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Csaba Osvath /
Ivan Illich

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<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>

○ **Deschooling Society**

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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/14780>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 04/11/2013

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<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>

The Shadow Our Future Throws



URL <<https://www.arenanet.org/block/168168>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 05/11/2013

The Shadow Our Future Throws



IVAN ILLICH

Because of his groundbreaking critique of mass industrial society in such books as Energy and Equity, Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health, Toward a History of Needs and Deschooling Society Ivan Illich was considered a founding thinker of the alternative and ecological movements, the prophet of an "era of limits."

This conversation took place at Illich's rustic retreat in Otostpec, Mexico, in the spring of 1989. (The title of the second chapter of Al Gore's 1992 book, The Earth in Balance is taken from this interview—"The Shadow Our Future Throws.")

Illich was no armchair witness but lived what he preached. In the early 1990s he developed a large tumor that protruded from his right temple. Claiming the right not to be a patient but to "die without diagnosis" as part of "hygienic autonomy," he was never treated, smoking opium to ease the pain over his last years. He died—without diagnosis—in 2002 in Bremen, Germany.

NATHAN GARDELS | Because of your radical critiques of industrial society 15 and 20 years ago, you are widely regarded as a founding thinker of the environmental movement. Now, many of your concepts have entered the vocabulary of the established institutions of industrialism and development: the World Bank now talks about "sustainable development" and incorporates ecological concerns into their sponsorship of economic development; world leaders worry publicly about the ozone layer and promise "an environmental agenda." What's changed?

IVAN ILLICH | What has changed is that our common sense has begun searching for a language to speak about the shadow our future throws.

FALL 2009

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Untitled



URL <<https://www.are.na/block/169994>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013



I recalled Homer's warning of the doom of Nemesis. Driven by pleonexia, or radical greed, Prometheus transgressed the boundaries of the human condition. In hubris, or measureless presumption, he brought fire from the heavens and thereby doom onto himself. He was chained to a rock, an eagle preyed on his liver, and heartlessly healing gods kept him alive by regrafting the liver each night. The encounter of Prometheus with Nemesis is an immortal reminder of inescapable cosmic retribution. (p. 81)



<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



Untitled



URL <<https://www.are.na/block/169996>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013



Common to all preindustrial ethics was the idea that the range of human action was narrowly circumscribed. Technology was a measured tribute to necessity, not the implement to facilitate mankind's chosen action. In more recent times, through our inordinate attempt to transform the human condition with industrialization, our whole culture has fallen prey to the envy of the gods. Now Everyman has become Prometheus, and Nemesis has become endemic; it is the backlash of progress. We are hostage to a lifestyle that provokes doom. (p. 81)



<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/169997>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

...now that the future we expected is not working, and that we are in front of what Michel Foucault has called an "epistemic break"—a sudden image-shift in consciousness in which the unthinkable becomes thinkable. (p. 81)



<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/169998>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013



...before Cortez, a unique Indian corn seed made up of at least 150 distinct genetic strains came into existence. It was uniquely adapted to the microclimate of the area where I live. When ground into meal, the corn was the characteristic blue color of local flowers, different from those ten miles east or west of here. Religious festivals, marriage customs, ovens, and diet were shaped by that crop. Then came Dr. Bourlag's "miracle" seed, with government subsidies for fertilizer, insecticides, and fungicides. In the first few years, the fields produced fantastic returns. But then, within less than a decade, the terraces that had covered this region from pre-Columbian times, left uncultivated, were all washed out. Now, the young people here no longer work in the fields. They seek work in larger towns, repair old cars, or try to earn some money peddling household appliances. The tools and donkeys of their fathers have disappeared. These changes occurred so rapidly that the "blue corn" festivals are still celebrated. (p. 82-83)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/169999>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

Since development reduces the constraints of necessity, people must, for their own good, transform their vague and sometimes unconscious desires into "needs," which then must be fulfilled. (p. 83)



<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170000>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

"Needs" redefine "wants" as "lacks" to be satisfied by "resources." Since "wants" are boundless, resources become "scarce" because of the value "lack" places upon them. This is the basis for the insatiable demand for more. (p. 84)



<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170001>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

"Needs" are not "necessities." They are "wants" that have been redefined as claims to commodities or services delivered by professionals from outside the vernacular skills of the community. The universal appearance of "needs" during the past 30 years thus reflects a redefinition of the human condition and what is meant by "the Good Life." (p. 84)



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○ **Untitled**

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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170002>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

Sustainability without development, or subsistence, is simply living within the limits of genuinely basic needs. Shelter, food, education, community, and personal intimacy can all be met within this framework. (p. 84)

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Untitled



URL <<https://www.arenana.net/block/170003>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

I distinguish between the attitudes of hope and expectation. "Expectation" is based on a belief in instruments and the naive acceptance of socially constructed certitudes. "Hope" is based on historically rooted experience. To face the future freely, one must give up both optimism and pessimism and place all hope in human beings, not trust in tools. (p. 85)



<<https://www.arenana.net/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



Untitled



URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170004>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

Originally, utilitarianism was conceived as an attempt to give the most good to the largest number of people. Then, sometime in the 1970s, it came to mean the least pain for the largest number of people. This medical metaphor illuminates the next step: not the greatest good, nor the least pain, but the greatest pain management for the species. (p. 87)



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Untitled



URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170005>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

You must understand that the concept of ecology is deeply related to the concept of "life." "Life" cannot be understood apart from the "death of nature." (p. 87)



<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



Untitled



URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170006>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

Man, the agent of disequilibrium, projects upon himself the task of restoring equilibrium to nature. Ecological man protects "life" and defends resources from depletion. (p. 87)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170007>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

A majority of medical achievements are deceptive misnomers, actually prolonging the suffering of madmen, cripples, old fools and monsters.
(p. 89)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170009>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

I demand certain liberties—hygienic autononmy—for those who would celebrate living rather than preserve "life":

- The liberty to declare myself sick;
- the liberty to refuse any and all medical treatment at anv time;
- the liberty to take any drug or treatment of my own choosing;
- the liberty to be treated by the person of my choice, that is, by anyone in the community who feels called to the practice of healing, whether that person be an acupuncturist, a homeopathic physician, a neurosurgeon, an astrologer, a witch doctor of someone else;
- the liberty to die without diagnosis. (p. 89)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/170011>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 12/11/2013

We will never eliminate pain; we will not cure all disorders; we will certainly die. (p. 89)



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A Plea For Research On Lay Literacy



URL <<https://www.arena.na/block/168170>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 05/11/2013

University of Northern Iowa

A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy
Author(s): Ivan Illich
Source: *The North American Review*, Vol. 272, No. 3, Special Heritage Issue: The Woman Question, 1849-1987 (Sep., 1987), pp. 10-17
Published by: University of Northern Iowa
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Accessed: 04/11/2013 23:29

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Illich, I. (1987). A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy. *The North American Review*, (3), 10.

PDF: <<http://s3.amazonaws.com/arena-attachments/168170/17036f28f0b63b5071074dd9f2a86b9.pdf?1383625947>>

<<https://www.arena.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181315>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

By lay literacy I mean a symbolic fall-out from the use of Alphabet in Western cultures. I mean something quite different from clerical literacy, which consists in the ability to read and write. (p. 10)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181316>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

By lay literacy I mean a distinct mode of perception in which the book has become the decisive metaphor through which we conceive of the self and its place. (p. 10)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181317>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

I use the term lay literacy to speak of a mind frame which is defined by a set of certainties, which has spread within the realm of the Alphabet since late medieval times. The lay-literate is certain that speech can be frozen, that memories can be stored and retrieved, that secrets can be engraved in conscience and therefore examined, that experience can be described. (p. 10)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181318>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

Since the Middle Ages, the certainties that characterize the literate mind have spread, overwhelmingly, by means other than instruction in the skill of reading and writing. This is a point which should be kept present in the current discussions on illiteracy, semi-literacy and post-literacy.



The approach currently used in spreading the skill of "written communication" might actually be subversive to the literate mind. (p. 10)



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URL <<https://www.arenablock.com/block/181319>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

During the last decade, the computer has rapidly been replacing the book as the prime metaphor used to visualize the Self, its activities and its relatedness to the environment. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181320>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

Words have been reduced to "message units," speech to the "use of language," conversation to something called "oral communication," and the text from the string of sound symbols to one of (binary) "bits." (p. 11)



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Untitled



URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181321>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

I want to argue that the mental space into which literacy certainties fit, and that other mental space that is engendered by certainties about the Turing Machine are heteronomous spaces. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.arenanet.org/block/181322>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

The study of the mental space that has been generated by lay literacy seems to me a necessary step if we are to grasp the nature of that entirely different mental space which is becoming dominant in our time. And just as lay literacy is largely independent of the individual's clerical skills, so is the cybernetic mind largely independent of the individual's technical proficiency on a computer. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181323>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

So far, however, no one has attempted a history of the literate mind as distinct from clerical literacy. And it is a discouraging task. The literate mind is a phenomenon both brilliantly clear and slippery, like a jelly-fish whose features and shapes can be discerned only so long as it is observed within its own milieu. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181324>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013



The book [Deschooling Society] advocates the disestablishment of schools, in the sense in which the Church in the U.S. has been disestablished. But what I called for, was the "disestablishment of schools" for the sake of education, and here - I then noticed - lay my mistake. Much more important than the disestablishment of schools, I now saw, was the reversal of those trends which make of education a pressing need, rather than a gift of gratuitous leisure. I had begun to fear that the disestablishment of the educational church would lead to a fanatic revival of many forms of degraded education. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181325>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

I argued that the Alternative to Schooling was not some other type of educational agency, or the design of educational opportunities into every aspect of life, but a society which fosters a different attitude of people to tools. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181326>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013



...let me recall for you how I came to the study of education. I came from theology. As a theologian I specialize in ecclesiology. It constitutes the only old learned tradition - in social analysis - that distinguishes fundamentally between two entities: the visible community in which the spirit is embodied, and the quite different community which is the city or the state. This dualism is of its essence. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181327>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

Emboldened by fifteen-hundred years of ecclesiology, I saw the Church as more than a mere metaphor for the new Alma Mater. I intended increasingly to stress the fundamental continuity between the two seemingly opposed agencies: at least insofar as they define the meaning of education in successive centuries. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181328>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

Within ecclesiology the study of Liturgy has always been my favorite topic. This branch of learning deals with the role of the cult in bringing about the phenomenon of "Church." Liturgy studies how solemn gestures and chants, hierarchies and ritual objects create not only faith, but the reality of the community-as-church which is the object of this faith. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181329>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

Comparative liturgy sharpens the eye to distinguish the essential mythopoetic (myth-making) rituals from the accidents of style. So sensitized, I began to look on those things that go on within schools as parts of the Liturgy. Used to the great beauty of Christian liturgy, I was of course put off by the abject style so common in schools. (p. 11)



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URL <<https://www.are.na/block/181330>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

I then began to study the place that the liturgy of schooling holds in the social construction of modern reality, and the degree to which it has created the need for education. I began to discern the traces which schooling leaves on the mind-set of its participants. (p. 11)



<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>

Ivan Illich: deschooling, conviviality and lifelong learning



URL <<https://www.arenanet.org/block/168163>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 05/11/2013

The screenshot shows the infed.org website. The header features the 'infed' logo. Below it, there is a navigation menu with links for 'explore', 'encyclopaedia', 'activities', 'courses and events', 'debate', and 'about us'. A search bar is present with the text 'Google Custom Search'. The main content area displays the article title 'Ivan Illich: deschooling, conviviality and lifelong learning' in red and black text. Below the title is a small image of a book cover with the title 'Ivan Illich: deschooling, conviviality and lifelong learning'. The article text is partially visible, starting with 'Ivan Illich: deschooling, conviviality and lifelong learning. Known for his critique of modernization and the corrupting impact of institutions, Ivan Illich's concerns with deschooling, learning webs and the disabling effect of professions has struck a chord among many informal educators. We explore key aspects of his theory and his continuing relevance for informal education and lifelong learning.'

Ivan Illich: deschooling, conviviality and lifelong learning. Known for his critique of modernization and the corrupting impact of institutions, Ivan Illich's concerns with deschooling, learning webs and the disabling effect of professions has struck a chord among many informal educators. We explore key aspects of his theory and his continuing relevance for informal education and lifelong learning.

Source: <<http://infed.org/mobi/ivan-illich-deschooling-conviviality-and-lifelong-learning/>>

<<https://www.arenanet.org/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>

Preservation Institute: Beyond Progressive and Conservative



URL <<https://www.arenanet.com/block/168164>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 05/11/2013

The screenshot shows a webpage for the Preservation Institute. At the top, there are two landscape photos and the text "Preservation Institute - The Natural Environment - The Social Environment". Below this is a navigation menu with links like "Home Page", "What We Do", "Publications", "Public Theory", "Research, Experience and Circumstances", "Preservation Institute Blog", and "Email us!". The main content area is titled "Ivan Illich Writing on the Web". It contains a paragraph about Illich's 1970 book "Deschooling Society" and a list of links to his other works, including "Tools for Conviviality", "Energy and Equity", "Yemenite Values", "Sense & Aesthetics", "Lithuanian Medical Paraphrase", "The Rise of Home Economics", and "Tangle School, Torralba and Nuyor Span".

Ivan Illich became well known in 1970, when he published *Deschooling Society* which argued that the top-down management of schools makes students powerless - and that the same top-down management is typical of the modern, technological economy that prevents people from learning. *Tools for Conviviality* made the same criticism of technology generally.

Source: <<http://www.preservenet.com/theory/Illich.html>>

<<https://www.arenanet.com/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>



Ivan Illich



URL <<https://www.arenanet.org/block/168165>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 05/11/2013



Ivan Illich (1926 - 2002)
[Wikipedia:en:en](#)
[NY Times](#)
[Commons:en](#)
[Other:en](#)
 Ivan Illich died Monday December 2, 2002 at his home in Bremen, Germany.

- 1966 Commencement speech to U.S. students
- 1970 The Church, Change, and Development
- 1970 Theological Society
- 1971 Celebration of Awareness Issues, Faith Forum
- 1971 A Critique of the Cultural Revolution from a Celebration of Awareness
- 1973 Energy and Equity
- 1973 Faith and Community
- 1974 Medical Tyranny
- 1974 Teaching Professions
- 1987 Toward a Kinship of Needs (recording)
- 1986 Versatile, Urban, Charming, Smart
- 1981 Shadow Work
- 1982 Gender (book review)
- 1983 Silence in a Common
- 1983 Gender (book review)
- 1987 *Democracy and Faith* (pdf)
- 1988 The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel
- 1989 *From Reason to Faith* (pdf)
- 1989 *As a Child, I Remember Learning and Learning to Learn* (pdf)
- 1989 *Letter to David Margolis* (pdf)
- 1989 *The Shadow Teacher* (book review) (pdf)
- 1990 *Discussion on Soul* (pdf)
- 1990 *HEALTH CARE'S CIVIL RESPONSIBILITY...NO, THANK YOU!* (pdf)
- 1990 *The Soul* (pdf)
- 1991 *First and University...on the joys and losses of a unique institution* (pdf)
- 1991 *ALTERNATE*: Ivan Illich and Alan Sokoloff (pdf)
- 1992 *In the Mirror of the Past*
- 1992 *To Honor Nature* (pdf)
- 1993 *In the Vineyard of the Test (Graham Scrogan, Literary)* (pdf)
- 1994 *HEALTH IN NEW PERSPECTIVE: HEALTH CARE FROM SCOMB TO TOMB*
- 1995 *Death unbound - From medicine to medicalization to systematization*
- 1996 *Yes, the People, YES! A Love Illich with Amy Ripstein*
- 1996 *THE INVENTION OF A WORLD & OTHER*
- 1996 *Speech: What Speech?* (pdf)
- 1996 *Philosophy... Aesthetics... Friendship* (pdf)
- 1997 *Ivan Illich in conversation with Mark Edelman*
- 1998 *The Cultivation of Consciousness* (pdf)
- 1998 *THE SACRED, PAST, AND THE ETHICS OF THE GAZE* (pdf)
- 1999 *The Conditional Human* (pdf)
- 2000 *The Goodteacher in the Future* (pdf)
- 2000 *"The Obedient Table": Conversations Between Ivan Illich and Friends* (pdf)
- 2001 *Getting the Past in the Age of Show* (pdf)

Audio Recordings

The writing of Ivan Illich, interviews, mp3 recordings



Source: <<http://www.davidtinapple.com/illich/>>



<<https://www.arenanet.org/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>

Ivan Illich



URL <<https://www.are.na/block/168166>>
User Csaba Osvath
Date 05/11/2013

The screenshot shows a Guardian news article titled "Ivan Illich" with a sub-headline "A polymath and polemicist, his greatest contribution was as an anthropologist of ideas, rather than an ideologue". The article text discusses his death at age 76, his work in 10 languages, and his exploration of Asia and South America. It also mentions his role as a priest and his work at the Vatican. The article is dated Monday 9 December 2012 12:28 GMT. The page includes a sidebar with social media sharing options and a "Free Download" button for a "Slow Mac?" advertisement. At the bottom, there is a "The Guardian University Awards 2014" banner.

Ivan Illich, who has died of cancer aged 76, was one of the world's great thinkers, a polymath whose output covered vast terrains. He worked in 10 languages; he was a jet-age ascetic with few possessions; he explored Asia and South America on foot; and his obligations to his many collaborators led to a constant criss-crossing of the globe in the last two decades.

Source: <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/12/09/guardianobituaries.highereducation>>

<<https://www.are.na/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>

A Special Supplement: Education Without School: How It Can Be Done



URL <<https://www.arenablock.com/block/168167>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 05/11/2013

The screenshot shows the website for The New York Review of Books. The article title is "A Special Supplement: Education Without School: How It Can Be Done" by Ivan Illich, dated January 7, 1971. The article text discusses the frustration of school-registered students and teachers, and the alternative of learning through various life experiences. A sidebar on the right lists other articles from the issue, including "The Trouble with Cuban Socialism" and "The Trouble with Cuban Socialism".

In a previous article^[1] I discussed what is becoming a common complaint about schools, one that is reflected, for example, in the recent report of the Carnegie Commission: In school registered students submit to certified teachers in order to obtain certificates of their own; both are frustrated and both blame insufficient resources—money, time, or buildings—for their mutual frustration.

Source: <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1971/jan/07/a-special-supplement-education-without-school-how-/>>

<<https://www.arenablock.com/csaba-osvath/ivan-illich>>

○ The Sad Loss Of Gender

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URL <<https://www.arenablock.com/block/181332>>

User Csaba Osvath

Date 21/12/2013

AUTHOR: IVAN ILLICH

TITLE: The Sad Loss of Gender

SOURCE: New Perspectives Quarterly 15 no3 special issue 4-8 '98

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In the following comments, excerpted from a long conversation which took place at the McCormick Seminary in Chicago, we review with Illich some of the themes of Gender.

We have lost, irretrievably, a way of being human. And although there still remains, in our flesh almost, the vague presence of something which has been, I do not see how such an ephemera can be passed on to our children. Standing beyond the edge of an extraordinarily rich and varied epoch, we must now face the sad loss of gender. The epilogue of the industrial age and its chimeras may be read in this loss.

○ At the end of the 20th century, the modern myth of sexual equality has finally triumphed completely over the complementarity of gender in which the plurality of cultures -- distinct ways of living, dying and suffering -- was rooted. The reign of vernacular gender marked a profoundly different mode of existence than what prevails under what I call the regime of economic sex. They are male/female dualities of a very different kind: economic sex is the duality of one plus one creating a coupling of exactly the same kind; gender is the duality of two parts that make a whole unique, novel, nonduplicable.

○ By economic sex I mean the duality that stretches toward the illusory goal of economic, political, legal and social equality. Male and female are neutered economic agents, stripped of any quality other than the functions of consumer and worker.

○ By complementary gender I mean the eminently local and time-bound duality that sets off men and women under circumstances that prevent them from saying, doing, desiring or perceiving "the same thing."

Together they create a whole which cannot be reduced to the sum of equal, merely interchangeable parts; a whole made of two hands, each of a different nature.

Gender implies a complementarity within the world that is fundamental and closes the world in on "us," however ambiguous or fragile this closure might be. The domains of activity inside that closure -- be it child-rearing, cooking, sewing, plowing, the use of a hammer or a pot -- have a dignity and meaning, often ritually expressed or mythologically represented, and valued solely by their contribution to the subsistence of a community.

Before industrial times, no culture lacked a gender dividing line in the use of tools, although no two cultures drew that line in exactly the same way. In many pockets of rural Europe today, tools still smell of gender. In Styria, for example, men's sickles are clean-edged for cutting; women's sickles are indented and curved, made for the gathering of stalks. Animals are also tied to gender. In one area of the upper Danube, women feed cows but never the draught animals. Farther east, women milk cows that belong to the homestead, while the herd in the pastures is milked by men.

In short, each activity is embedded in a circumscribed whole. How that embeddedness is articulated defines the novel way of life of a community, what I call the "art of living" or "art of suffering" and what is commonly referred to as culture. No one is the same, or does the same thing. Men and women complement each other; nothing which is necessary for their life in society can be done by their hand alone. Discrimination has no meaning in this context.

THE ORIGINS OF DISCRIMINATION

Once gender is disembedded from the commons, and ways of doing things are transformed into scarcity-based exchanges or tasks of production meted out as the exchange of labor for pay, discrimination arises. Of everything economics measures, women get less.

Clearly, the rise of market relations, the penetration of capitalism, monetarization and commodity dependence accelerated the abolition of gender.

I believe, however, that the demise of gender preceded the rise of capitalism, dating to the middle of the 12th century in Europe. It was in the first marriage contract that we find the origins of the notion of male/female equality in the idea of bonding equal parts in a contractual couple. Before men and women took the marriage oath before God, swearing had been completely prohibited by the Church. Henceforth, God became the cement, the witness, of a bond between two individuals

broken out of the community as abstract legal entities.

This mechanization of the "thou" of the other gender ended the self-imposed limits of community and opened up the possibility of unlimited inter-marriage. Hence, the limited size of community, once imposed by gender, dissolved and the concreteness of the "we" disappeared.

That transition, in my view, was the key anthropological root of the birth of a new kind of conceptualization of human activity: society and culture as a "system" with interchangeable and substitutable parts. Also arising out of this transition was an abstract notion of the global "we," disembedded from any concrete reality and seeking the fulfillment of "needs" made scarce by a limitless domain of possibility.

By the end of the 20th century, "systems" thinking has gone so far that the main demand of the global "we" is the equal provision of the universally standard requirements for average survival -- which in its most advanced stage means biocracy: the management of human life from sperm to worm, from conception to organ harvest. All that was disembedded from a way of being in the limited community must now be managed with the result that everyone is assigned the same way of living.

FETUS AS THE CORRUPTION OF HOPE

We can see how far we've gone down the systems path by reviewing the history of the conception of the unborn.

Historically, the fetus didn't exist. It was unseen, unborn, a "not yet." Pregnancy had the same meaning in all languages: something which is there, but at the same time is not. The "not-yetness" was fundamental. When the unseen embryo developed and was born, it may have been a child, a cripple, a "molecalf" or a clump of blood.

Now, with new medical technologies, the embryo becomes a "fetus"; the "not yet" loses its mystery as we see it in the sonogram. It becomes another patient, another disconnected part of a way of being to be managed.

To me, the fetus is a symbol of the corruption of hope, just as the medicalization of dying is the corruption of agony. Hope is transformed into expectation -- the awaited results of technological intervention. We now have a new emblem of what the future will be. Every moment of existence, since it is all encompassed by the "system," is a profaned domain open to intervention.

The final step of "systems thinking" is the elimination of time itself. With real-time computers that are never shut down, all potentiality will be subject to management, choice, selection and intervention. The future will hold no surprises because it will be part of the present. [NPQ

WINTER 1990]

ADDED MATERIAL

IVAN ILLICH, the social philosopher, is author of numerous books, including *The DeSchooling of Society*, *Medical Nemesis* and *Gender*.

THE BIRTH PANGS OF ECONOMIC SEX

One story suffices to enliven my description of the birth pangs of economic sex: A Lutheran village in Württemberg bears witness to the reactions of men and women faced with the first imposition of genderless work.

Between 1800 and 1850, the unusual number of four dozen divorce proceedings were recorded in Württemberg. The historian David Sabean has tried to interpret the grounds given for the dissolutions, grounds unlike any adduced in earlier times. To understand what had occurred, he had to consider the economic transformation of the region during this period. A railroad was being built, tenancy was being altered, and most of the families were being forced from homesteading toward producing cash crops from fruit trees. Plum and apple orchards, together with the large-scale production of sugar beets, replaced diversified farms and kitchen gardens. Putting in and harvesting the cash crops proved to be more labor-intensive than homesteading had been. And the change occurred in one generation.

Women were suddenly forced to join men in men's work in order to earn enough family income to buy what had formerly been grown in the garden plot. They were also forced to work more and faster in the kitchen. The divorce proceedings reflect how deeply disturbing these innovations were for both men and women, how helpless each felt, how unable to understand the implications of their seemingly rational decisions. Women complained that men suddenly ordered them around at work, a totally new experience for them. No matter how much the gender-defined work of women might seem subordinated to that of men, the notion that men could direct women in the work itself had so far been unimaginable. Women resented the loss of domain. Women also complained that, while men had time after working at the rhythm of the plow to relax at the inn, they had to hurry back and forth between the hoe and the kitchen. Envy of a new kind, envy for the other gender's schedule and rhythm, thus appeared, an envy destined to remain as a central characteristic of modern life, an envy fully "justified" under the assumptions of unisex work but unthinkable under the shield of gender. The men, on the other hand, regularly complained that their women were inferior to their mothers: Formerly their diet had been rich and varied; now they had to eat spaezli day after day. The curtain closed on

the epoch of broken gender and conjugal coproduction. In this microcosm, we see vividly how the new script for the industrial age was to be written. For the drama to live and move, the stage had to be peopled with heterosexual actors who were also economically neutered workers.

In most versions of the modern drama, a short intermission separates gender from sex -- the reign of gender (where the household obtains its subsistence from the apportioned tasks accomplished by the sets of non-interchangeable hands) from the regime of industrial economics (where genderless hands produce commodities in exchange for pay). During this proto-industrial intermezzo, unisex work, to be performed in the home, is forced on the household. Thus, the household is transformed into a mill where gender is ground down until only sex is left. The sufferings this crushing of gender caused both men and women have gone largely unreported. Two reasons can be offered to explain this blind spot. On the one hand, the new experience of economic misery became the glue of proletarian unity. Wage labor brought a new kind of pain that annihilated women and men. All wage laborers suffered from the very same epidemic of disorientation, loneliness and dependence. These feelings brought forth political interpreters and an elite of a new class. The diagnosis of the universal woe became the career field for new professions -- educators, physicians and other social engineers -- which thrived on the production of policies, guidance and therapies. The self-interest of both the revolutionary leader and the socialization merchant precluded any attempt to understand the gender-specific pain of loss. On the other hand, the pain of impoverishment, due to the obliteration of gender, constituted something quite different in each region; few possessed a language suitable for translating the subtle vernacular varieties of this pain of loss.

IVAN ILLICH [NPQ, Winter 1990]

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Ivan Illich Talks Tools, Cybernetics, and the Good Samaritan

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User Csaba Osvath

Date 11/04/2014



This is an extract from Canadian Broadcasting's 5-hour program, The Corruption of Christianity, which featured Ivan Illich in conversation with David Cayley. It was broadcast in 2000 and is now available in recorded form from CBC.

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