucial public choice. With the dream of universal paid employment fading fast from most of the world, he saw that more and more people would have to decide between remaining in the shadow of a commodity intensive economy and trying to invent new, post-economic forms of subsistence. He wanted to support and encourage these new forms by making self-determined subsistence entirely separate from shadow work. The book *Shadow Work* was Illich's first step towards his proposed history of scarcity. Two years later, in 1982, he took another step with an ambitious essay on economic history called, simply, *Gender*. This new book argued that the breaking of the traditional gender line which runs through all pre-modern societies was the decisive precondition for the establishment of capitalist economies. This argument, like parts of the earlier *Shadow Work*, grew out of Illich's eclectic reading in the new literature of women's studies.

#### Ivan Illich

I ran into an article by Barbara Duden with a colleague of hers. In this article, the author claimed something which by now I think historians take for granted, but which at that moment for me constituted a surprise because I had not seen it stated anywhere else by historians for the 19th century. What she stated was that that change which others describe as the coming of capitalism and the generalization of a capitalist mode of production she could describe as in fact a polarization of activities between reproductive women and productive men, which also generated an entirely new view about what woman and man are, bodily, physically. Men, generators, women, reproductive organisms, or precisely, wombs hanging on top of two legs, a pair of legs. I detested the way it was written. It was purple language, but it made a key point. The category of work which men and women can do, tasks defined as work, which are done either by a man or by a woman, have a historical beginning. As you very well know, we later on became very close friends and collaborators. But at that moment, I was surprised by this statement and began to read widely into the history of what was perceived as work in the past. *Shadow Work* resulted, and in *Shadow Work*, in writing this little article, it became clear to me that the history of modern work, or more precisely, the archaeology of that which we call mentally, ideologically, work, had not been written so far. Why? Because I observed that no matter which historical societies before the 19th century I can look at carefully enough to make such observation, no matter into which strange, so-called primitive culture I move, a line runs through the tools, the toolkit of every one of these societies, separating tools which men may grasp from tools which women can grasp. A line runs through the spaces which are in the house, around the house, in the village, used by the villagers. In



some spaces, at some hours, you will find only women; in other spaces, you will find only men. It's possible that at another hour you find men in spaces which otherwise are occupied by women, but there will be this demanding gender line which runs through every society, and that therefore it is, in traditional society, in a pre-capitalist society, impossible to speak about abstract work for which one can just hire workers without regarding who they are, men or women. What other people have described as the coming of capitalism really could be described as what I then defined as a demise of the gender line and the creation of some completely new concept, the image of the human worker of whom half have a bulge in the blue jeans and the other half don't. This is the observation from which I started. I then worked together with a few other people and went through hundreds of books, and everywhere found confirmed my suspicion that, until quite recently, until the 16th, 17th century, in the church a little bit earlier, the 13th century, there is no talk about human beings. Customs are those of men or those of women. Society is conceived, each local community is conceived, as a dissymmetric complementarity of two fields which define those who are in them as that society's men and that society's women, that in no two societies is the definition the same. I simply was so surprised, rendered so curious by what for me, at least, was a discovery that I spent a year reflecting on it.

#### David Cayley

Illich's discovery of gender had far-reaching implications, first of all for his history of scarcity. Gender, he came to see, was the great historical antagonist of scarcity. So long as there were two fundamentally distinct but mutually dependent genders, the scope of purely economic principles was limited. Because gendered people were not interchangeable cogs, economic choice was restricted by cultural decisions about who could do what. But the significance of gender, for Illich, went beyond economic history to the question of knowledge itself. Do we know the world as human beings who are only accidentally sexed or do we know it differently as men and as women? Is the world of a single homogeneous character or is it characterized by a fundamental duality of which gender is an expression? These were the deeper questions which Illich's study raised.

#### Ivan Illich

I became increasingly convinced that the deepest change which I would be able to observe between a pre-scientific, pre-industrial, pre-commodity-intensive past and now was the transition from one type of duality to another. It is quite clear that two can be conceived of in two different ways. When I say "one," two can mean primarily, emotionally, conceptually, "the other," or it can mean "one more of the same." It seems that in all pre-literate society, pre-alphabetic societies, at least of the West which I can study, the first way of conceiving duality shaped the depths of consciousness. There is me and there is the other. There is the microcosmos, there is the macrocosmos. There is this world and the other world. Here are the living and there are the

dead. And in a most profound sense, here I am, a man, and these others, women, are shaded for me, muted for me, other for me. There might be a distant search for unity in which the world would disappear, but otherness, even in the height of intimacy gave ultimate consistency, to what we call today consciousness, to being here. With the 17th century or certain religious ideas of the 12th century, the human being, the self, the individual, became the model of our thinking, and then an entirely new way of seeing the other came into existence. He's an other with a black skin. The post-Cartesian inside is a special zone within the general space. People who speak English are a special group in humanity, where others speak French or German. I am a type of human being with physical characteristics which are different from the others. You are blond, I am dark, you are woman, I am man, and that this loss of the idea of otherness, this collapse of what, as far as I can see, is constitutive of all traditional language and culture and thought, this tension between dissymmetric complementarities, was collapsed into an a priori, abstract notion which then finds accidental distinctions.

#### David Cayley

If you're right, and presuming that the loss of gender is not absolute, but to the extent that it is lost, then it ought to be fatal to the imagination.

#### Ivan Illich

First you say supposing that the loss is not absolute. The greatest difficulties I encountered then when I wrote the book, which you have read, was how to speak about what I called "the rests of gender," which we can recover, which in a very personal relationship of friendship, which must replace what was formerly a culturally defined relationship between men and women, we can become conscious of, and which makes us able to survive. That without the recovery of these gender rests, we are really locked into a double ghetto without any access to what makes poetry or imagination between the two of us possible and, at the very same time, excluded from what we seek in sexed society, namely equality.

#### David Cayley

The idea of the double ghetto, a phrase coined by Barbara Duden, is the heart of Illich's argument. We are not only cut off from a gendered past, he says, we are also cut off from the feminist utopia of sexual equality. This is because, in Illich's view, the presumption of equality creates a competition between men and women which most women are bound to lose. So long as gender existed, he says, men and women simply couldn't compete with each other. There was no common arena in which the competition could have taken place. They occupied completely different spaces and therefore the idea of equality couldn't arise. Patriarchy existed in many places, but not sexism. Only with the replacement of gender by sex did the entirely new type of discrimination, which we call sexism, appear.

**Ivan Illich**

I tried to distinguish between gender, which creates in all societies two fields, two complements which are dissymmetric, and in which, I have absolutely no doubt of it, a thing which disgusts me, usually men in the outside, in the public sphere at least, dominate heavily on women, which I call, in European, Mediterranean cultures, patriarchy, and I call something totally different, discrimination, which can exist only where there is a claim that men and women are equals. So that every woman who finds out that she gets a bum deal, or any sociologist who finds out that women as a group get a bum deal, can speak about discrimination. Discrimination happens where somebody who officially is claimed to be an equal in fact finds out that she is not treated as a man in her place would be treated.

**David Cayley**

Gender, as you may already have guessed, was a very controversial book, mainly because of the ways in which it contradicted the claims of the feminist mainstream. Many of the reviews were hostile and derisory. Illich was also attacked by female faculty members at the University of California in Berkeley, where he originally gave the lectures on which the book was based. Their criticisms were later published in a journal called *Feminist Issues*.

**Ivan Illich**

A group of seven senior professors of Berkeley organized a witch-hunting trial a week after my lectures were over, to which I was invited, and was assured from the beginning that while each of them would speak 20 minutes, I would have 10 minutes to answer the seven of them. And I was accused--you know, I know what it means to be treated as a Jew--I had exactly the same impression from the exalted feminist professors in Berkeley, treating me not simply as Jew but as a Jew who had engaged in anti-Aryan explicit activities. The papers were published, as you say, and somehow a copy was sent to me of the journal, which is one of those journals where you may pay a certain amount and reproduce it. I said to myself, well, gee whiz, that's really the occasion to make people aware of what I have said by making a thousand copies of this journal and send it out. I had the copies made, I had the list made, and then I said to myself, no, a gentleman doesn't do this.

**David Cayley**

The women in *Feminist Issues* arguing against your position point to the fact that gender very frequently occurs under circumstances that are patriarchal and actively misogynistic. So there are many gendered societies where ambiguous complementarity is a bit of a euphemism for suppression, segregation, shunning of women by men.

**Ivan Illich**

Yes, no question.

**David Cayley**

And this leads to a question, I think.

**Ivan Illich**

Is this any better?

If you carefully read my book, this judgement I leave up to women who have to experience discrimination, and I ask them to make that judgement if they have understood my distinction between patriarchy and discrimination. There is a tremendous difference between being, in modern society for instance, born to poor parents and having learned in school that the reason why I have remained poor is due to my having failed in school, especially once you understand that if you are born to poor parents, the probability that you fail in school is enormously higher than if you are born to rich parents. Therefore it is my belief, as an outside observer, I had never been subject to feminist discrimination, machista discrimination, that I live in a society in which the traditional Italian, Spanish, French, German, English patriarchal subjection of women has been compounded with an entirely new, interiorized discrimination which was unknown previously. And I am angry, I was then, at least, deeply angered, furious at seeing the position of modern women as worse, as far as I could understand, than the position of women any time before. And I was equally angered, though much less, by the belief of a little bunch of women who believed that by improving their own personal status by outlawing discrimination, women would be helped.

**David Cayley**

The argument of gender was closely related to Illich's previous writings, as can be seen by his choice of the analogy with schooling to illustrate his point. Feminism, he was saying, was just one more counterproductive strategy for social improvement. But the sensitivity of the subject made the argument hard to hear, and Illich was portrayed by his critics as both a romantic and a reactionary.

**Ivan Illich**

I am not endorsing the past. It's past, it's gone. Even less am I endorsing the present. I am subject to it. I am in it.

**David Cayley**

But people see an image of a traditional society, a closed society. I think they then feel that you are recommending a return to a closed society. I think they don't have the image of a new commons.

**Ivan Illich**

I'm neither a romantic nor a Luddite, nor a utopian. I'm telling them, please look, try to understand how these people lived, felt, laughed, cried, moaned, shouted, fought, bit each other. Look at it. Believe me, that's how people lived here, and somewhere else they lived in a very different way, in hundreds of different ways. There were certain commonalities to them. No matter how they lived, they had at least this one assumption, which I am discussing at this moment, namely gender. But then look at how we live. We don't have the assumption about gender. We can't go back

to it. I'm not endorsing the way I live now. I personally find much of it terribly sad. I end my book with that sentence about sadness. I mean, I say quite clearly when I end the book, I have no strategy to offer. The book is not written with strategic intent. I refuse to speculate on the probabilities of any cure to the regime of sex. That's not my task. Each one of us will have to invent, in friendship, in which I believe, his own anodyne, medicine, ray of hope. I shall not allow the shadow of some brilliant future, of something which is to come, to fall on the concepts with which I try to grasp what is and what has been. I am not one to dream about a fully sexed, totally degendered population of cyborgs, cybernetic organisms. I look backwards to the sad loss of a kind of socially perceiving duality which is gone. I have no fantasies about it coming back.

#### David Cayley

In the concluding passage of *Gender*, Illich also sounds an optimistic note. "I strongly suspect," he says, "that a contemporary art of living can be recovered." This is the note that I think Illich's critics often miss. Because he takes the past seriously, which so few of us now do, and because he refuses to speculate about the future, believing that all our hopes centre on the possibility of our becoming fully alive to the present, Illich is sometimes taken for a less hopeful person than he actually is. Once, thinking over all that he believes we have lost through becoming an economic society, I asked him whether he thought people today had to live completely in the dark. "No," he said, "be a candle in the dark." And then he told me this story about his friend and teacher, Helder Camara, the former archbishop of Recife, in northeastern Brazil.

#### Ivan Illich

I remember being with him in the Palacio San Joaquim. He had just founded the world's first bishops' conference to oppose Rome, but totally at the service of the Pope, as he always insisted. And we were living together there--this must have been '62--and he had an appointment with a general. And he said to me, "Ivan, I want you to sit in the back of the room while I have this appointment." One of the founding fathers of "Pro Familia" in Brazil, later on, one of the most cruel torturers. Helder already knew what would happen. And after half an hour, he let this general out of his study and kind of flopped down on a chair, next to me. Complete silence. And then he looks at me and says, "Ivan, you must never give up. Somewhere beneath the ashes, as long as that person is alive, there is a little bit of remaining fire, and all our task is--" and he put his hands, funny, skinny hands around his mouth and blew and said, "You must blow, carefully, very carefully, blow and blow. You'll see if it lightens up. If it takes fire again or not, you mustn't worry. All you have to do is to blow."

#### Lister Sinclair

Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich concludes tomorrow evening.

\* \* \*

#### Lister Sinclair

Good evening and welcome to Ideas. I'm Lister Sinclair with the final program in our week-long look at the career of Ivan Illich.

#### Ivan Illich

If anybody asks me, Ivan, what is it that you would most like to stimulate during the next year and a half of your life--it is, in those kind of horizons that I've seen in my life, I would say--I would like to get a certain number of people to think about what tools do to our perception rather than what we can do with them, to look at how tools shape our mind, how their use shapes our perception of reality rather than how we shape reality by applying or using them. In other terms, the symbolic fallout of tools elevated to the sacramental tool structure of the world.

#### Lister Sinclair

"Tools" is a word to which Ivan Illich has always given his own peculiar twist. What Jacques Ellul calls "technique" or George Grant "technology," Illich describes by this simpler word, but he means something no less embracing than these other writers do. The tools we use, in Illich's view, shape both our image of the world and our image of ourselves. In the age of textual literacy he believes people imagined themselves as texts. Today, the computer is creating a new self in the image of a cybernetic system.

#### Ivan Illich

I believe that during the mid-'80s, for many people, for very many people, a change of the mental space in which we live has happened. Some kind of a catastrophic breakdown of one way of seeing things has led to the emergence of a different way of seeing things. Morris Berman speaks about the "cybernetic dream state" into which people have gotten and which people value. We are, in my opinion, at this moment passing over a watershed, and I had not expected in my lifetime to observe this passage.

#### Lister Sinclair

Tonight on Ideas, we'll explore Illich's thinking about this watershed. We'll consider his two most recent books and we'll conclude with a look at Illich, the man, through his own eyes and the eyes of his friends.

#### Lee Swenson

To me, the greatest title of Illich's work is *Celebration of Awareness*, that really, Ivan's great gift is he celebrates that awareness that one can have by living in the present.

#### Lister Sinclair

Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with

Ivan Illich is written and presented by David Cayley. It's based on conversations he recorded last year at Illich's house in State College, Pennsylvania, where Illich now teaches for part of the year at Penn State University.

#### David Cayley

While I was visiting Ivan Illich, he told me a story about a young woman, a student of his, who had called on him the week before. They had taken a glass of cider together, and then he had offered her a second glass. "Oh no," she said, "my sugar requirements are already met. I don't want to get into a sugar high." More recently, I heard a similar story from my wife about a mother she had overheard saying to her child during lunch, "That's enough of the protein, dear. Now have some of the carbohydrates." Both of these people view themselves, or in the second case, their children, as systems with complex requirements. An offer of a glass of cider is not weighed as hospitality, or even in terms of subjectively experienced needs. Was she still thirsty or not? Instead, it is evaluated in terms of that person's knowledge of their requirements. This is the essence of the transformation which Illich now sees society undergoing. Under the influence of cybernetic tools like the computer, he says, the root metaphors by which we grasp who we are are rapidly changing. During the '80s, this change has become one of the main themes of his writing. This is particularly the case in his 1987 book with Barry Sanders called ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind. But the theme of catastrophic change, and loss, was already evident in an earlier book called H<sub>2</sub>O and the Waters of Forgetfulness, published in 1985. In H<sub>2</sub>O, Illich wrote about what he called "the historicity of stuff," and reflected that the natural stuffs of our world, like water, might be losing their imaginative resonance for us. The process which led to his writing the book began at his home in Mexico with a phone call from Dallas.

#### Ivan Illich

I was just sitting, puzzling out with my miserably limited Greek some passages in the sources when the gardener called me to the other place where they have a telephone in Mexico, and I came there and there was somebody from Dallas asking me if I would come to talk. "No, I don't want to come to talk to you. What is it about?" "Well, we have a meeting on celebrating water." I said "What? I am just sitting on the waters of Lethe, the river which washes away from the feet of the dead their memories and carries them into the pond of Mnemosyne, where the poets can go occasionally, in an altered state, and pick them up and bring them back to sing them. So what do you want?" "Well, you know, there are a large number of Mexicans living in a certain area which is to be washed away to build a central city lake in Dallas." So I had them explain to me for a few minutes what they were doing. I said, "Yeah. Who says 'A' must say 'B.' If I say 'Mnemosyne' and 'Lethe' and so on, I will say 'yes' to Dallas.

#### David Cayley

Illich studied Dallas's ambitious plans to turn recycled toilet flush into a brilliant display of fountains, waterfalls and sparkling surfaces. He concluded that the waters of Dallas and the waters of forgetfulness were of two fundamentally different kinds. The industrial solvent with which Dallas hoped to beautify itself might be chemically H<sub>2</sub>O, he said, but it had lost its ability to mirror the water of dreams. The book which resulted from Illich's talk in Dallas was a sort of long, rambling letter to a friend, full of fascinating excursions into mythology, the history of bathrooms, our changing sense of smell, and many other subjects of current interest to the author. He subtitled it "Reflections on the Historicity of Stuff."

#### Ivan Illich

Now there is a Canadian, a Canadian whom I met in Kingston. I wished I could recover him, who he is, who when I asked him at a faculty meeting, "And what do you do, sir?" he told me, "I want to make 'stuff' a subject of philosophy." I can't find who the man is, but I owe it to him, since he said this to me, I have been thinking about it. I said I want to do the history of stuff because I do believe that in this world into which I see the young generation now moving, it is not only their voice they are losing by imagining themselves along the model of the computer, it is also that they are emerging as a generation rid of stuff. Now water is one of the traditional four stuffs from which our Western universe is made. There are other universes in other bodies, world bodies, which are made of five or of seven elements. Ours is made of four. Water is one of them. In this little booklet, I wanted to raise the question about the historicity of stuff and the possibility of studying it. I tried to retrace the history of the "stuff" of water, the age-old distinction of the ambiguity of water, which is a surface and a depth, which can wash dirt off the skin by flowing, but just by touch can purify the depth of the soul. This is a totally different activity, washing and purifying. It gave me an exceptional opportunity to speak about a stuff which at this moment is escaping us socially. Other people worry about the human organism, not finding any more sometime in the middle of the next century the appropriate kind of H<sub>2</sub>O to make it work, and I am saying the deadness which sets in when people have lost the sense to imagine the substance of water, not its external appearances, but the substance of water, that deadness might be worse for those who live on than the diseases which will set in, the AIDS analogues which will set in because there are too many organic phosphate residues, or God knows what, radiation bearing elements in the goo which comes out of the tap. I'm speaking of the deadening of the imagination.

#### David Cayley

Illich's fears about the deadening of the imagination remind me of a question Father Tom Berry once asked me. If we lived on the moon, he said, what would our imaginations be like? Could we imagine passion without fire or purification without water? If we denature nature, I think Illich is saying,

whether we do it through pollution or just through the intensity of our management, the result will be the same as if we did live on the moon. Two years after *H2O* was published, Illich followed it with another angle on a society passing through frightening changes. This time, his subject was literacy and the way in which a society's perceptual style is shaped by its knowledge tools. This book was rooted in his recognition of himself as, literally, a man of letters, "a man with a papery soul," he told a conference in Toronto a couple of years ago. He traces the beginnings of this recognition to a conversation with his dear friend, the late American writer, Paul Goodman.

#### **Ivan Illich**

As he once said to me, "I have never written a line if I was not sure that I either had said it or would say it as it's written." And that impressed me, of course, because I have never written a line which I have the feeling I could have said, and people don't notice the difference between my speaking and my writing because they aren't aware how much, given my destiny, I am obligated while speaking to read off internal lines. This conversation with Goodman was one of the reasons why later I got so much concerned about the impact of literacy on the mode of being of our Western culture.

#### **David Cayley**

Illich's book *ABC* was the result of this concern. Co-written with Barry Sanders, a professor at Pitzer College in Claremont, California, the book describes three watersheds in the history of literacy, beginning with the invention of the technology which Illich believes made philosophy possible--the alphabet.

#### **Ivan Illich**

Most of the concepts with which our modern literature and philosophy are constructed are based on the existence of this technology. We couldn't have them unless we had this technology. In order to imagine yesterday's sentence still present, which is fundamental for Greek thought, I must imagine yesterday's sentence recorded somewhere so that it can be resurrected. The winged word, the bird which has passed, has been somewhere put on a skewer. That also changes the idea of memory. Memory is a tablet on which something is written. It's a storeroom where these dead birds are stored and can be picked out again. It is not remembrance which Plato still knew, kind of the smell that something like that has already been in my heart. I follow the trail of it, go to the river of remembrance, try out driftwood, find a piece which does fit more or less in the space which was left empty by what I feel has been there, know exactly that it's not the same, but treat it as if it were the same. This is my version of Plato speaking about remembrance as opposed to memory. Thought requires the technology, interiorized, of writing. Even if I don't know how to write, I know that some people can write and that's how they do it. Memory requires it. Rhetoric. Rhetoric is planning out and storing somewhere in my memory palace,

in my interior space, the sentences which I'll use under certain circumstances where I can go to grab them and fit them into my discourse.

#### **David Cayley**

Having described the transition from epic orality to alphabetic literacy in ancient Greece, the period when, in Eric Havelock's wonderful phrase, "the muse learned to write," Illich and Sanders then jump to a period when literacy was, in a sense, reinvented--12th century Europe. Before the early 12th century, reading in Europe had been predominantly monkish reading, teasing words out of a continuous line of unseparated letters by sounding them out, reading, as one monk said, for savour, not for science. Literacy didn't touch most of the people at all. Then, over the course of a couple of generations, a recognizable ancestor of our modern book appeared and the nature of reading changed dramatically. Illich examined the reading of a monk who stood precisely on the cusp between these two styles, Hugh of St. Victor, the master of a monastery just outside 12th century Paris.

#### **Ivan Illich**

Hugh of St. Victor wrote a book which is called *Didascalicon*. Really, that means "teaching tool." There is a subtitle, *De studio legendi*--today we say study. It means what your kids have to do when they come home from school. If you look it up in the Oxford Dictionary, it still means commitment, engagement, effort--on the effort of reading, let me translate it for the moment. And instead of interpreting this very well known 12th century text as others have done, as an introduction to the corpus of four years' curriculum in the pre-university cloister--Hugh mentions a lot of titles one should read and in which order one should read them--I went to analyze this book with two questions only in mind. What can I read out of this book which would tell me what Hugh actually did when he engaged in the activity which he calls reading? What did he materially do? What did he psychologically do? Not what did he read, but what did he do in his own mind when he read? First question. And second question, what meaning did he give to the things which he did when he read? This led me into a careful analysis, paleographically, of what a page looks like around 1120, and what it looks like around 1150, ten years after Hugh's death.

#### **David Cayley**

The appearance of the two pages was radically different. During this time, word breaks, which had been known in Europe for 400 years, became universal. Unseparated words had to be read aloud, as anyone can ascertain by typing a line of continuous words and trying to read them silently. Now silent reading became possible. Paragraphs, titles, footnotes, quotation marks and tables of contents all appeared, and there were other changes, as well.

#### **Ivan Illich**

The alphabetic index is invented. The alphabet, strangely

enough, since Phoenecian times has the same sequence--alpha, beta gamma, A, B, C. Aleph, beth gimel. But nobody, for 2,000 years of the existence of the alphabet, had used this feature of the alphabet, of an ordered, fixed sequence, to order concepts. During the 12th century, with a first slight attempt during the 11th, the idea appears to order concepts alphabetically, to put the lion and the lizard, in a book on animals, next to each other. Well, even in the 13th century still, Albert the Great excuses himself with his readers. It is a highly non-intellectual way of putting things together, Albert says. The lion should go with the ferocious animals and the leopard, in that case, with the sweet ones, like the panther. But for practical reasons, he finds it very useful to put concepts in an alphabetic order. This again made it possible to look up where subjects in a book are mentioned, or where biblical passages in a book are mentioned. The early 12th century knows the gloss. Holy scripture has been commented upon by dozens and dozens of church fathers, and monks had created the *Glossa Ordinaria*, as it came to be known later on, this huge sequence of volumes, all the comments which the church fathers made to Genesis, chapter one, verse 17, who said what about this verse over a thousand years, but the only way to look up the past was by following the ordering of scripture. Now, suddenly, even more importantly, in the 12th century, late 12th century, the book is not a commentary on some old text which perhaps overwhelms that old text, but it is the projection of an order in my mind on to the page where the order of my mind becomes visible. Silent reading becomes the norm. Reading becomes an activity where the letters through my eyes speak to my mind, rather than the letters through my eye activate the mouth, which makes me hear what I see. When I read Hugh, I am still in the old world. When Hugh speaks about the page, he still remembers that *pagina* means a vineyard, or more precisely, the *espalier* in a vineyard which he walks along. He still picks and tastes words, like berries. He still "sucks" words from the page. It's an oral activity, literally with the mouth, with his lips. He still "walks" through the pages. Reading, for him, is not accumulation. Reading, for him, is a pilgrimage towards regions ever lighter, towards the light, into the light, until the light becomes so strong that he doesn't go on reading but begins to contemplate. That becomes totally different by the end of the century. Scholasticism would be impossible without Thomas Aquinas having recovered--he belongs to the first generation who has recovered the art of making notes in cursive writing. We have lecture notes of St. Thomas in his own handwriting. Nobody could decipher them, it was a new invention.

#### David Cayley

Illich believes that these changes, taken together, transformed European society. The book ceased to be purely an object of devotion and became a powerful tool, and this new tool was the source of a new conception of the self.

#### Ivan Illich

The idea was that I can project my mind on to a pergamen

and by the end of the century, it's already paper, that the page could be a mirror of what's in me. Hugh already is the first who speaks about "mirroring" oneself in the page. He stands exactly at that point of transition. Therefore the self can be conceived in a new way as an interior text. Examination of conscience becomes possible, as a reading in the text which is on the inside. The peasant can't go into the church without passing beneath the tympanum of the late 12th century, that hollow above the church door, where the Last Judgement is sculpted, with the judge sitting there, deciphering from a book the accounts. People know that in the abbey there are account books, even if they themselves can't keep accounts. It is not their remembrance of what they owe, but the debt written down somewhere. The devil stands next to everybody, noting down what he does, says and thinks to transfer it into the eternal account book. Torture comes up. Not punishment, but what in modern times we call torture, the attempt to find out the truth by "reading" into the heart of people, and it's explained in this way by the 13th century. The relationship between person and community is perceived of in the terms of a text. I can act in "con-text." The oath which remained in popular culture, the ultimate empowerment of a man's word--you know, a man grabs his testicles or a woman grabs her hair and wishes, curses herself or himself conditionally if it is not as I say and invokes horrible divine punishment on himself and his oath helpers--this is replaced by a piece of paper you can hold in your hand. Possession, which is something you do with your behind, sitting, by which land is possessed changes to property, which you "hold" in your hand as a writ. Changes which I myself learned from McLuhan to notice, but which McLuhan wrongly ascribed to print culture, appear much earlier, without the technology of printing, on the manuscript page of the late 12th century, at that moment of the emergence of the new individual.

#### David Cayley

One of the most interesting aspects of these changes is the way in which they engulf the literate and the illiterate alike. People's mind sets changed, Illich believes, whether they could read or not. This has led him to distinguish the actual skills of reading and writing, which were still relatively rare even in the 13th century, from what he calls "lay literacy," the new literate mind set.

#### Ivan Illich

This transformation from an oral public to a literate public happens without any increase in the percentage within the total population capable of using the pen. This is the reason why I speak of "lay" literacy. The impact of the alphabet and its use on the popular mind happens independent from the success of clerics to transmit the skill of pen holding or spelling, spelling out, because reading is something which you can do through your own mouth or through somebody else's mouth, as in South America still today. Writing is something in which you distinguish carefully between "scribing," which some technician does, and "dictating," which a ruler can do without having held a pen, as a dictator. But also the

peasant, when he goes, employs a notary and dictates to him, and the notary can betray the peasant as much as he can betray the ruler.

#### David Cayley

With the concept of lay literacy, Illich is saying something about our situation today as well as about the Middle Ages. He is suggesting that the changes sweeping our world will affect us whether or not we can use the new cybernetic tools of the late 20th century. Today, he says, the word processor--he calls it, for emphasis, the text composer--is changing minds just as surely as the transformed page of the 12th century changed minds.

#### Ivan Illich

I am afraid for the text of the 12th century, the mirror of Aquinas's thought projected on to the paper covered with his scribbles from which he will give his lectures, lectures of a completely new kind, out of which the Summa Theologica came, I see that this perception of the page as a mirror of a mind is now being eaten up, the age of the mirror of the soul is being eaten up by the text composer. I don't want to speak in terms of the future, but in terms of the dazed look which I see on the face of students who tell me, "Dr. Illich, what data do you have? Couldn't you tell me about the program which you are following? How did you plan out your approach? What is it that you want to communicate to me?" I then feel that I am drowning with an age which is past.

#### David Cayley

The difference between St. Thomas's scribbles and the fluorescent text which appears on the screen of the word processor may seem too slight to justify Illich's alarm, but he claims that it goes to the heart of how we view the interior text we call the self, and he believes that there is a noticeable difference between a text which is still the mirror of a mind and a text composed on a computer.

#### Ivan Illich

I can recognize so far every book which was composed on a computer.

#### David Cayley

Truly?

#### Ivan Illich

Yes. I remember the first time it happened to me, Hofstadter's *Godel, Escher, Bach*. I got that book. I was fascinated by it and it was given to me by somebody in Berlin in '81 who had been enthusiastic about it. I couldn't get into it, and I said, "What is this?" I'd just heard about text composers. I said to myself, that must be written that way, dragging out paragraphs which didn't come out of an inner flow. Individually, they came, but it is like saying I can reorganize a river by taking a piece from here and putting it somewhere else if it fits. I then read the introduction. I saw that the guy was proud and grateful to the computer for

having helped him to write the book. Even today, I can discover it. And I made a vow, just as I made the vow not to buy a daily newspaper twenty years ago and have kept to it, I have made a vow I will not type into a computer any sequence of sentences which I haven't first written out with a much newer invention than the computer, the felt-tip pen, which is so soft that you can write even on a moving Mexican bus with it.

#### David Cayley

Illich's fundamental concern with the computer is not with its products, and his case against it wouldn't be touched if he failed to make good on his claim to be able, infallibly, to recognize these products. What he's really drawing attention to is the computer's symbolic fallout, the language of programming, which we increasingly apply to ourselves--the computer as metaphor for self-perception. He's concerned that words have ceased to have a fundamental and irreducible integrity and become instead the plastic elements of a communication code, and he remembers the first time he became aware that this was happening.

#### Ivan Illich

It was in Chicago, must have been twenty years ago, at a meeting at the University of Chicago with social science people. And there was a young guy, well, he's pretty well known by now as one of the American Marxists, who gave again a respectability to Marxist analysis. In fact, I respect what that guy has done in the meantime. But there he sits and says, "Illich, don't kid yourself. I don't read you. You don't communicate with me. I don't get your message." My immediate answer was, "Sir, I have no intention to be a transmitter." I thought that he was offending me by identifying me with a radio station. A minute later, I realized that he had just probably seen his department renamed from English to department of communications. Now I told this story at a seminar at the University of Freiburg, where there was a strange composition, 15 to 20 men, my age, and 20 or 30 people, definitely university students. The middle range was missing. None of the younger people could understand what I was saying. They took it for granted that we are transmitting information to each other. While a quarter of the older people, each in one way or another remembered how much they had been struck when, for the first time, somebody imputed to them to be comparable to a computer or a system.

#### David Cayley

Illich claims that our age has adopted a radically new style of knowledge, discontinuous with even the recent past. As a reader of his, I've been puzzling for some time about whether he's right. Is our break with the past really as deep, as complete, as catastrophic as he contends? I brought up this question in conversation with Illich's close friend, John McKnight of the Centre for Urban Affairs at Northwestern University in Chicago. His reply was that he feels his own experience and understanding closely parallel Illich's.

**John McKnight**

I now have seminars with students, none of whom I think has ever experienced citizenship, and they're upper middle class. Their lives are twenty years of consumption and their lives are also almost totally derived from symbols, and that's what seems to me to be the essence of what the computer world provides. It's a way of associating with an environment where there is no kiss, there is no hand held, there is no great idea generated in the dialogue between two people, there is no creativity of a human form. There is no leaf, there is only a graphic of a leaf. So I think that what the computer does is it announces the end of experience and provides an alternative to life. It is the ultimately unconvivial tool because it asks us to move out of our relationship with God's earth and God's people and into a symbolic set of understandings, inputs, outputs--the video, the record, the television, the computer. The word that one has to use is "derivative." People whose life is derivative of the products of systems and who themselves and with their neighbours are almost devoid of deep opportunities for relationship, creativity, the vernacular, the democratic. It's happening so quickly, I could never have believed it.

**David Cayley**

Some of John McKnight's phrases, like "the end of experience" or "an alternative to life," have for me a pretty chilling quality. Illich has much the same effect on me when he envisions a future society of cyborgs, a science fiction term meaning cybernetic organisms, which he finds apt for people like the students who ask him what program he is following. Both men are obviously deeply troubled and surprised by what they have seen in the last few years, and yet neither, I think, has despaired, and neither could. Certainly, for Illich, hope is not something that could be extinguished by the growing darkness around him. Hope, rather, is the fundamental condition of his life. Once, he tried to define hope by contrasting it with expectation in a wonderful essay called "The Rebirth of Epimethean Man," which concludes his book *De-Schooling Society*. Expectation, he said, means reliance on results which we predict, plan and control. Hope centres desire on a person from whom we await a gift. It depends on trusting faith in the goodness of nature. Hope which awaits a gift rather than expects one is a quality which Illich has lived. It has made him a surprising and trusting friend and it has animated his work with the faith that we don't need the institutional intermediaries we put between ourselves and reality. He has lived his life as a pilgrimage rather than a planned career, and in the light of the intense honesty this has allowed him, he has been able to give his students, readers and audiences a vivid sense of other times and finer possibilities than most of us are now living. And yet, he himself has lived in the same world as we do, amidst word processors, jet planes and cars, like the old banger now parked outside his house in State College.

**Ivan Illich**

I do drive a car. For seventeen years, I was without one. I decided that's no good and was without one. When I

accepted to work in the university--what is it called here?--University Park, Penn State University--I don't even remember what the place is called after four years--which is somewhere near nowhere, and also distant from the supermarket, I couldn't do anything else but tell Lee Hoinacki, please get me a cheap and good car in Southern Illinois, they are particularly cheap there, and drive it over here. I know that in order to conduct that meeting on water, near Assisi, for Wolfgang Sachs next week, I will consume as much oxygen as a herd of twenty elephants will consume in their entire life and not produce the shit elephants produce from which again oxygen can be generated, in order to be propelled, jetted to Assisi and three days later back. And yet I do it. I try to be austere and draw my lines. I have vowed to myself, I who couldn't live, didn't want to go to Mexico without having the promise that the New York Times will be delivered by airmail every day, twenty years ago, decided not to buy a daily newspaper, and I won't buy it. It doesn't mean that I don't pick up the newspaper left on the seat next to me while the other person in the airplane has gone to the toilet. I feel a little bit when I do this, as if you peep. I have refused these interviews, but I say there is a point at which if you draw your own line, you can make your own exceptions. You can't find security in austerity. Otherwise, you are really through.

**David Cayley**

Illich has never tried to find security in austerity, in reputation, or by making a system of his published ideas, nor has he ever offered security to others by trying to tell them how they should live. Even in his critical writings of the '70s, there is little in the way of a positive political program. Instead, says John McKnight, he's tried to clear away the obstacles that stand in the way of people deciding for themselves what they should do.

**John McKnight**

I remember when we were working closely together on this question of medicine, health and community. I had a tendency to talk about remedies and solutions, and he would say to me, but I don't want to deal in prescriptions, I want to deal in proscriptions. I don't want to tell people what they ought to do. He wanted to lay out the errors throughout all of the efforts that he was associated with that might have been thought of as reform. I don't think he was ever willing to go beyond reforms that were proscriptive. From the beginning, he didn't want to describe a good school. And if you believe in the creativity and adaptability of primary groups in the society, then what you have to do, it seems to me, is to say how can we give this social space the room to act and be powerful, not to say what it ought to do. Nor--and I think this is even a more difficult thing to come to, which I have come to and he has come to--nor probably can you say to big systems, here's what you ought to do to help primary vernacular life along. I think Ivan would say today, if you want my advice, get out of the way.



**David Cayley**

John McKnight sees Illich's conscientious refusal to prescribe for others as an expression of his confidence in people, a confidence which seems to me at its root deeply Christian. For Illich, as a Christian, Jesus has already revealed the way. It doesn't need to be revealed again. All that's necessary is the unmasking of systems which claim they can ensure our salvation, whether they be churches or schools, because to Illich, our salvation can never be ensured, only encountered, right now, in the person of another. Lee Hoinacki is an old friend of Illich's and the editor of a number of his books. He describes Illich's writings as a new way of doing theology.

**Lee Hoinacki**

What he is trying to do is to say something which Chesterton said years ago. Chesterton said there is no supernatural, that's crazy. There is only one, there's one reality, and you don't get to a certain point and then cross and get into the supernatural realm. In a sense, Illich, I think, is saying that, that there aren't two realities, the natural and the supernatural, there is only one reality. And what he then tries to do is to write in such a way that what he says includes both these realities. So it's what I could call a new way of doing theology. You can look at any list which informed people would put out today of say the top ten theologians of the world, top twenty, top fifty, and I suspect, unless you get some really maverick type compiler, no one of those lists will ever include Ivan Illich. But I put him up there. That's where I put him, see, because I think what he's doing is a different kind of theology.

**David Cayley**

But listen to this. This is from the lectures at McCormick Seminary in 1987. "I do not speak as a theologian, but as a historian." Now he seems to be making a contrast there.

**Lee Hoinacki**

He certainly is, right. Because you can't say these things as a theologian.

**David Cayley**

Listen to this. "In the Roman Catholic church's more recent tradition you imply teaching authority which derives from the hierarchy when you claim to speak as a theologian."

**Lee Hoinacki**

Right. That's what he will not claim, and that's why I say it's a new way of doing theology. You claim no authority, and so he's not going to produce some major tractatus, some treatise, on the Trinity or on whatever it is. He's trying to find his own voice, and I think he's found it. He's not trying, he's found it, and he's seen that his voice is this narrow voice or this little voice or this gentle voice or this silent voice or this hidden voice. People are after him now, "What are you doing at Penn State University? Why don't you go to Chicago or Berkeley or Tübingen or someplace?" No, he comes to this out in the sticks someplace, and that's where

he is. That's my interpretation of him. He's found his voice and it's this silent voice.

**Ivan Illich**

I have chosen the politics of impotence, bearing witness to my impotence because I not only think that for this one guy, there is nothing else left, but also because I could argue that at this moment, it's the right thing to do. Politics almost inevitably today focuses attention on intermediary goals and doesn't let you see what the things are to which we have to say "No!"

**David Cayley**

Illich's passionate "no" prepares the way for each person to say his own "yes" in his own way. His work as a critic and historian is for me, finally, a form of iconoclasm, of image breaking and ground clearing. It prepares the mind for surprise, for silence and for mystery.

**Ivan Illich**

For mystery and for what in the Old Testamentary tradition we call the attempt of walking beneath His nose, in facie tua.

**David Cayley**

I don't know the phrase. Beneath the nose of God?

**Ivan Illich**

Yes, beneath the nose of God. I mean God has a nose as big as mine, seemingly. Yes, it is an attempt to accept, with great sadness, the fact of Western culture. Dawson has a passage where he says the church is Europe and Europe is the church, and I say Yeah! *Corruptio optimi pessima*. We attempt to ensure, to guarantee, to regulate the revelation that at any moment we might recognize, even when we are Palestinians, that there is a Jew lying in the ditch whom I can take in my arms, embrace him. To study, accept the West as the perversion of revelation and thereby become increasingly more tentative, but also more curious, totally engaged in searching for its origin, which is the voice of Him who speaks. It's as simple as that. It's childish, if you want, child-like, hopefully. You can't take the crucifixion away if you want to understand where we have arrived at.

**John McKnight**

Many people, I think, might describe him as being imperious and haughty, at times, many times. I have always found him a comrade, solicitous, absolutely conscientious in his care and concern for me and my well-being and those around me. He is a person whose capacity to be a friend is absolutely unequalled among everybody that I have ever known, and every once in a while, he'll say to me, if you ever need me, I will never be more than 24 hours from you, just call. And he'd come.

**Ivan Illich**

I got into this out of foolish trust--foolhearted trust, that I'll do it once. Never again! be sure. And instead of being a useful interviewee for you in the old way, which I thought I

could be, I had a unique experience besides making a new friend. Laus tibi domine.

**Lister Sinclair**

You've been listening to the final program in our five-part series, Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman: Conversations with Ivan Illich. The series was written and presented by David Cayley. Technical operations by Lorne Tulk. Production assistance, Brian Hickey and Gail Brownell. Producer, Jill Eisen.

Transcripts by Multi-Media Transcriptions, Toronto.



Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman:  
Conversations with Ivan Illich

A brief annotated bibliography  
by David Cayley

Illich's books in order of publication:

Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution,  
Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City, New York, 1970.

Deschooling Society, Harper & Row, New York, 1971

Tools for Conviviality, Harper & Row, New York, 1973

Energy and Equity, Harper & Row, New York, 1974

Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis--The Expropriation of Health  
Penguin, 1976. Originally published in 1975 as a working draft  
under the title Medical Nemesis. Limits to Medicine was the  
final revised and expanded form of this draft.

Towards a History of Needs, Heyday Books, Box 9145, Berkeley, CA  
94709, 1977. This book contains the complete texts of two works  
also published separately: Energy and Equity and Useful  
Employment of its Professional Enemies.

Disabling Professions, published in Canada by Burns and  
MacEachern Ltd., Suite 3, 62 Railside Rd., Don Mills, ON M3A 1A6  
Also contains essays by John McKnight, Irving Kenneth Zola,  
Jonathan Caplan and Harley Shaiken.

Shadow Work, Marion Boyars, Boston, 1980.

Gender, Pantheon, New York, 1982.

H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness, Heyday Books, Berkeley, 1985  
(address above).

ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind, North Point Press,  
850 Talbot Ave., Berkeley, CA 94706, 1988.

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Most of Illich's articles that I'm aware of are included, or at  
least covered, in his books. Two that are not, and that expand  
on ideas mentioned in the IDEAS series are:

"A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy", Interchange, Vol 18,  
Nos. 1/2, Spring/Summer 1987, pp. 9-22.

"The Silent People", The Progressive, June, 1983.

I found few articles about Illich that seemed to me to really come to grips with his ideas, but here's what I think is notable in what I did find:

Herb Gintis: "Towards a Political Economy of Education: A Radical Critique of Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society", A neo-marxist critique of Illich's approach; Vincente Navarro later did a very similar critique of Limits to Medicine.

Francine Du Plessix Gray: "The Rules of the Game", New Yorker, April 25, 1970. This is a New Yorker profile, published without Illich's consent, but of biographical interest for the period up to 1970.

Sidney Hook: "Illich's 'Deschooled Utopia'", Encounter, Jan. 1972. A more central perspective than Gintis's; as good a critique of Illich's 'utopianism' as I could find.

Feminist Issues, Vol 3 #1, Spring, 1983. Seven essays criticizing Illich's Gender, drawn from a symposium, held in Berkeley after the lecture series on which Gender was based. Several of these articles seem to me to amount to willful misrepresentation of Illich's ideas, but one by anthropologist Nancy Sheper-Hughes is more substantial, and the whole shows how outraged feminists were by Illich's book.

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It would be impossible to list all of Illich's influences, but here are a few thinkers, and their books, which stand out:

Philippe Aries: Centuries of Childhood, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1962. Without Aries' research, Illich says he could not have written either Gender nor Deschooling Society.

Paul Goodman was a close personal friend, and he and Illich spent a lot of time in conversation towards the end of Goodman's life. All Goodman's books are interesting. Three I like which might serve as introductions are Drawing the Line, New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative, and Growing up Absurd.

Leopold Kohr, The Breakdown of Nations, London, 1941. Kohr was E.F. Schumacher's teacher and the first to extend the studies of D'arcy Thompson and J.B.S. Haldane on the relationship between size and form into the social sphere. He helped Illich to devise the whole language of limits, thresholds, and natural scales that inform his writings of the early 70's.

Gerhard Ladner, The Ideas of Reform, Santa Fe, New Mexico: Gannon, 1970. First published in the early 60's this book was a model for Illich's search for the historical origins of those unique and unprecedented ideas which have created the mind of the West.

Jacques Maritain introduced Illich to the thought of Thomas Aquinas: a formative encounter. Maritain wrote a lot, and I know too little his work to confidently recommend a starting point.

Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation, New York, Octagon Books, 1975, first published 1944. Polanyi was an economic historian, who helped Illich to see the strangeness and the novelty of the type of market society we commonly take for granted.

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I want to mention one other book neither by nor about Illich, called The Silence of St. Thomas by Joseph Pieper (Pantheon, New York 1957). This is a small readable set of three essays about Aquinas, which I think sheds a lot of light on Illich's theology.

Thanks for listening!

David Cayley  
IDEAS

## **Bibliography for Corruption of Christianity**

The following is an up-to-date version of the bibliography provided for "Part Moon, Part Travelling Salesman" (Ideas, 1989)

Add to Illich's books: In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses, 1978-'90, Marion Boyars, London/New York, 1992

David Cayley, Ivan Illich in Conversation, House of Anansi Press, Toronto, 1992

In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993.

A second volume of the In the Mirror of the Past, collecting Illich's occasional writings of the 90's and other pieces not included in the earlier volume, is in preparation. In addition the Science, Technology and Society programme at the Pennsylvania State University (Willard Bldg. 133, University Park, PA 16802, USA) have published a series of working papers by Illich. The ones I have are:

Working Paper #2 - Blasphemy: A Radical Critique of Technological Culture, April 1994

Working Paper #4 - Guarding the Eye in the Age of the Show, August, 1994

Working Paper #6 - The Scopic Past and the Ethics of the Gaze: A Plea for the Historical Study of Ocular Perception (with Barbara Duden and Mother Jerome O.S.B., ed. Lee Hoinacki), November, 1995

Working Paper #8 - Papers on Proportionality, Sept. '96 - this includes Illich's 1994 Schumacher lecture "The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr"