

Commemorating Ivan Illich: A Roundtable of the Paulo Freire Institute, UCLA
with Drs. Carlos Alberto Torres, Douglas Kellner, and Peter McLaren

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Editor's Note: The following is a transcription of a video recording of a roundtable panel discussion with Drs. Carlos Alberto Torres, Douglas Kellner and Peter McLaren that was held in early 2003 for the commemoration of Ivan Illich, after his death. The recording was not of the best quality, and the transcribers have indicated in red text where their transcription was based on particularly difficult to hear passages and have utilized extended periods (.....) where accurate transcription was deemed unfeasible. This transcription is provided as a scholarly gift only, and readers are hereby notified that the transcription has not been officially certified by those presenting and does not therefore constitute a definitive and official text.

Octavio Pescador: ...to commemorate the life of Ivan Illich, who ironically—I'm from Mexico originally—from Mexico City originally, one hour from Cuernavaca, where he was based. He was a Catholic, a Roman Catholic priest who was stationed, or assigned to the Cuernavaca area and after a while of criticism, after a while in the late 60's or 70's he started criticizing the church itself, and he was, he ended up voluntarily, so to speak, stepping out of the church and the priesthood. He was a magnificent man who I must admit I didn't know a lot about, and that is why I mention the Mexico connection, because I had him so close. I wasn't an intellectual age at that stage and didn't have the initiative to visit and get to know him, but to have these great scholars here with us, and I now have the intellectual initiative to rub shoulders with these colleagues, so I'll let the masters take over. We're going to have a brief discussion on, starting with Doug on *Tools for Conviviality*...but preceded by Carlos's introduction to Illich's biography, and then Carlos will present, following Doug, an analysis of Illich's work in the context of Freire's work. I'm confident that Peter will be making some comments after the two presentations. That is our program and I hope you enjoy the discussion.

Carlos Alberto Torres: It's a privilege to be in the company of my friends and colleagues, Peter and Doug. This is the kind of work that I appreciate very much doing. There are a number of reasons that would justify a lecture on Illich including terms about friendship. But, let me start by saying this is a roundtable, but of course with the complexity of academic life, we have not a roundtable here, but this is a roundtable. So, the presentation will be quite informal, we want to elicit some kind of conversation. I know that we all look very good physically, we look very young and very athletic, but the truth is that—and before I never thought of this in these terms—but the truth is looking at how young some of you are, this is a model of transmitting the culture from the older generation to the newer generation, because in a way, Illich was part of our growing up into an intellectual age and a political age in the time of the '60s. In many different ways, for us, this is to revisit our own youth. So, you can imagine, this is not a detached model of analysis, but pretty much part of our own bio. With that preliminary comment, I would like to say that Ivan Illich was born September 4, 1926 in Vienna, Austria. He was the first born of a very difficult pregnancy of his mother, Helena. When he was born, the doctor said he had no time to live so prepare for the worst. His father was a civil engineer and both of them of two different fields. The mother came from a Jewish background, the father from a Catholic background. In the Austrian model, the newborn child has to be blessed by the grandfather. So he was immediately taken, even though he was in critical condition, and he may die, three or four days later he was taken to the mountain coast where the grandfather lived so the father could bless the child just in case he was going to die. But he continued living, and for those of you who like trivia, he was born in the same year that the famous Catalan architect, Antonio Gaudi died, and of course the famous French painter Claude Monet died. He lived in Vienna until 1941. He was classified by the Nazis as a half Aryan, therefore there was a problem with the other half, he was a Jew. And when the Nazi model began to be more stringent he moved with his mother and his two brothers to Italy and lived at the age of 15 in Florence and Rome. His secondary school took place in Florence in Leonardo da Vinci Lycee, where he graduated in 1942. He began early on to demonstrate his proficiency in languages. The last time I counted he had mastered 20 languages, including Hindi, after spending six months in India, where he was following the path of Gandhi. Actually, he wrote a very interesting meditation on Buddha when Gandhi was killed. He possessed a photographic memory that allowed him to retain names and dates with extreme accuracy. He studied natural sciences with a specialty in inorganic chemistry and crystallography at the University of Florence from 1942 to 1947, and

at the University of Rome from 1945 to 1947. From 1944 to 1947, he also studied philosophy in the University of Rome. At the time he also studied Latin, obtaining summa cum laude. And between 1947 and 1951, theology, at the same university, obtaining cum laude. Then he obtained a PhD in history at the University of Salzburg in Austria with a thesis on Arnold Toynbee. He finally conducted post-doctoral studies in Princeton on *Macro-Micro Cosmos* of Saint Alberto Magno, who was a professor of science...and put forth the first theories in the Catholic Church that recognized Aristotle in the Christian teachings. Ordained as a Catholic priest, Illich was originally destined to have a diplomatic career in the Vatican, but he refused, accepting in the early '50s a position as assistant priest from 1951 to 1956 in the Church of the Incarnation in the upper west side of New York, a neighborhood pregnant with tensions between the traditional Irish Catholics and the new flow of Puerto Rican Catholics. He took sides with the Puerto Ricans, it was announced in the *Times*. He reported to the famous Cardinal Spellman, who as we all know was particularly involved with politics in Latin America in the '60s. Then, in 1956, as a result of his many problems in New York, he was sent to the Catholic University of Santa Maria in Puerto Rico, as vice rector, vice chancellor, where he spent several years learning a lot of Latin America...he perfected his Spanish and then, he returned to New York, in 1956, to create and form the Center for Intercultural Formation, and then changed to Intercultural Training, while he was also professor of sociology in the department of sociology. In this particular condition, he trained missionaries to learn Spanish and to understand the Latin American culture that they would be working with. In 1961, he created in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on the eve of second Vatican Council, the CIDOC (Centro Intercultural de Documentación), the Center for Intercultural Documentation. It was originally a center devoted to the [...] Catholic Church from the changes brought about by the Vatican counsel. Influenced by the radical American educator, Everett Reimer, author of the best seller, *School is Dead*, Illich became concerned with educational change. CIDOC was a continuation of [...] training missionaries and teaching Spanish, discussing the role of churches in Latin America. There he brought together people like Paul Goodman, Erich Fromm, who wrote a very famous preface to *Celebration of Awareness*, one of the main books of Illich.

He also invited Paulo Freire, whom he met in Cuernavaca, when he was teaching. He invited Peter Berger that many of you know that he started on the left and then moved “somewhere else.” And, of course, he invited Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo, who was the most important Mexican bishop connected with liberation theology. They produced

something called “Cuadernos de CIDOC,” CIDOC notebooks that were the first publications of Illich in which many of his ideas were first disseminated. His orientation was critical of modernization, and it was critical of the role of the Catholic Church, as Octavio mentioned. In 1967, CIDOC and Illich were censored by the Vatican and he responded by leaving the priesthood. CIDOC closed their door in 1976. As a personal biographical note, I was really sad to learn this because CIDOC closed the door around March of 1976, and I arrived in Mexico in October of 1976, and one of my main goals was to go visit with Ivan Illich in Cuernavaca but he was already gone. But to those of you who like to follow up on this and a lot of the material here, for people interested in the origins of radical education and the connection with Latin America, all of the archives of CIDOC are presently in the public holdings of *El Colegio de Mexico*. So you can consult all of the material, mostly in Spanish, but many of them in English. In his book of conversation with David Cayley, he tells the story of how he decided to work and create a collective amount of money, the equivalent of a year’s salary for each of the sixty-three employees of CIDOC; and when that amount was reached, they closed the institution. He wanted a full year of severance pay for each employee. He explained the economics of CIDOC in the following way. He never took any money from the government. He never accepted any contributions from corporations or individuals. He worked strictly on market disparities. He charged the students, coming mostly from the U.S., U.S. fees, and paid the teachers, coming mostly from Mexico, better than Mexican fees. But the disparity was so immense that [...]. The other thing that he did in CIDOC, which is quite amazing, is the following. His model was not to put together a number of courses for people to take. CIDOC was a hub.

People in the U.S., particularly people connected to the kind of thing that we do now, as it was done at the time, would like to take a course—let’s say, “I want to take a course on *School is Dead*.” Alright, so I send my resume, I am a student and want to take a course on the *School is Dead*, and I’m prepared to pay the fees. So, Illich would receive these letters and say, “Oh, we have five people who want to take a course on the *School is Dead* and the person who wrote that book is Everett Reimer. So, Everett, would you like to teach it?” Everett would say, “Yes, I would like to teach it.” So, the five students and Everett Reimer would get together and spend three to four weeks discussing exactly that subject. When you go and look—and I presume it would be well defined by Doug next—when you go to the notion of deschooling, he is talking about that model at the world level, describing what is now known as the Internet. So that was the way it worked. After CIDOC, he decided not to

stay in one place, he would become what he calls himself, an errant pilgrim. He said, “I am errant pilgrim...one that was caught between the contesting power of Byzantium and Venice.” Obviously not Venice, California...

His 70th birthday found him teaching at the University of Bremen in Germany. His course on common sense of proportionality in the lifetime of Locke, Leibniz and Johann Sebastian Bach. He was contrasting the long history of Western *philia* (of friendship) in his semester course that he had been teaching since 1991 in Bremen, but had taught before in Kassel, Berlin, Marburg and Oldenburg. He received on March 14, 1998, the Culture and Peace Prize of Bremen, which is only given to citizens of Bremen. This was the first time it was given to somebody who was not residing in Bremen, or was not a citizen of Bremen—and Illich pronounced a discourse entitled, “The Cultivation of Conspiracy,” one of the most beautiful pieces I have read in my life, which I found absolutely delightful. It is an attempt to link linguistics and the history of languages, trying to explain the connection between the subjects of peace and hospitality and friendship. Ivan Illich passed away December 2, 2002 in Bremen, Germany.

Douglas Kellner: Thanks to Carlos for an excellent overview of Ivan Illich’s life and thanks to Octavio and the Paulo Freire Institute for organizing this symposium so that we can pay tribute to Ivan Illich, who is one of the heroes of some of us in the 1960s, because he was *the* radical critic of education. Today we take Paulo Freire as the guy who is sort of the godfather of critique of the current organization of schooling and education, particularly in the Western countries and the author who has the radical alternative pedagogy. But in the 1960s and early ‘70s, I think it’s fair to say, Illich was *the* prominent figure. As Carlos mentioned, Paul Goodman, Erich Fromm, a lot of the radical thinkers from the whole world went down to Cuernavaca and together they developed critiques of schooling and industrial society, and developed alternatives. But today, it seems—and this is in some ways shameful or sad—he seems to be almost forgotten in some radical educational circles. But I was interested to see that he still lives on the Web. There are several websites that have some of his major books. In fact, the entirety—as is indicated in this bibliography—of the two texts that I am going to be talking about, *Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality*, you can get the entire books on the Web as well as a lot of articles and speeches and other talks that he gave. So there is a tremendous amount of material.

So, there are two things that, in remembering Ivan Illich, I think are most important.

First of all it's his critique of the industrial system of education and schooling, and secondly, his radical alternative. What I found most interesting in looking back at his critique was how he placed the critique of schooling in terms of a critique of modern industrial civilization, where he argued that schooling is basically an institution for reproducing the system of industrial civilization. This is anticipating what later became known in academic circles as reproduction theory, that schools are reproducing the industrial society. He came up with this notion of the *hidden curriculum* of schooling, which is to basically get people socialized into fitting into and participating in the industrial system. Just think of the architecture of schools and how they are like factories; like you punch into work, and sort of punch into school. Work is organized in hours. Literally, you work for 4 hours, and maybe a lunch break, and then maybe an afternoon break. So, everything is time segmented and organized, and that is the way school is, according to time, etc. The workplace is obviously competitive and hierarchical. In schools you compete for grades. There are teachers, there are students, honor students, etc. So the hidden curriculum of schooling is basically to produce citizens and workers for the industrial society. The problem with industrial society for Illich is that it's massified, alienating, and it's destroying the earth. He was one of the first to bring ecological perspectives that industrial production is basically producing so much waste, wasting resources, producing overpopulation, that it's creating ecological crisis. And schooling is also massifying and thus Illich critiques mass society that has the same curriculum for people of certain ages. So he was critiquing schooling.

Today, I just did a seminar on Rousseau, for my philosophy of education class, and it's a fairly similar critique that Rousseau did that real learning is individual, it's to cultivate the capacities that different individuals have, that education should produce better individuals—citizens—it should promote social justice. So all of this is part of what Ivan Illich called for in *Deschooling*. He wanted to create what he called “webs of learning” and “tools for conviviality” that would cultivate both genuine learning and a more democratic and just society. It's interesting that this notion of webs of learning anticipated the Internet so that we could now have Illichean, sort of, schools of learning Illich by going to the Internet, having seminars or study groups or just reading and discussing among ourselves some of his ideas. There is actually some of this on the Internet, where you can go to different philosophy sites, Marxism sites, or feminism sites, or literary sites, and you can reach out to communities that share your interests and have discussions of books or go to Internet sites for ideas for free, or in a decommodified way. So, in an interesting way, he anticipates the Internet. The

older Illich though became critical of it because it became used not so much for learning and for webs of learning and community, but was used by corporations to sell products, and thus became like television; it became sort of corporate and massified. But I think there are some ideas in Illich—and also Paulo Freire—that show how we could use the media, the Internet and technology as tools of conviviality. By conviviality, he meant not just feeling good, but creating social and convivial relationships and community. He thought that was the way learning should take place. Carlos gave a good description of his school where people came, like-minded individuals who study topics of mutual interest and try to make education more of an instrument of social change and justice. So, in a time that people thought that maybe the schools were going to be the solution to the problems of society, Illich thought that schools were part of the problem, that we need to radically reconstruct and democratize schools to make them genuine instruments of learning, and that in industrial societies schooling is more akin to hidden curricula to reproduce industrial society rather than to genuinely promote learning or social community.

Illich also became very critical of the modern system of medicine, which he also thought had been taken over by bureaucrats. For him, in a certain way, everyone should be concerned with health and learn about medicine. We should be our own, and each others', doctors and he felt similarly about teaching. And here I think is the connection with Paulo Freire that we should create communities where we learn from each other through discussion, through debate, through setting up these webs of learning. So, at this point I think I am going to conclude since Carlos wants to talk about Paulo Freire. I guess my concluding thought—it would be a mistake to make Illich *the* great critic and prophet of a new education. We need to see how we can learn from both Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, but also people like Rousseau or John Dewey, or certain feminist theories of education. There's not just one great prophet or great text or source of radical ideas, but we need to see how we can use a variety of these different thinkers. I think its unfortunate that Illich has been forgotten to the extent that he has and I think it would be very healthy to go back and study and read him and bring him back to see the ways he does connect with critics like Paulo Freire, and also to see some of the differences. These can be some of the topics that we can discuss today.

Torres: Thank you very much, Doug. I would like to follow up on Doug's comments on Illich and mention Freire and then try to give ways for Peter to frame his analysis as well and response. I am glad that Douglas mentioned that Illich's critique of industrialization

represents a different extension of the version of the Frankfurt School critique of technical rationalization. I have said that in the book with Raymond Morrow. And I think that he was particularly looking at welfare services. If you really look at the kind of critique he does, he has a critique of *service* industries. That is interesting because he doesn't critique all of the industries, but service industries in particular. This notion of critique on industrial rationality borrows from other areas: the progressivist school, the free school, and what I would call the Italian anarchist traditions. And there is a bit of rubbing shoulders with Freire on the new Italian thought, for a number of reasons that I don't have time to discuss in the formal dissertation, but will have time to discuss in the conversation. One of the other elements in Illich, very well outlined by Doug, is the critique of science. But the critique of science is also rooted in critical theory and rooted in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno. In that regard, he is really an appropriation and extrapolation of Adorno and Horkheimer's own science. And on professionalization. And if you want to compare, there is an interesting strand of critique of professionalization in Weber that then goes into Collins. So if you look at Weber, Collins, and Illich, there is an interesting similarity in the critique of professionalization. Morrow and Torres, and I am sorry to talk about my own work with Morrow, we call Illich's theory a "class-bureaucratic reproductive model" because it really focuses on how the service industry, the science, and the professionalization really have a class underpinning. And in this area, he really joins Herbert Marcuse. Once again, in this room there probably is nobody that knows more about Herbert Marcuse than Douglas, who is in fact in charge of the continual publication of some of Marcuse's manuscripts. Marcuse is one of my great intellectual heroes as well. And Marcuse has done two books, one in 1959, its called *Soviet Marxism*, in which he really smashed the whole Marxist model, the notion of industrialization, [reification, [...], and the whole established process]. And then, in 1964, if I am not mistaken, he comes back with another book which is kind of—how can I put this—it is the other side of the coin, which is the *One Dimensional Man*, in which he does similar devastating criticism of U.S. capitalist development. When he was teaching in San Diego he was a kind of ruler and when he was talking, if he were to be talking here, there would be people really hanging on the windows just to listen to him. He was the prophet of the 1960s in this country. And of course, this *One Dimensional Man* is important, but the interesting thing about Illich—I'd like to emphasize this—was that he was never negative.He would speak about negative things but also talk about tools for conviviality, convivial institutions, he was looking for a way out. He saw the dimension[...], but he didn't want to succumb to the [one-]dimension and say

there is no way out. New forms of educational institutions, the idea of the Internet, the idea of communist schools, people coming together, communities sharing knowledge. Tools, this is a beautiful term that he used. It's synonymous with Max Weber's instrumental rationalization, and it incorporates the Marxian problematic of Frankfurt theorists. And I will quote him, where he says, "I use the term 'tool' broadly enough to include not only simple hardware...and not just large machines. I also include among tools productive institutions such as factories that produce tangible commodities...and productive systems for intangible commodities such as those which produce 'education,' 'health,' knowledge,' or 'decisions.' I use this term because it allows me to subsume into one category all rationally designed devices, be they artifacts or rules, codes or operators, and to distinguish all of these planned and engineered instrumentalities from other things such as basic food or implements, which in a given culture are not deemed to be subject to rationalization." He is thinking of how to reconceptualize this process that he is finding himself enmeshed. But of course he was criticized and one of the criticisms is that he is a form of conservative Christian anarchist.

Let me read a criticism from Levine, who says (now very quickly): "Ivan Illich's call for institutional transformation is the demand of a true cultural revolutionary. It is *revolutionary* because it demands nothing less than the total revision of society; it is *cultural* because it argues that the revolution must begin with the transformation of individual consciousness. In a way, Illich fits perfectly Henry Adams' description of himself as a... 'conservative Christian anarchist': *conservative* because it is the humanistic image of man which he is trying to conserve; *Christian* because he posits a natural order to show limits man must not trespass; and *anarchist* because he insists that the individual become the master of his own life." Here again another interesting overlapping with the work of Freire. Now, in the U.S., Illich was subject of very few of those devastating, unkind attacks. I will mention just one. Herbert Gintis, in a much discussed document—if I'm not mistaken Peter, tell me if I'm wrong, probably about 1976/77—he comes out with an article entitled "Against Illich," in which he just (in Spanish we would say ..., there was no puppet with their head's on). Alright, and in fact many of the criticisms of Gintis are ... misplaced.

Freire himself engaged in an inimitable exchange with Illich, distancing himself from his thesis, thinking that if I say the word "conscientization" you associate that word with Freire, if I say the word "deschooling" you associate that word with Illich, but when people were learning and when they were studying in their beginning as scholars, everyone would talk about conscientization and deschooling as the same thing! And to call them the same

word...they are not; and Freire tried to take exception. I must say, ... , I'm going to read something I wrote in 1980, and I quote Freire. It is published but only for a quick translation here now, a little bit imprecise. And he takes distance from Illich—this is a conversation with Illich with Freire that was published in Buenos Aires in 1975 in a very interesting book called *Buildings of the Objects* (Illich and Freire, what a nice title, *Building of the Objects*). And I don't know if you realize that it has a theological underpinning because the prophets are those that come back to us to remind us of the objects of the coming of the Messiah. So the *The Building of the Objects*, which is the title that both of them accepted ... is the title of this conversation. In this moment, in this book, there is a moment in which Freire said "There is this moment in which certain thinkers, let's call them social scientists who are dedicated as such to education, are questioning *all* educational systems and insisting effectively that we don't really have to lose our time investigating the systems ... the products that they are throwing out, they are products that are deforming reality instead of reforming reality. If the question they are asking me is that of Ivan Illich, I would have a critique of Illich—and that Illich is a genial man; in the next 50 years, an historian of the culture or of education has to say Illich existed undoubtedly. But we don't have to wait 50 years to make a fundamental critique of Illich. When he suggests all the problem is (solved by) 'deschooling,' in my opinion, in my judgment he falls into an error. He denies constantly to discuss the ideological question, and it is precisely for that reason because in my judgment he cannot understand the totality of the phenomenon that he is analyzing. In my judgment, only by analyzing the ideological force that is behind the school as a social institution can I understand *what it is, but what it could stop being*. And even in a country that has made its revolution, the school continues for a long time repeating the same old school. The scientific explanation of this is what ... called the dialectic of the sovereign determination." (Which by the way is invoking ... Althusser. So Freire is drawing from Althusser to criticize Illich. How interesting.) "That is the old superstructure of society that was changed continued to preserve itself in contradiction with the new infrastructure that is being constituted. During a long time this contradiction between superstructure and infrastructure continues, and as I said universities and schools...are ideological. They are really enterprises. They are manufacturing ideologies. What happened is that systematic education (Freire said) is the last to fall, the last bastion of the old society to fall. In the first place, it is not school that changes society." Though I must confess Illich, after he wrote *Deschooling*, he wrote another book called *And After Deschooling, What?* in which he said exactly what Freire is accusing him of not to have said.

“In the first place it is not the school that changes society, but the society which changes school and it seems that they are dialectically intertwined. Secondly, there are however areas that are non-neutral of course that could and ought to be analyzed and studied today and when I understand the moments of activism in a society, I must confess I have tremendous fear of activism.” Which of course is the fear of criticism that Illich in his constant criticism was just doing an activism or criticism without providing solutions. Perhaps quite an unkind criticism by Freire of Illich.

Let me conclude by giving Illich the last word. For those of you who come from a Christian tradition, my apologies to all of you who don't and I do, in the Christian tradition there is a peculiar subtradition that is the monastic tradition. It is very important because there were the monasteries that kept this connection between the early history of Europe and the Renaissance. The Middle Ages were built around the monasteries but the monasteries that translated the original texts from Greek into the vernacular languages were the monasteries that in the context in the modernization of Europe they preserved this “Western culture.” The monasteries were a site for reflection, of thinking, of the preservation of culture, for inspiration. Illich, in so many places that I stopped counting, defined himself as a monk. He said, “I am ascetic.” And you look at him and Illich was very, very—in Spanish you would say “delgado”—thin; he was very ascetic, even in his personality. And he said that he dedicated his life to the life of the spirit as an ascetic monk—he said that several times. He dedicated to contemplation that extended to the knowledge of the spirit...to the East with his passage to India, and he dedicated to his life to study as a scholar but as a rapt pilgrim, as a . He sometimes called himself a “... monk,” which is very much part of the famous...which were monks that never could confined themselves to march, they were just walking and walking and walking (around in circles) and they would keep their own work, in terms of philosophy and theology, by talking with themselves as they were walking. He considered a 12th century monk, Hugh de St. Victor, his teacher. And then, if you follow Hugh of St. Victor you will connect with St. Benedict of Norcia, who was a monk who lived from 480 to 547, who was considered the founder of Western monasticism. He was the co-patron of Europe—Benedict was, because of Benedictine (order)...so the monks were in groups that they had to follow and essentially all the monks of the world had to follow the Benedictine rule, which by the way includes work. You pray, you work, and you meditate. And your work had to be practical work. And in the history of Italy the Benedictine monks are credited with the first Renaissance of the culture of Italy because of the work outside the convents. But

then St. Benedict gave another advice. He said monks thrive on good humor. And if you read Illich, particularly in the last 10 or 15 years after he stopped writing books and he wrote more essays, there is a lot of sarcasm. There is a lot of humor in his work. And there is another comment from St. Benedict which is friendship—you have to thrive on friendship, particularly if you don't talk because many of the **Dominican orders don't talk within the cloisters of the monastery**. And I think that Illich took very seriously this monastic ethics in looking at friendship as one of the key attitudes **of a good scholar, even one that he would investigate**.

Let me give him the last word – he's speaking of friendship and the quest for truth as displayed in his wonderful speech accepting the peace award of Bremen, *The Cultivation of Conspiracy*. Let me conclude with Illich, and I quote:

“Learned and leisured hospitality is the only antidote to the stance of deadly cleverness that is acquired in the professional pursuit of objectively secured knowledge. I remain certain that the quest for truth cannot thrive outside the nourishment of mutual trust flowering into a commitment to friendship. Therefore I have tried to identify the climate that fosters and the “conditioned” air that hinders the growth of friendship.

Of course I can remember the taste of strong atmospheres from other epochs in my life. I have never doubted—and it's even more true today—that a ‘monastic’ ambience is the prerequisite to the independence needed for an historically based indictment of society. Only the gratuitous commitment of friends can enable me to practice the ascetism required for modern near-paradoxes, such as renouncing systems analysis while typing on my Toshiba.”

Now I would like to turn to another good friend, Peter, for his comments, and after Peter's takes we'll open up our presentation.

Peter McLaren: Well these were very spirited and ordained commentaries on Illich. I am basically going to respond in the context of racism and fascism rather than specifically critiquing the discussion that has preceded me. I first became aware of Ivan Illich's work during Friday night seminars at The Coach House that belonged to Marshall McLuhan...I don't know if it belonged to him at that time, but he spoke out of The Coach House; it was a center in Toronto. And, I remember attending the lectures of McLuhan and Illich's name coming up quite a few times, but I was a graduate student at the time and I was having trouble just fathoming McLuhan and trying to understand his hippy axioms about media (and

medium is the message and massage) and I didn't have time at that point to follow up on a lot of secondary sources. But that's when I first heard the name Ivan Illich and I remember also I guess it was 1988 or 1989, I was asked to be the outside reader for a dissertation by David Gabbard, who is a professor who was looking at Ivan Illich and Michel Foucault. It struck me as a little strange because I hadn't followed Illich's work very much, and here was Gabbard making an argument that Illich needs to be revived and revitalized in the field of education. I think he published that dissertation as a book.¹ I may even have it in my office somewhere. But what struck me as rather strange was when about five years ago when I was editing a series with two colleagues, Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg, I was doing the series with Westview Press. They dropped the series after about a year claiming that a series about education really wasn't that profitable so they decided to drop the series. But, I remember we were trying to convince a number of publishers about publishing Illich's recent work, so over the last five, six, seven years. And this was basically a project that was headed by Shirley Steinberg, and Shirley said "Nobody's interested in publishing Ivan Illich." He was going to Penn State for two or three months at a time and Joe Kincheloe, who is Shirley's husband, was teaching at Penn State and that's where Joe and Shirley got to meet Illich. Illich was really excited about getting some of his more recent work published. Shirley made some inquiries around the publishing industry and there was very, very little interest. And that I found telling. It tells you more about educational publishing than it does anything else.

So, I have basically have just written a series of questions. You may feel that some of these questions are irrelevant or too arcane and that's fine. But some, you may want to pick up on, so let me just sort of read them in a random order. I wrote down while listening to Carlos and to Doug—I wrote down this question: From a man seemingly obsessed by the Rabbinical and monastic Christian tradition, what do his ideas have to offer to the Enlightenment tradition, specifically I understand his connection with Marcuse, Erich Fromm, the Frankfurt School of Western Marxism, and I know about Marcuse's book attacking soviet Marxism, but I am wondering (and I am just wondering this out of ignorance) to what extent Illich himself dealt with Soviet Marxism directly, or Marx for instance, and Freud. I mean you talk about the Enlightenment tradition and you look at the Frankfurt School, did Illich in a sense see himself as a kind of shadow, this isn't a pun on his *Shadow Work* though, but as a kind of shadow figure? How did he respond to the Frankfurt School, did he want to become part of it, did he see himself as having any kind of allegiance

¹ Name of the book

to it intellectually and theoretically? Carlos gave a fascinating account of Illich's circle and his colleagues—many of whom I know—and I was actually reading on the web about Illich wanting to die among his close friends in the new institute that he was planning and wasn't able to realize that goal, unfortunately. I met Illich only once, by the way, at an AERA convention. He came and spoke in a ballroom. Maybe some of you were there. I can't remember the details. I remember his talk was very arcane and I remember the discussion afterwards, like "What did he say?" "What was he talking about?" (Laughter.) Among the educators that were assembled. I find it quite fascinating, and I think I recall some of the details, it was basically kind of a linguistic analysis.

[Possible recording lapse here.]

Illich's stress on individuality is almost a stress on hyper individuality, in my sense, and people, critics, often associate individuality with liberal democratic parliamentary consensus. And, of course, when I look at the kind of incipient utopianism in Illich's work, I see some connection between his notion of individualism and Marx's notion of freely associated labor. And I am just wondering what complex reaction that might be? Now, how does his concept of de-commodification fit into a larger pedagogy of liberation? I think that was something that I was provoked to ask when Doug was reading. I think Carlos answered that question to a certain extent by talking about the limitations of Illich's overall problematic. I mean in a sense he really was a pilgrim of the obvious ... **he was a kind of radical monument**. And he really didn't seem to have larger political project other than to sort of critique the excesses of what had already transpired both in terms of society, culture and politics, etc. So my question would be: What do you think Illich's vision of social transformation was? And what were the essential differences, just as a summary, between Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire? It's interesting because when I was a graduate student in Toronto 1979 to about 1982, I recall many discussions about Illich and Freire. And Freire was always singled out. Now beyond the obvious answer that educators were more invested in Freire, because if they were invested in Illich they'd be out of a job, what were the essential differences between Freire and Illich? Freire has also been critiqued or challenged on the question whether or not he was really a pedagogue of post-revolution or the pre-revolution. The critique has largely been that Freire was a pedagogue after the revolution; I am thinking of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; to what extent did he join Ivan Illich, if at all, in that perspective. Now, I am just going to stop here in a moment, but I wanted to comment a little bit on Illich's connection with Hugh the Saint and I actually have a little bit of

quotation. Hugh of St. Victor. And he wrote this, this was actually taken an interview with Jerry Brown in 1996, and they spent a lot of time, Jerry Brown and Ivan Illich, talking about love. And Brown began to read this letter, and Illich decided to finish the letter to Jerry Brown, and it started like this (but this is the goodly saint speaking here): "To my dear brother Ronolfe from Hugh, a sinner. Love never ends. When I first heard this I knew it was true. But now, dearest brother, I have the personal experience of fully knowing that love never ends. For I was a foreigner. I met you in a strange land. But that land was not really strange for I found friends there." And Illich interrupts Brown and says, "It's so beautiful" This is an actual radio broadcast and Brown actually continues, and he says: "But the land was really not strange for I found friends there, I don't know whether I first made friends or it was made one, but I found love there and I loved it. I could not tire of it. For it was sweet in me. And I filled my heart with that name. I was sad that my heart could hold so little. I could not taken all if there was, but I took in as much as I could. I filled up all the space I had, but I could not fill it all. I found so. I accepted what I couldn't weight down with this precious gift. I didn't feel any burden, because my heart sustained, and now I had made a long journey, I found my heart still warm, and none of the gifts were lost, for love never ends." And Illich breaks in and goes, "Isn't that a marvelous little letter?" and ... decides to respond to this.

He said, this is Ivan Illich, "that I cannot come to be fully human unless I have received myself as a gift and accepted myself as a gift of somebody who has, well today we say distorted me the way you distorted me by loving me. Now, friendship in the Greek tradition, in the Roman tradition, in the old tradition, was always viewed as the highest point which virtue can reach. Virtue meaning here the habitual facility of doing the good thing which is fostered by what the Greeks called *politaea*, political life, community life. I know it was a political life in which I wouldn't have liked to participate," [this is what I find very interesting] "with the slaves around and with the women excluded, but I still have to go to Plato or to Cicero. They conceived of friendship as a flowering, a supreme flowering of the interaction which happens in a good political society. This is what makes long experience so painful with you that every time we are together you make me feel most uncomfortable about my not being like you. I know it's not my vocation. It's your vocation. Structuring community and society in a political way. But I do not believe that friendship today can flower out, can come out, of political life. I do believe that if there is something like a political life to be, to remain for us, in this world of technology, then it begins with friendship. Therefore my task is to cultivate disciplined, self-denying, careful, tasteful friendships. Mutual friendships

always. I and you and I hope a third one, out of which perhaps community can grow. Because perhaps here we can find what the good is. To make it short, while once friendship in our western tradition was the supreme flower of politics I do think that if community life if it exists at all today it is in some way the consequence of friendship cultivated by each one who initiates it. This is of course a challenge to the idea of democracy which goes beyond anything which people usually talk about, saying each one of you is responsible for the friendships he can develop because society will be as good as the political result of these friendships will be.”

So it’s interesting because, on the one hand, I would like to compare this to the, and I’m not going to but I’d like to ask the presenters today if they could collaborate a little bit on this, that concept of friendship grounded in love, the notion of community grounded in love, what comparisons or differences might Illich’s perspective play out with Freire’s notion or the notion of, we all know, Che Guevara? So here are three very different figures who have all talked about the centrality of love, and what are the differences that might obtain among these three personages? Now it suggests to me that Illich really in some fundamental way focused on a kind of ethics—the world is grounded in ethics. Marx we know in course in some ways disdained the concept of ethics. He was mainly focusing on relations of production, ...worker organization, out of which could follow the possibility of community. The possibility of community could not exist unless the social relations of production were such that alienated labor would not be able to exist. Illich seems to be grounded in the concept of love—which almost takes the reverse notion—that a society can only grow and flourish if we begin with the principle of love. Very different emphases and I am just curious to know what our presenters would think about that.

Torres: Well, thank you very much Peter. I don’t know how to proceed because Peter gave a host of extraordinary good questions. He *added* his own interpretation, with which I concur, on a number of facets of Illich. We have many things on the table. Maybe, Douglas would you like to respond...*to do something like that...and then we open up our conversation with all of us here; because maybe it can give us more than just food for thought, some indications of how to...*

Kellner: Both Peter and Carlos in their presentations answered or clarified questions that were sort of going in my mind. That is: what are the differences between Freire and Illich, as

well as what is the kinship and the similarities? I thought that both Peter and Carlos helped me see the differences with Illich being more sort of monastic, more a Christian communitarian, his alternative coming out of communities of friendship and love. And Paulo Freire being more of an activist, someone involved in political communities that involved in projects like reforming the state and actually developing alternative systems of education in Brazil. Carlos has written books about that. I would argue though that we don't need to do either/or, but if we could combine both of these sorts of projects we would get further ahead. But also as a response to Carlos; I am suggesting a dialogical mediation and a synthesis, I think Paulo Freire in some ways was being unfair in criticizing Ivan Illich for not seeing the foundation of the bourgeoisie capitalist education system that are schools of ideology. I think that they are both instruments to reproduce industrial society through the hidden curriculum. I agree with Peter that this phrase that is used by many different people, I found it in re-reading Ivan Illich, I've forgotten myself where it come from. But Illich's book was written in late 60s and early 70s, *Deschooling Society*, analyzed how the structure or the form of schools, like the architecture of schools, the organization according to periods, and subjects, etc. So I would basically argue it's the form and the content of schools that basically reproduces both in terms of social relations and in terms of ideology, and its combining both of these to critique schooling that is Illich's important contribution. But also for the alternatives that we both need to figure out how we can have alternative education institutions in our communities, like the Paulo Freire Institute. But also how we can reconstruct bigger institutions, whether it's UCLA or public schools, or develop alternatives on all of these levels. So I thought that the differences were productively presented in your presentations and that our challenge is the mediation and the synthesis.

Torres: I agree, **I think it occurs to me that this experience of getting** two different courses together in the same environment inviting other distinguished professors to join us to inspire some commentaries, the idea of creating the Paulo Freire Institute as a site of political activism, as a site of research outside, as a site of community gathering of sorts. Our own initiatives pertain to the richest tradition of academia. It is this notion of the sponsoring of curiosity. We could not develop scholarship if we are not curious, and I think in a sense, Freire defined himself as a very curious child when he was young. Asking questions to his parents for answers. Illich defined himself as a very curious individual. And in many different ways, the genealogy of Illich **...goes** in many different places. He was extremely conversant

with languages, with histories, with stories; he was very conversant with technologies. He was very conversant with different service industries. In a way, his mind never ceased to jump from one area to another area, to **entertain** what was really the great contribution to conviviality So he created broad strokes, a set of challenges to himself and to many others that try to follow him. Freire, in many different ways, concentrated on education **first about education and then on the individual, and** at the same time he was an activist. And Freire was politically very astute. **I think the way I would read this criticism of Illich is written in a code. The code I would use is the code of political mobilization.** Because if you really think of conscientization and deschooling as a continuum, one thing is that we become cognizant of the fact that schools are producing inequalities. We become cognizant of the fact that social reproduction occurs in schools and we become cognizant that culture has inscribed in its main rules, rituals, and other experiences—hegemony. Therefore, what we need to do is to abandon the school, deschool. But at the same time, we have to drop out of society because the school is a negative environment in the context of construction of conviviality. Freire would say no, of course not! First of all to drop out of school, as many Freireans understood, you leave the door open. That is the interesting intriguing argument because if the Left does not occupy spaces, or fight for spaces, well we do fight but usually lose many fights. But the question is that you occupy spaces by fighting for those spaces, by stating an element which I will never deny as central in our life is our principles. You fight for principles. And from principles you develop strategies and tactics. Not the other way around. The difference between analytical, political, pedagogical thinking is that you start from principles and work around strategies or tactics on how to best implement those principles in the best perfect loving way. So principle precludes you from using some tactics, principles precludes you from employing some strategies. In a way, Freire is saying, “Look this is an ... question here, if a school is a site of contestation, as I think, don’t drop out.” In that context I see **the kind of criticism of Illich.**

Let me finish because, Peter excited me so much with those questions, and of course there are many other questions...even one interesting question raised by Douglas: why did Freire become the guru of the Left in education and Illich, who in many different ways set in the same time had more currency in the ‘70s than Freire in many different ways but, kind of disappeared from sight. One concept could be the notion of If you keep pounding and pounding and pounding and pounding maybe your voice will be heard; if you keep working in education and working in education repeatedly, then you remain. Another thing is the

joyful personality of Freire. Freire was always really joyful. He was a man who enjoyed a meal with his friends, which I think Illich did as well. But Illich had this kind of somber personality at the outset which Freire did not. I think the other element in Freire is that he was always politically astute. I think Illich was intellectually astute. Illich was very clear at having defined what he ultimately reflects. He was very clear how to build some kind of utopia around the principles he articulated. But he had never had the interest of carving out in the creation of social movements, in the creation of some kind of networking around it. Let me put it this way, Illich built personal friendships, Freire built social movement friendships and developed schools of thought, and intervened. As he said to me once “I want to be invited to improve things. If I find an excuse to improve things, I go there”—even sometimes at the risk of traveling too much for a man who is getting older and older.

So I think the importance of Illich in the history of thought is still to be assessed critically and connected with Foucault, connected with Freire, and particularly connected with the critical theory approach à la Frankfurt—mostly the idea of culture in the Frankfurt School. Here we have an interesting subject, it is well treated and well articulated but has few dissertations. On the other hand, I think the legacy of Freire is much easier to appreciate because you have Freireans working in the schools of education. You have Freirians working in other areas. You have people who have been influenced by Freire writing books, expanding upon some of the key issues of Freire. But with this I will conclude: I think the element that articulates a lot of our comments today, and it is an element we take for granted when we have it, and we miss, and we suffer when we don’t, which is love. We have to protect our love and our love lives. Because, in a way, the notion of friendship it is the connection with love. Freire and Illich, they are in defense of love. There is the *paideia* love in which teachers love their students, because we do this as a work of love. We love our students. There is the notion of love for your children—it is another type of love. Then, loving your friends, who are neither your children, nor your students. It is a different type of love. And without getting too romantic and too *sappy*, I tell this in particular to my graduate students: Look who is with you now, because 20 years from now you are going to be looking backwards and seeing who has walked with you the same way, who was walking a sweet life, who was willing to console you, to support you, to make you laugh. And I think that friendship is what it is all about. But then of course you have to keep in mind this notion of love, which is also pedagogical and political at the level of the *couple*, at the level of the significant other, at that very peculiar one to one interaction, the sense of love that we’re

talking about here is almost germinal to the notion of love that we can speak about when we talk about (in various traditions) The feminists have taught us, and we have learned I hope, that better than asking “How are you?” is “Where are you going to?” The notion of “Where are you going to?” is really its asking what is the sense of love, and sharing the situation, the emotion, the experience, and I think is important. Freire and Illich, from different angles, and different perspectives, with tremendous intelligence both of them, have contributed to our understanding of love. Illich, maybe from a monastic tradition, Freire in more the jovial Latin American tradition, which is usually much more easy going and engaging in many ways than the monastic tradition. But if we draw both of them, I think we will be able to learn a great deal. And particularly when we are down, when we are sad, and we have lost hope, think of these guys. Illich spent his life preaching to the winds, being constantly unrecognized because he was ahead of his time. When he spoke nobody understood, he was ahead of his time. Freire spoke and spoke and spoke and he was condemned as a Christian, a communist, as a traitor to his land. He was, because of his nationality, he couldn’t talk ... in the streets ... for he was exiled. These guys in their own lived experiences show that love could conquer, that freedom could conquer. And that is the message that comes, looking backwards, from history of Illich and Freire in this context of human thought.

I think what we should do is open up the conversation, we have plenty of time for questions and comment.

Kellner: I could pose a question for you, Carlos, actually that Peter raised, that I would like to hear some discussion on, and that is the relation between Illich and Marx? We all have made the point that Ivan Illich’s critique of industrial society was similar to the Frankfurt School, showing how all of the institutions (of the factory, of schooling, of the state) produce certain forms of alienation and oppression, of forms of technological rationality and bureaucracy. So, Illich shares this general critique. Carlos pointed out, and Peter also, that there were half latent monastic roots of Ivan Illich’s critique, but Carlos maybe you can comment on the question Peter raised, how does this relate to classical Marxism? There is very little reference to Marx in those two books, at least as I reread him, *Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality*. Although he does say at one point that education for socialism requires these schools of conviviality. So he seems to be in something of a Leftist framework, but I am not sure exactly how to situate him versus/vis-à-vis classical Marxism. Do you have

some thoughts?

Torres: I don't think I have a lot of thoughts. I have a half-notion, which is probably this. I think, on the one hand, he was trained in classical philosophy...in academic universities...of Marx. If you really think that he was really trained before the Second Vatican Council so he didn't have ... access to a Marxist tradition, no matter how important it was at the time in Europe. On the other hand, I would bet that he was very concerned with what I would call the young Marx's notion of manuscripts dealing, the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in which Marx 1848 really draws the whole argument and expands upon the ... of 1845 in *German Ideology* on alienation. I think that if there is a clear connection between critical theory, Marx, and Illich, it is through the Marxist concept of alienation, which goes beyond the Hegelian concept and certainly is very different than some of the concepts of exploitation developed by the French utopian socialists that Marx criticized. So my hunch is that if there is a source of thinking for Illich ... because he is a socialist, but he is cosmogenic socialist. You think of a socialism at the global sense. You know one of the things that I missed in this conversation, and I wish that I could find an answer or that someone could find an answer is what Illich said about globalization? Because he was participating in globalization, like everybody else, so what would be his assessment of globalization from this kind of critique of alienation.

Kellner: I think he has a critique of industrial civilization as globalized. That it's destroying the earth. He certainly has the ecological critique; it's using up the resources of the earth, causing pollution, producing overpopulation. So I think he has a completely globalized critique of industrial civilization that he sees it is encompassing the earth and that it is destroying the earth. So that's a critique of globalization. But I think you are also right, he has this sort of Christian globalizing notion that we can have a universal community. That the only way to end industrial civilization is to have the whole world united in some sort of community of emancipation, democratization, or social justice, etc. But I think he might have become pessimistic once the 1960s movements were defeated, he sort of turned more interest into the monastery, so to speak, into small communities of learning and friendship, and I doubt I take it that was Peter's critique. Where as Freire was always out to find the next country and connecting with different networks, involved in political activism and struggle. But I think that Illich clearly was a globalizer in terms of his critique of capitalist industrial

globalization.

McLaren: I think what's interesting to mention here is Teilhard de Chardin...and to what extent Illich maintains a connection to that mystical tradition of agape, for instance as a form of divine love. We have to remember too his mother was a Sephardic Jew and he did maintain a close connection with a Bavarian tradition of And to what extent of, I'm just curious and here I'm asking another question, to what extent given his long **tract of painful writing on** pain, which I don't think is published yet ... to what extent did his own personal suffering and his own struggles, the fact that he was ... by the Vatican, to what extent his religious beliefs went through some kind of modification or transformation? **He was always very interested in religion...people want to know about Marx, religion, etc. it's a key concept.** We talked about in a very general way Illich as sort of aesthetically drawn to the monastic tradition, but to what extent ... **I'm curious**, I don't really know.

Kellner: I'm going to let Carlos answer this. This is a great point. I commented before that both Carlos and Peter stressed very strongly the kind of religious and Catholic roots of both Illich and Paulo Freire, which often times are overlooked. I mean especially both of these thinkers sometimes people just put aside the religious roots of, the dimension of these thinkers which would be the difference from Marx who is more secular, enlightenment critic of religion. But I think it's clear that in both Freire and Illich religion is playing a bigger role ... than Foucault and any people in Marxist tradition. So do you have some thoughts on Illich's religious beliefs and there is quite a bit of divisive interaction with the Catholic church, often very conflictive? What do you think he might have finally taken with him as his ultimate religious underpinnings and ultimate beliefs?

Torres and Kellner end with brief discussion including the motif of guilt and suffering in the work of Illich, Freire, Marx and Rousseau.

Followed by Q&A with the Audience.

The videos are available at:

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAPrJ2-gPAQ>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhSuv-3fZbo>

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