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Introduction to Volume 3 Number 2

For over a decade ending in 1999, historian and social critic, Ivan Illich “rested” in State College, where upon the invitation of Professor Rustom Roy, Illich held a visiting professorship in both the Dept. of Philosophy and the (now defunct) Science, Technology & Society Program at Penn State University. Although no complete history of Illich’s efforts during his time at Penn State exists, numerous publications resulted from the many symposia, lectures, and gatherings held as a consequence of Illich’s time in State College. With Illich’s arrival each fall, others, too, arrived from all parts of the world to extend their reflections, collaborations, and stories—in some way all related to Ivan.

The lecture hall in 112 Walker Building was the site of Illich’s public lectures each semester. Fitting then, that on Dec. 3, 2012, the same room was the location of an event commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Illich’s death, “Remembering Ivan Illich.” On this evening, two of Ivan’s dear friends (Samar Farage, Sajay Samuel), two former colleagues (Gene Bazan, Lakshman Yapa), and one admirer (Roger Shouse) gathered to share their thoughts in the very room where Illich shared his own. The event was one of many held around the world – all celebrations in homage to the thinker now being discovered, even re-discovered by many.

Though the room has changed negligibly in the days since Illich’s lectures drew hundreds of people, what remains constant is the depth of insight and breadth of inspiration Illich’s work continues to pose for those who look seriously, authentically, at his work.

This special issue is devoted to the commemoration held at Penn State.

Dana L. Stuchul

Stari otac, moy brat<sup>1</sup>

Gene Bazan

Three books catapulted me out of the university by the mid-1970s: Herman Hesse's *Magister Ludi*, Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, and Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*. Each of these was given to me by students, sensing before I did that my destiny ought to lie elsewhere.

Over the next several years I would come across Illich's writings, usually in Stewart Brand's "Co-Evolution Quarterly." It was a stroke of cosmic luck for me that his and my paths crossed. I have Rustum Roy, chair of the old STS program at Penn State, to thank for bringing Ivan to Penn State.

On me, Illich practiced a kind of intellectual jiu jitsu – that is, leading me gently in directions I was already leaning.

One of these directions was living outside modern institutions, which in every case have become destructive, repressive, and corrupt. In one discussion about markets, Ivan suggested I look at Karl Polanyi's *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires*, which sharpened my perceptions of what markets are and do. Better known is Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, an earlier work which showed how the shapers of modern institutions ripped subsistence out from under the 99% of the occupiers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and turned them – and then us – into drones. I have striven to recover some measure of subsistence in my own life, and I hope I've passed along Ivan's gift by helping others do likewise, first with Penn State's Center for Sustainability and now through Neo-Terra.<sup>2</sup>

A second vista Illich opened for me centered on those key concepts that have come to define modernity. Here Illich used Ludolf Kuchenbuch's metaphor of walking backwards in time until the certainties of our western modernity fade and then ... disappear. The screen of our computer disappears into the page, the page into the word, and the word into speech. I have been a fan of words since, at 16, I read a dictionary from cover to cover, but it was Illich who pointed out that the word was merely one stage in a stream of modern development.

With *Deschooling*, Illich helped me understand how to think differently. He instructed me in the art of unpacking words. One of his protégés, Wolfgang Sachs, who I came to admire

greatly, unpacked the term “development” in his 1992 book, *The Development Dictionary*. He helped me understand my own work experiences in Yugoslavia, Ghana and Turkey. By dissecting the term “sustainability” in his next book, *Global Ecology*, Wolfgang shaped my thinking and action when a group of us started the Center for Sustainability at Penn State.

Which brings me to the third move in Illich’s jiu jitsu – his magical conviviality. Is there anyone here this evening who was present the night a magician stopped by Ivan’s ashram on Sparks Street? David Abram, who had wanted to meet Ivan, performed magic tricks with a coin as he regaled us with tales of his trips to visit shamans and healers in different cultures, out of which David wrote, *The Spell of the Sensuous*.<sup>3</sup>

Doubtless, all of us have watched one talk show or another; hung out with strangers at a bar or professional meeting; partied with friends. But until I went to the first Illich weekend consultation on Sparks Street, I thought convivial was just a fancy word for having a good time. He, and his band of brainy minstrels, taught me different. Discourse – not mere talk! Collaboration! Exploration! Plus good food, wine, and music.

In *Tools for Conviviality*<sup>4</sup> Illich treats the barriers to conviviality, one of which is radical monopoly. What was at first only accessible to the few, became obtainable for many, until it finally became so necessary that none could do without. That, in a nutshell, is radical monopoly. Cars, with their unacknowledged shadow work, drove out walking and bicycling. Health care drives out caring. And education drives out our own unfettered exploration of the world around us. The autodidact becomes suspect.

On the radical monopoly that is transportation I remember reading, in city planning school in the late sixties, that the average speed of transport in Manhattan was 4 mph. This is a speed of brisk walk. Years passed, and then I came across Ivan’s elegant calculation transmogrifying the majesty of a car to that same brisk walking speed. By the time I was 60, I had worn out three bicycles and clocked more than 60,000 miles. I did the first 30,000 on my own, but Ivan kept me going for the next 30 thousand!

When I met Ivan in the late 1980’s I was close to abandoning a lucrative line of economic development consulting. My take on that line of work, it turned out, was based on reasoning put forth by Jane Jacobs in her book, *The Economy of Cities*. Jacobs was a famous urban activist, first in NYC and later in Toronto. She wrote a path-breaking book in the early sixties which I read in urban planning school titled, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Here she

exposed the dark underbelly of urban renewal. Her next book, *The Economy of Cities*, addressed what became known as the rustbelt. For her, the solution was “import substitution,” that is, reclaim the economic base of a city by making locally what you find yourself importing. Since I was involved in rustbelt renewal, I glommed onto her solution without giving it the critical thought I had given economic base theory in graduate school. What I had failed to do was get to the core issue.

So how do we get to the core issues? The driving functions of a gnarly problem? I recall the weekend consultation on Sparks Street where the Illich tribe hosted a group of humanist economists, headed up by Mark Lutz, who had just published a book titled, *Humanist Economics*. The Friday evening socializing was great, but the Saturday session was fraught with tension. The climax, for me, came when Jean Robert, one of the Illich core, summarized the entire model of humanist economics by recalling B.F. Skinner’s behaviorism. Skinner developed theories and methods for shaping behavior by linking desired behaviors with rewards. He used pigeons as subjects and food pellets as rewards.

Jean Robert commented that humanist economics did not escape the essential condition of modern economics. “First,” he said, “you have to starve the pigeon.” Of course, this is what Polanyi outlined in *The Great Transformation*. To get peasants to work in factories, you have to first starve them by denying their subsistence. This is what the enclosures of the 17 and 1800’s did. Jean Robert’s phrase got to the core of modern economics and delivered its coup de grace.

Out of Illich’s insights, and the insights of his protégés and associates, I came to develop my own intellectual jiu jitsu.

THANK YOU IVAN!! Thank you Jean Robert! Thank you Wolfgang!

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Notes:

1. My father, my brother. Among his many languages, Ivan spoke Serbo-Croatian. As I had earlier spent a year there, I was still able to speak a few words with him.

2. [www.neo-terra.org](http://www.neo-terra.org)

3. Excerpt at <http://www.primitivism.com/ecology-magic.htm>

4. Text for *Tools for Conviviality* at:  
[http://www.mom.arq.ufmg.br/mom/arq\\_interface/3a\\_aula/illich\\_tools\\_for\\_conviviality.pdf](http://www.mom.arq.ufmg.br/mom/arq_interface/3a_aula/illich_tools_for_conviviality.pdf)

**Author's Bio**

Gene Bazan has spent a large part of his last 30 years working with educational, environmental, civic and business organizations here and abroad on projects, funding, and board and staff development. Dr. Bazan has taught at three universities, in the U.S. and abroad. At Penn State, he helped create the Center for Sustainability and design the first Projects in Sustainable Living course. He has given numerous workshops, talks and tours in Central Pennsylvania on organic gardening since 1998. His university training is in Electrical Engineering & Economics, and his Ph.D. is in City & Regional Planning. Please see <http://www.neoterra.org/Pages/default.aspx> for more information about Gene's current projects.

Deschooling Twenty-First Century Education

Roger C. Shouse

*Introduction*

I was delighted to speak at the event honoring the memory of Ivan Illich, despite the fact that I could not “remember” him, at least not as other speakers could. For I really only became acquainted with his work in recent years, thanks to a dear colleague of mine who introduced me to *Gender* at the exact moment it was needed by one of my doctoral students. Next I read *Deschooling Society*, which was like suddenly seeing the vague notes of my internal music in front of me on a piano score. I found *Deschooling* to be one of the finest and most accessible examples of critical thinking I had ever read; so much so that it’s now required reading in my introductory educational leadership course. This perhaps was a risky move on my part. “Educational leadership” is supposed to be about preparing future teachers and administrators to create “21<sup>st</sup> Century schools” where 21<sup>st</sup> Century students receive 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century employment. This is because “times have changed.” Beat the drum.

But I’ve long been growing weary of the obedient rhythms of leadership on the march. With each new book or article I read about “what effective leaders do” or “what effective educational leadership programs do,” I felt ushered further down a narrowing corridor. Reading Illich’s ideas gave me confidence to leave the parade and deconstruct it so that others might understand its meaning and consequences. Would Professor Illich appreciate this? I hope so, and I hope that he would consider this a good way for him to be remembered. The following discussion represents my effort to remember him even more. I’ll argue that the deschooling idea is powerful, practical, and needed now more than ever. Even if total deschooling is politically impossible at the present, I’ll propose that those who love the idea of authentic and diverse educational opportunity will at the very least begin to promote the idea of *separation of school and state*.

But first, an apology. Many of the ideas and arguments offered here have likely been explored by others, perhaps with more theoretical depth or clarity. I feel I’m in the early stage of a journey and so I welcome ideas from those further down the road.



*Schooling Memes and the Expansion of Institutionalized Pupil-Teacher Control*

*Deschooling Society* was both invitation and warning. It was an invitation to consider an array of organic educational possibilities. It was a warning about the state controlled organization, institutionalization, and mobilization of educational “treatment.” It is perhaps because the warning was issued at a time when American public education was near enough to deschooling itself (e.g., through decentralized and flexible curricular alternatives) that it could subsequently be countered and neutralized by public fear mobilized through memes such as “A Nation at Risk.” This paper argues that American public school students and teachers remain at risk, not for lack of academic intensity or desire, but from an invasive apparatus of socio-technical systems of control, or *dispositif* (Foucault, 1980; Lianos, 2003).

American public schools have always been porous institutions, deeply influenced by outside forces. Traditionally, their diffuse and individualistic purposes coupled with technical uncertainty as to how to attain them rendered them as perfect receptacles for public desire. When such desire was locally based, one could expect some degree of curricular and instructional variation and diversity across schools. When local desire was heterogeneous, one could expect to find variation and diversity within schools as well. Over time, however, as uncertainty, variation, and diversity became marked institutional features, public schooling became more vulnerable to power-distant structures of socio-technical control (e.g., centralized authority and standardized educational treatment). Such control structures work by coordinating a consensus of fear or emergency with technologies of organizational efficiency. They may originate from formal policies, but gradually evolve into informal norms, memes, and narratives. As this occurs, oppositional ideas and practices become marginalized, silenced, and ultimately inconceivable.

For example, “zero tolerance” began outside the boundaries of public education in the early 1980s as a slogan of penological innovation; the legalized confiscation by state or federal law enforcement agencies of money or property belonging to those arrested for narcotics violations. Congruent with other slogans (“war on drugs” or “just say no”), “zero tolerance” constituted a highly robust “policy species” (Weaver-Hightower, \*\*\*\*). It also served as a unit of cultural transmission, or “meme” (Dawkins, 1976), readily adaptable to other policy habitats such as schools facing problems of student drug or weapons possession (Shouse & Sun, 2013). Older memes emphasizing uncertainty and professional discretion (“no two disciplinary cases are alike,” “let the punishment fit the crime,” etc.) were ill equipped to ease public fear or protect the

school from lawsuits. Zero tolerance thus rapidly became a successful species, capable of evolving into a dependable and malleable standardized routine for pupil control (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Ackerman, 2003). Its memetic power is revealed today as teachers and administrators, nested within a web of codified procedures and punishments, appear to unlearn and deconceive the possibility of reasoned discretionary disciplinary practices. In this way, zero tolerance fosters silence. Teachers and administrators must accept it, violate it surreptitiously, or risk sanction and marginalization by openly challenging it.

One may thus understand the march toward restrictive intensification of public schooling not as isolated custodial overzealousness, but as product of the capacity of technology, discourse, and structure to intertwine and mutate into new templates for action and cultural transmission. Memes, in effect, serve as cognitive labor saving devices, facilitating organizational action by sharply reducing the need, desirability, or awareness of reasoned alternatives. As cultural transmitters, memes not only change popular and professional conceptions of what schooling (and education) ought to look like, but also spawn outbreaks of moral amnesia and collective unlearning in and around school organizations.

The risk of harm is heightened by the ease and speed with which memetic templates migrate across school habitats, feeding on the natural uncertainties of teaching and learning, as well as upon the fears associated with newly perceived organizational “problems.” The so-called “bandwagon” (the rapid faithful collective acceptance of mandated novelty) is one example of this. A more insidious example involves the mobilization of fear regarding child sexual abuse and student-teacher sexual contact. The commoditized expansion of and demand for electronic “news” fosters an exaggerated collective sense of the frequency and novelty of the problem. Parents fear the potential for “incidents.” Schools fear the potential for lawsuits and negative publicity. Teachers fear false accusation or suspicion. Some teachers build spatial or emotional buffers to students, while others strive to preserve personalistic interaction. Emerging narratives produce memes of suspicion (“times have changed,” “keep your door open,” “don’t be alone with a student,” “even a false accusation can end your career”).<sup>1</sup> Schools seek relief from the burden of fear and uncertainty through the imposition of efficient organizational routines. Formal guidelines or rules are imposed to govern teacher-student relationships. But over time they become unnecessary as their corresponding memes morph into normative structures that may even exceed the “letter of the law.” Any “unusual” contact between teachers and students is

perceived as “unwise,” “suspicious,” or “inappropriate.” Whether teachers accept or reject the new social reality, they now live in a smaller and more restrictive world where resistance is hidden, viewed as annoying, or interpreted as evidence of possible guilt. School organizations gradually “forget” that hugs or handshakes were ever part of a teacher’s work.

It would be a missed opportunity to end this section without reference to “No Child Left Behind,” as it represents the epitome of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education and a prime example of how discourse, technology, science, and politics merge to create a “regime of truth” (Foucault, 1980). This is discussed in detail in the next section. For now, it is enough to point out that like the previous examples, the success and power of the NCLB memetic species grows from uncertainty, fear, silence, and invisibility.

#### *Creeping Invisibility: Two Brief Descriptive Case Studies*

The evolution of invisible structures of social control has received wide scholarly treatment. In *Deschooling*, Illich’s key examples relate to the commodification of education and the shift of responsibility for learning from individuals to institutions. Consider, for example, changes in language and narratives used to describe educational processes. The slogan that “every child is entitled to quality education” seems benign until coupled with another, that “teachers are fundamentally responsible for student learning.”<sup>2</sup> The message becomes that whichever direction one faces in the classroom, education is both grant and mandate of institutional authority (e.g., students “get” their education from teachers; teachers unable to provide it to “every child” must be retrained with scripts and routines designed at a higher level of expertise or authority). To openly argue that students bear responsibility for their own learning becomes a risky act for those professionally connected to public schooling. Over time, however, such arguments become irrelevant or marginalized – indeed, “paranormalized” – via invocation of powerful sociopolitical narratives about standards, accountability, and equality of educational outcomes.

One notes that such narratives are formed as individual units of social fact emerge, interact, and mutate into new stable molecules of meaning, often distinct from that of the original units. This is the memetic construction of social reality. The two cases that follow help illustrate and deconstruct this process. For me, they seem so iconic that I’ve given them names; *No Sir With Love* and *What the Math!*<sup>3</sup>

*No Sir With Love*

Since the time I began teaching courses on school administration and leadership, I've used popular film as a teaching tool.<sup>4</sup> The first film I studied and later used was *To Sir With Love*, the mid-1960s story of a new Black teacher in a lower-working class London secondary school.<sup>5</sup> One key theme involves the innocent sexual tension between "Sir" and an attractive female student. Though Sir maintains professional distance, near the end of the film the two exchange warm words, a deep glance, and a meaningful dance at a well-chaperoned, school-sponsored graduation party. For years, my students almost universally responded with words like "touching," "inspirational," and "authentic." In 2004, however, I noticed an abrupt change. Responses included "creepy," "inappropriate," "he crossed the line," "times have changed," and "he'd be fired if he did that today." Such reactions have become common every year since.

When I ask "what has changed? Why would he be fired?" my students' awkward silence suggests that I've touched a sensitive cultural nerve. I press on. A student will then tell me of the growing national "epidemic" of teacher-student sexual relations. I ask, "Where is the sex in this movie?" to which students typically offer vague concerns about "crossing the line," "the gaze," "the dance." Recently, a student (a high school English teacher) recited her school's rule: "teachers may not touch students nor meet with them one-on-one in classrooms." Another student/teacher followed with "not even handshakes are allowed," then demonstrated her school-mandated "silent high five" by raising her hand high but keeping it a safe inch or so away from that of her classmate.

Persuading students to critically examine their responses to film scenes depicting what they perceive as "inappropriate teacher behavior" requires an often uncomfortable deconstruction of "facts," fear, silence, and obedience. As I engage further, suggesting that the scenes reflect popular long-held understandings of school social interaction, some students begin to tell stories of similar positive school experiences or about peculiar "unquestioned rules" they encounter at their schools ("they tell us what kind of *shoes* we should wear!"). This instructional process always seems to involve a great deal of classroom discomfort.

*What the Math!*

No longer simply a school subject, "Math" is now part of an ensemble of social memes which regulate school policies and practices. But "ensemble" may be insufficient to describe a process that has fundamentally changed the meaning of schooling among not only practitioners,

but among scholars and researchers as well. One might think the latter group might know better. But when a professor blasts the value of standardized math scores one moment, but then the next uses them to defend the quality or legitimacy of the greater public schooling apparatus, one must appreciate the invisible silencing power of “Math.”<sup>6</sup>

Two questions arise. First, how do we account for the explicit and implicit primacy of Math within practical and theoretical educational discourse? This question is often answered in terms of corporate demand, global economic competition, or a generalized fear that students in other countries are outperforming our own. Other answers involve the framing and privileging of math as a means of individual opportunity and success. Such answers are unsatisfactory and tautological, amounting to the argument that math became important because it is so important.

The second question concerns the various memes, assumptions, or other social structures that surround, defend, and strengthen math as a prime narrative of institutionalized education. These include the popular acronyms and slogans used to reinforce the importance of math and its use as a measure of school quality; e.g., “STEM,” “NCLB,” or “21<sup>st</sup> Century Education.” Yet one must not overlook the easy tacit acceptance among scholars and researchers of the validity of math learning not just as a measure of school quality, but also as one of social and racial equality.

The extensive power of Math is understood by examining the interactions of various socio-technical and socio-political events and trends over time and how these came to focus directly on the institution of schooling. For instance, from the late 1950s through mid-1960s, fear over Soviet technological advances (e.g., *Sputnik*) combined with concern over poverty and inequality (e.g., Harrington’s *The Other America*) to promote the idea that both problems might be addressed by improving and equalizing access to public schooling. This idea, which nicely coincided with efficiency trends and the availability of computing technology, led to the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare commissioning a study now known as *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, also known as the *Coleman Report* (1966). As one of the study’s major goals was to assess the impact of unequal resource distribution on student learning, a need arose for standardized indicators of achievement to serve as dependent variables in large scale regression analyses. Though the Coleman study included four such measures, it was reasoned that because math was taught primarily within classrooms, its test scores offered the most valid measure of school effectiveness.

The published results of the Coleman Report were fascinating, yet somewhat irrelevant to the fact that it had planted the seeds of a mindscape in which educational activity could be objectified and centrally manipulated, and in which math was not merely a “good” indicator, but the prime indicator of school effectiveness. This mindscape was further nurtured in an enlarging habitat of global comparisons, research grants, the regular production of large scale data sets, and fast-growing capability of researchers to conduct hundreds of sophisticated regression models in less time than it took for Coleman’s team to create one set of punch cards. Equipped with a “valid” metric, high technical capability, and a supportive system of incentives (grants, publication, demand for scientifically based research), researchers in both government and academia could both shape and respond to an emerging narrative about the quality and purposes of schooling. It was, in fact, a snowballing narrative which tacitly linked math scores to popular, scholarly, and political dissatisfaction with public schooling.

As it evolved, however, the Math narrative provided an effective buffer for public dissatisfaction. It reduced uncertainty by providing a focal point of attention, action, and evaluation. In addition, it heightened the significance of standardized testing as a *political* resource. Low scores – and the fear of low scores – could be used to mobilize voters at local and national levels. NCLB is just one obvious example. Less obvious is the further commodification of education as revealed in efforts to lengthen the school day, the school year, and the number of years students must attend school.

Two final points I hope are clear. First, math is cool. I used to teach it. I’d recommend it as a field of study to anyone. Second, however, readers should understand that *What the Math?* isn’t only about math. It’s about the gradual mutation of meaning of concepts like “learning,” “school,” “education,” “innovation,” “leadership,” and “educational research.” It’s about the growth of a regulatory mindset throughout K-12 and higher education. In fact, *No Sir With Love* can be viewed as simply an outgrowth of *What the Math?* Together, they’re about the “third face of power” (Lukes, 1974), the foreclosing of future educational alternatives, and the loss of our ability to imagine them.

#### *Implications for Deschooling and Leadership*

Recently evolving educational memes (e.g., “21<sup>st</sup> Century Schooling,” “NCLB,” “Common Core”) work to efficiently convey the message that American youth achieve their greatest potential as learners and workers through state-centralized, standardized, and mandated

schooling structures. This is a complex, puzzling, yet attractive narrative that offers students future social and economic security and fulfilment in exchange for restrictions on their educational freedom and responsibility. In a real sense, the narrative frames educational opportunity and innovation as narrowly whittled commodities to be administered and distributed through the various arms of state public schooling policy. The practical deconstruction of this narrative begins as “21<sup>st</sup> Century Deschooling” is conceived not as ideal vision, but as a set of continual incremental acts of leadership and resistance to promote decentralized, local, and individual authority and responsibility over educational desire and design.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Deschooling thus becomes the process of imagining and gradually building a wall of separation between school and state. Such efforts will likely cause intense cognitive and emotional struggle for those tightly invested at various levels of the present public schooling apparatus. Consider, for example, the difficulty faced by scholars and educators who, though highly alarmed by current policy trends, cannot release themselves from various longstanding, shared, affectively toned entanglements among ideas such as “public schooling,” “democracy,” “learning gap,” and STEM. In short, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Deschooling requires suspending one’s belief in public schooling as an administratively manipulable tool for repairing large scale social or economic problems. Without this, public schooling will continue to serve not just as a structure of social control, but as a perpetual source of “crises” and “solutions” to be used for larger political ends.

The difficulty of letting go is evident in the peculiar tendency among education scholars and practitioners to decry state imposed standardized measures of accountability while using them as a basis for rejecting policies that undercut centralized state control. One example of this occurs when researchers or educators decry the testing regime’s threat to creative teaching and learning, but then criticize “choice” schools (or alternative teacher certification programs such as *Teach for America*) for failing to improve student performance on standardized math exams. Incongruous as well is the argument that parents lack sufficient information to make sound educational choices, while tacitly assuming they possess sufficient information to support public schooling or to vote against its political defenders. Educators and scholars critical of state-controlled education may wish to consider the wisdom of what seems to be a faith-based defense of current public school structures against the challenge of alternative visions.

A similar form of defense occurs when college of education leadership preparation

programs avoid or marginalize discussion of knowledge, dispositions, and principles conducive to professional challenge or resistance to prevailing structure. Instead, “educational leadership” is often presented in terms of professionals’ capacity to facilitate needs and aims determined at higher levels of authority – that is, to work more effectively within existing structures of public schooling. Colleges of education could certainly encourage 21<sup>st</sup> Century Deschooling by instilling within students a collective capacity for *critical* professional judgment and leadership. This seems unlikely, however, given the lack of serious scholarly challenge over the past decade to state and agency (e.g., NCATE) imposed curricular and instructional “standards.”

It is no surprise then that teachers are fearful or unaware of the possibility of resisting 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schooling, nor that administrators are paralyzed in its wake. The strong structural and philosophical linkages between colleges of education and public schooling have weakened their ability to offer and engage in the critical leadership needed to promote teacher and learner ability to judge, create, or innovate outside the “enshrined” agenda of “best practices” (English, 2003).

Yet, numerous deschooling strategies nevertheless exist. Parents opt their children out of standardized testing. Educators work with home school networks to design alternative learning opportunities and structures. Individuals everywhere create digital conviviality. Questions emerge about the value and necessity of teacher or administrative certification. Overall interest grows in forms of education that are immune to state control. One can almost sense how the apparatus of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schooling has overplayed its hand.

In the longer run, however, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Deschooling is likely to require bolder forms of resistance, some of which may be risky and painful. A student of mine, a high school teacher, recently described a faculty meeting at which her principal had teachers standing and chanting “core curriculum, core curriculum, 45 states, 45 states!” The principal then advised teachers that the time for opposing views had passed. Silenced, perhaps, by fear or frustration, teachers offered no resistance. I wondered to myself, “could it be otherwise?” and made a mental note to move Illich’s *Deschooling Society* to the first week of my introductory educational leadership course.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, outside of school, caution grows among adult males regarding possible interactions with unknown children, and among young children with respect to unknown adults.



<sup>2</sup> As a former high school teacher, I was hammered with this meme. As a professor, I find it still to be a driving belief of many students and educators.

<sup>3</sup> “What the math?” is a phrase often heard on the cartoon series *Adventure Time*, which portrays a post-apocalyptic future world where the word “math” is used as an oath or expletive.

<sup>4</sup> I now teach a course called “Leadership in Popular Film.”

<sup>5</sup> See Shouse, R. 2005. Taking Lulu Seriously: Theory and Meaning in ‘To Sir with Love.’ *Journal of Educational Administration*, 43:4, 357-367.

<sup>6</sup> “Math,” when capitalized, refers to its broad *depositif*. In lower case, “math” refers to a field of study.

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**Author's Bio**

Roger Shouse is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership in Penn State University's Department of Education Policy Studies. Roger's research interests include critical studies of schools as organizations, communities, and institutions in local/national and global/comparative contexts; examination of leadership and education as portrayed in popular texts; public schooling as a mechanism of social control.

Ivan Illich: Theories of Poverty And The Politics of Agency

Lakshman Yapa

Introduction

I have been reading, researching, and teaching topics on poverty and development for nearly forty years of my life. A thought that has stayed with me constantly throughout that time was one expressed by Ivan Illich in *Celebration of Awareness* (1970), that underdevelopment is a state of mind, a state that occurs when basic needs are converted to the demand for manufactured goods, in his words, when “thirst has been transformed into the need for a Coke.” Illich examined that idea in many different fields—schooling, health, transport and energy—and showed us that development cannot eradicate poverty because development is in fact the causative agent of modern poverty.

Development is, of course, all about economic growth. Economic growth which is accomplished through the increasing incorporation of households into the capitalist exchange economy through wage work and purchase of consumer commodities, a process engineered by, and done with, the full sanction of the discipline of economics. At its simplest the science of economics says that physical resources—land, labor, and capital, etc—are limited, but the human demand for these resources is unlimited. Scarcity, then, is a constant universal condition akin to something natural like gravity. However, scarcity, in the strict economic sense does not refer to an absolute lack of things, but rather the relative scarcity experienced when, at a given price, the demand for a commodity exceeds its supply. In a system of limited resources and unlimited wants this is believed to be a NORMAL condition. Drawing on the writings of Illich, I wish to show that scarcity is neither natural nor “normal,” but is in fact discursively and socially constructed.

In 1953 Robert Heilbroner, an American economist, published a book titled, *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers*. The book has gone through seven editions and sold over four million copies. He wrote on the contributions of a range of important economic thinkers, beginning with Adam Smith, and then Karl Marx, Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo, John Maynard Keynes, and Thorstein Veblen, among others. I find the absence of Ivan Illich in the book notable but perhaps understandable. All the worldly philosophers that Heilbroner writes about are economists, and hence are philosophers of

exchange value, even Marx. Illich, though toiling outside the framework of exchange value, is the pre-eminent philosopher of use value.

Over the years I have used Illich's writings in my undergraduate classes on poverty and development, and also in a Penn State community outreach course I conducted for 10 years in an inner city neighborhood of West Philadelphia. Teaching Illich to undergraduates is not always easy. As profound and insightful as Illich was, students sometimes find it difficult to follow his language, and growing up as they do in a world of Facebook, Twitter, and iPhones, they do not easily relate to concepts that appear in books such as *Shadow Work* (Illich, 1981), for example, "subsistence and the vernacular." When teaching poverty and development to undergraduates I do not regard myself as simply providing instruction in an academic discipline; rather I see my role as helping young people become more concerned citizens with a lens with which to critique the world, while cultivating a sense of effective agency for engaging that world. It is important that my pedagogy begin with an understanding of where my students are at intellectually and culturally—I do my best to find out what they know and what they read and make that knowledge an integral part of how I teach. In that regard, Illich posed a special challenge to me.

Someone once described Illich to be a like a crow that sits on a perch, turns its head this way and now that way, with nothing escaping the sharp eye. My own bird analogy to Illich is that he is a like a soaring eagle that surveys the entire landscape from high, sees all mountains and the shadows they cast on the plains, and yet can detect a small rodent hidden from view simply from the movement of the grass in the meadow far below. Illich's description of the economy and culture is very radical and sometimes difficult precisely because he sees things that others can only vaguely sense. Aware of the big picture, yet he was able to see the smallest details and place them in their larger historical, economic and cultural context. The language he employs to describe what he sees is equally novel. A reviewer once wrote, "Illich's style is difficult. He uses exotic language, confusing in phraseology and sentence structure." (Killeen, 1976, p. 69). I consider teaching Illich to undergraduates important even if I am reluctant to use the language he himself used. Illich is an invaluable resource to deconstruct discourses through which the American citizenry has been constructed – The American dream, the middle class, professional success, charitable giving, and so on. The language and techniques I have used in this paper are part of my effort to make Illich accessible to undergraduates, to develop a contemporary critique of capitalist development, and to contribute to a politics of agency.

### Poverty as Opportunity Cost of Development

The last half-century has been called the age of development. Some have predicted its imminent end (Sachs, 1992, p. 1), yet the triumph of market economics and the relentless march of the forces of globalization show that development is alive and well, and will remain so for a very long time to come. Even as it was becoming abundantly clear that 60 years of poverty eradication in both the US and the world—led, of course, by the World Bank and the IMF— had failed, the clamor was still for more of the same: economic growth and development.

The mass appeal of development comes from its seeming commonsense and normalizing logic. Consider the following sequence of propositions: People are poor because they do not have enough money to buy the things they need (commonsense). This can be corrected through education, training, creation of jobs, and raising incomes (commonsense). On the supply side production should be expanded by modernization, increased investment, and where necessary, obtaining technical and financial aid from rich countries (more commonsense). Little wonder that development has such universal appeal and that there is such little disagreement among theorists—whether of capitalism, socialism, nationalism, or sustainable development—on the need for economic development.

In such a world to say that development in fact *causes* poverty sounds counterintuitive, and yet that is exactly what Illich claimed so presciently over forty years ago. In *Tools for Conviviality* (1970, p.163) he wrote, “Each car which Brazil puts on the road denies fifty people good transportation by bus. Each merchandised refrigerator reduces the chance of building a community freezer. Each dollar spent in Latin America on doctors and hospitals costs a hundred lives . . . . Had each dollar been spent on providing safe drinking water, a hundred lives could have been saved.”

In economics an opportunity cost is the cost incurred when one makes a choice between several mutually exclusive alternatives. The costs of producing guns is not only its explicit price, (the cost of production), but also the implicit price of what could not be produced, say butter. The value of that butter would be the opportunity cost of allocating resources to producing guns.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Opportunity costs should not be evaluated entirely in terms of “accounting prices” because the choices made are first of all a qualitative idea before it becomes a quantitative matter of accounting prices. Also decisions about how factors of production are allocated are not just about microeconomic rationality, they occur within a complex political economy of power and influence.

What Illich realized in *Tools for Conviviality* is that there is an opportunity cost to economic development. He refused to be taken in by the promise of material abundance. He alone was able to see clearly that industrial productivity contained within it the seeds of material scarcity. That in fact, development cannot eradicate poverty because development is deeply implicated in the *creation* of poverty. Poverty is the opportunity cost of development.

Illich's strong anti-development views became widely known through a set of four books published in the 1970s: *Deschooling Society* (1971), *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), *Energy and Equity* (1974), and *Medical Nemesis* (1976). *Tools* is the most general statement of Illich's ideas while the other three volumes expand on examples critiquing education, energy consumption, and modern medical treatment. Two subsequent books—*Toward a History of Needs* (1978) and *Shadow Work* (1981)—continued the critique of economists and their view of scarcity.

With these books Illich gave us, among other gifts, a new way to talk about poverty: poverty in an economy can be measured by the extent of the *underproduction* of basic use values. Basic use values, or basic needs as I call them, would include affordable nutrition, public health and public transport, etc.

In 1970 these were brave ideas to proclaim as Third World leaders and their theoreticians, both capitalist and socialist, were arguing about which model would yield the quickest path to development. In fact, it was the socialist Nehru who once proclaimed that high dams were the temples of modern India. During the 1970s and 1980s critical thinking on development was primarily inspired by neo-Marxist theory (Frank, 1979, Wallerstein, 1979).

However, in the 1990s there began a more radical sweeping critique which rejected the very idea of development, and not just 'capitalist' development. Among these were: a collection of essays titled, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (Sachs, 1992), another collection titled, *The Post-Development Reader* (Rahnema, 1997), and several special issues of the British journal, "The Ecologist." The ideas expounded by this growing band of critics were founded on the pioneering arguments put forth by Illich in *Tools for Conviviality* (1973). The critiques of the 1990s drew on reports detailing incontrovertible empirical evidence—failed development projects throughout the Third World, the social and ecological consequences of high dams, destruction of rural livelihoods and the cancerous growth of Third

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World cities, the violence of the Green Revolution, tropical deforestation, desertification, the mounting Third World debt, and so on.

And yet Illich had opposed development decades before the material evidence of the destruction had become apparent. He not only saw that the opportunity cost of development was poverty (created through the process of manufactured scarcity of basic goods such as lack of safe drinking water and adequate nutrition, what I later call basic needs), but also provided the answer to the paradox of “poverty amidst plenty” that had baffled economists and philosophers for so long.

By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the English enclosure movement was in full swing. Peasants were separated from their means of subsistence when the commons were privatized by the English nobility and turned into grazing pastures to serve the highly profitable wool industry. This was the birth of the poor lower classes that attracted the attention of Malthus in 1798 in his *Essay on the Principle of Population*. Eventually the landless working class found employment as industrial labor even though the factory conditions in 1844 that Engels described in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* were deplorable.

Globally, the enclosure of the commons was carried out by the Spanish, Portuguese, British, French, Dutch, and Belgian colonial powers in South America, Africa, and Asia, separating the indigenous population from autonomous production to satisfy their everyday needs. However, unlike England itself, the colonies did not industrialize to absorb the surplus labor nor did they have the option of exporting their surplus population. Instead “economies” were created which existed solely for export to the colonial power, often one or two commodities. Even after political independence, the former colonies still depended almost entirely on export commodities, and the economic system developed under colonialism continued to dominate through deeply established patterns of international trade.

The result was the underproduction of everyday basic use values, a pattern which has continued to this day through multinational investment and prevailing neo-liberal economic policies. This is what Illich so clearly saw in the 1970s when he wrote *Tools*. He anticipated decades earlier the argument that development does not alleviate scarcity, but in fact is instrumental in its creation, a process that I call the social construction of scarcity, and which I will explore in the next section.

### Social Construction of Scarcity

In 1932, Lionel Robbins wrote in his *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, “We have been turned out of Paradise. We have neither eternal life nor unlimited means of gratification. Everywhere we turn, if we choose one thing we must relinquish others which, in different circumstances, we would not wish to have relinquished. Scarcity of means to satisfy given ends is an almost ubiquitous condition of human behavior. Here, then, is the unity of the subject of Economic Science, the forms assumed by human behavior in disposing of scarce means.” (Robbins, 1945, p. 15)

This is the fundamental assumption of the science of economics, yet there are two striking omissions in this conceptualization. Firstly, scarcity comes not from the finitude of resources inherent in nature, but rather, because at a given price the demand for a commodity exceeds supply. Scarcity is not resident in nature, it is a social relation defined between demand and supply at a given price. Second, in claiming that resources have multiple uses economists somehow fail to mention that there are also multiple ways to satisfy a given end. This omission is crucial and one which was important to Illich’s understanding of how scarcity is socially constructed.

To proceed, imagine a commodity that has a range of use values and one of these use values is primary; we shall call that the end-use value. For example, the end-use value of an automobile may be the “commute to work” and the end-use value of a bowl of beans might be the ingestion of proteins in the beans. In the case of the automobile it is useful to pose the question: What are all the alternative and complementary ways of meeting the end-use of getting to work?

Such a list of course includes driving, but also includes a multiplicity of options: car-pooling, public transit, cycling, walking, moving closer to work, or telecommuting. The history of transport in the US shows clearly how many of these alternatives were never made available and some alternatives that did exist were de-developed.<sup>2</sup>

The net effect of removing alternative means of getting to work is to increase the demand for automobiles. There is nothing “natural” in this increase in demand for automobiles; it is

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<sup>2</sup> Beginning in the 1920s and continuing for three decades, General Motors with the help of Standard Oil, and Firestone Tires undermined the rail-based public transit systems in the urban areas of the US, in order to promote the demand for automobiles, a story now often told under the title, “The Great American Street Car Scandal.”



socially constructed. Another implication is that when the demand for automobiles increases, it comes at the expense of our other options-- public transport, and bicycles, just to name two, will be less available, and less resources will be allocated to their use and development (recall the point about opportunity cost). That process too increases scarcity for these basic use values. Again this scarcity is not a “normal” condition of nature; it is socially constructed. The argument here is that the exchange economy underproduces basic use values and expends resources in the production of high-value added commodities. As Illich writes in *Tools*, (1973, p. 15) the present world of industrial production, “is divided into those who do not have enough and those who have more than enough, those who are pushed off the road by cars and those who drive them.”

Although in *Tools* he used a different terminology than I use in this paper, Illich identified a variety of ways in which scarcity is socially constructed, and proposed the concept of multiple balance which can serve as a framework for a program of convivial tools. (1973, pp. 46-83) First was his idea of a “radical monopoly” by which he meant, “a kind of dominance by one product that goes far beyond what the concept of monopoly usually implies. Generally we mean by “monopoly” the exclusive control by one corporation over the means of producing (or selling) a commodity or service. . . . Monopolies of this kind restrict the choices open to the consumer. . . . By “radical monopoly” I mean the dominance of one type of product rather than the dominance of one brand. I speak about radical monopoly when one industrial production process exercises an exclusive control over the satisfaction of a pressing need, and excludes nonindustrial activities from competition.” (1973, pp. 51-52) The automobile, which can shape space in a city to meet its own needs ruling out movement by public transportation or foot or by bicycle, as illustrated above, is one such example of a radical monopoly.

Another element of the multiple balances was “biological degradation.” At the time of his writing, the role of overpopulation, excessive affluence, and faulty technology in threatening the environment was well known. While recognizing the need to limit procreation, consumption, and waste, he argued that it was important to radically reduce society’s expectations for what machines will do for us. A third element of his theory of multiple balances is “overprogramming.” Balanced learning depends on the ratio of two kinds of knowledge. One is the result of people spontaneously interacting with each other and with their environment, the most obvious example being learning your native language. The second knowledge by contrast involves formal training, schooling, training manuals, experts, and much capital. In industrial

societies the balance between these two types of knowledge has drastically shifted towards the latter thus reducing the autonomous capacity of individuals to attend to their needs.

Overprogramming develops a certain consciousness and prevents the population from getting an accurate assessment of things such as radical monopoly.

A fourth element of multiple balances is “social polarization” in industrial society. Non-convivial tools push societies to grow in numbers and in affluence. The underprivileged grow in number, while the already privileged grow in affluence, and power gets polarized. Illich writes, “Significant benefits for the poor demand a reduction in the resources used by the rich, while significant benefits for the rich make murderous demands on the resources of the poor. Yet the rich pretend that by exploiting the poor nations they will become rich enough to create a hyperindustrial abundance for all. The elites of poor countries share this fantasy.” (1973, p. 68)

Illich notes that social polarization has far reaching consequences for the demands and needs of women, blacks, and other minorities. At best, these groups succeed in getting some of their members through school and into well-paying jobs. “They claim victory when they get equal pay for equal rank. Paradoxically, these movements strengthen the idea that unequal graded work is necessary and that high-rise hierarchies are necessary to produce what an egalitarian society needs. . . . It does not matter for what specific purpose minorities now organize if they seek an equal share in consumption, an equal place on the pyramid of production, or equal nominal power in the government of ungovernable tools. As long as a minority acts to increase its share within a growth-oriented society, the final result will be a keener sense of inferiority for most of its members” (1973, pp. 71-72). This is a very radical argument which states that the present demands for equality has the net effect of producing permanent inequality.

The fifth element of planned balance is “obsolescence” that produces devaluation, “which is the result not of a certain general rate of change but of change in those products which exercise a radical monopoly” (1973, pp. 73). Products cannot be improved without retooling huge capital-intensive machines. To make this profitable huge markets must be created for new products. Hence the functional need for obsolescence. In such a society limits on the rate of change are viewed as a threat.

Illich has shown that scarcity comes into being from within the process of industrial production, and there is no known way to eliminate scarcity by simply producing more. Production induced biological degradation contributes to scarcity by destroying conditions of

production as seen for example, in soil erosion, water pollution, and pesticide contamination. Radical monopoly occurs when an industrial product becomes the only means by which certain needs can be met, thus creating a huge demand for that particular product. As Illich has repeatedly pointed out the great demand for automobiles arose out of the destruction of the alternative means of locomotion such as walking and bicycling. Moreover, the radical monopoly of automobiles restructures space to meet its own needs, thus creating an even greater demand for cars. Programming refers to the altering of people's values so that they are consistent with the needs of an industrial economy. As Illich has shown, there are many mechanisms for programming including the inculcation of values in schools. Advertising plays a key role in the programming of consumers to "need" the goods manufactured by industrial productivity. Polarization is an inevitable consequence of the fact that the economy has only a limited number of high wage jobs, and therefore, not all people have enough money to consume the high-valued goods they desire. In a polarized society, by a strange twist of irony, legitimate demands for equality—good jobs and good pay—contribute directly to the creation of scarcity. The economy by its very hierarchical structure cannot produce enough high wage jobs for the mass of people. But instead of demanding changes in the structure of the economy, the powerful equality discourse has socialized us to demand an increase in consumption which only serves to fuel the treadmill, reproduce inequality, and fan the fires of unattainable hope. Finally, there is planned obsolescence whose very purpose is to create demand for new or improved products.

It is abundantly clear that the five elements of balance that Illich speaks of are present in all modern economies. One does not need an advanced degree in economics to see how they create increased demands for particular goods, while eliminating less resource-intensive ways of meeting basic use values. That is why poverty persists in the richest economies, and that is also why poverty in poor countries cannot be alleviated by opting for more growth and development.

### 3. Subjugation of Use Value by Exchange Value

There are two ways to view poverty. The universally accepted view of poverty is that household can be defined as poor when it lacks the income to purchase a basic market basket of use values. This is how the US Census Bureau defines poverty in the US and this is also how the World Bank measures poverty in the poor countries. Saul Alinsky, a famous community activist

from Chicago in the 1960s, is supposed to have once said that the matter of poverty is easy to understand, “you are poor when you do not have money.”

Alternatively we could say: a household is poor when it lacks physical access to a basic basket of use values such as adequate food, good health, housing, energy, and transport. Although these two views of poverty sound similar, they are in fact not, and lead to radically different conclusions and approaches. The choice to begin with, lack of income or a physical lack of basic use values (basic needs), leads you to two diametrically opposed views, two very different theories, and two very different prescriptive measures and understandings of agency. The idea that people are poor because they do not have enough money is an example of what Foucault (1979, pp. 177-184) would have called a normalization discourse which refers to a manner of speaking in which a particular state of affairs appears normal to us. Poverty as not having enough income is not a self-evident truth; it is a way in which powerful discourses make it appear normal to speak about the poor that way. This normalization has come at a very steep cost, borne primarily by poor people themselves.

In 2012 the size of the US health economy was 2.7 trillion dollars and yet all that money seemed incapable of producing the most basic of all use values, namely, healthy American bodies. The Center for Disease Control speaks of an epidemic of obesity and Type II diabetes and a rise in the rates of incidence in cardiac disorder, hypertension, and chronic pain. This is a clear example of the “underproduction of basic values,” a phenomenon which is seen in nearly all other sectors of the economy—food, housing, transport, and energy—and which Illich would have certainly recognized as familiar.

Marx opened his *Capital* with a chapter on the nature of commodities. There he explains that a commodity carries two kinds of value: a use value and an exchange value. Use value refers to the utility derived from the consumption of a commodity and exchange value refers to the price paid to purchase a commodity. Use value refers to a quality and exchange value refers to a quantity.

According to Marx the simplest form of exchange is C-M-C, the transformation of commodities (C) into money (M) wherein that money is used to buy another commodity (C). This is the circuit of use value—the purpose of exchange is to obtain a good that is consumed and the circuit ends with the act of consumption.

The other form of value is the circuit of exchange denoted by M-C-M' where money (M) is transformed into a commodity (C) that is then sold for a larger amount of money (M') where the goal is to increase profit, i.e.  $M' > M$ . A capitalist will use money to buy commodities such as raw materials, machines, and labor to manufacture a finished commodity which is then sold for a profit. The motivation for this production is not just profit but the reinvestment of the profit in further expansion of money or capital. This in fact may provide a minimal definition of capitalism where the object of production is the expansion of capital; Marx used (M-C-M') as a general formula for the expansion of capital.

Marx's two circuits of value give us a useful way to revisit what I called earlier the two views of poverty. From the perspective of use value, poverty can be seen as a household's physical lack of access to adequate food, good health, housing, energy, and transport. From the perspective of exchange value, poverty can be defined as not having enough money to purchase a basic market basket of use values. As I have noted, the second definition is the universally accepted view of poverty

When a household is declared poor because it does not have sufficient income for a basic basket of goods we accomplish two powerful transformations. First, basic use values automatically transform into commodities to be purchased in the market place. Second, the household needs to be employed by the economy for it to have income to buy commodities. The net effect of the US Census and The World Bank's definitions of poverty is to normalize the incorporation of the household firmly into the circuit of exchange value (where poverty is primarily defined as the lack of *purchasing power*). With that seemingly inconsequential definition we have accomplished a sea change—we have moved the household from the circuit of use value to the circuit of exchange value. This is what Marx would have described as a classic case of commodity fetishism – first workers sell their labor on the market as commodity and second they buy all their basic use values from the market as commodities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> When Marx developed his ideas on commodity fetishism in the first chapter of *Capital* he meant a lot more than what I have described here in the shift of the household from the circuit of use value to the circuit of exchange value. Marx talked about something far more profound, namely, the perception of social relationships among humans as a relationship of one commodity to another, measured by its money value.

The shift of the household from the circuit of use value to that of exchange value has enormous consequences for the fate of the poor.<sup>4</sup> We have turned away from the question “Why does the economy so systematically underproduce basic use values?” to one where we ask, “Why do poor people not have enough money to buy basic use values?” We have moved from the direct interrogation of economic rationality to one where that inquiry is now deeply buried under several discursive layers of mystification and obfuscation. In answer to the question of why poor people do not have enough money we have generated a vast discourse that has invoked a raft of explanatory variables—racial and gender discrimination, overpopulation, lack of natural resources, lack of investment capital, lack of education, the persistence of a culture of poverty, welfare dependence, and a modern form of geographic determinism explaining poverty as a matter of wrong latitude and being landlocked.<sup>5</sup> In my view addressing poverty is actually a lot easier than solving the problems of racial discrimination because race puts us into realm of people’s innermost thoughts over which outsiders have little agency. By invoking enormous metanarratives of race, class, gender, resources, and geographic location we have transformed poverty into a hopeless and endless Sisyphean task of constantly moving boulders uphill, and thus robbed ourselves of agency. Because we fail to see poverty as a matter of the subjugation of use values we insist that the solution to poverty is the further expansion of the circuit of exchange value as evidenced by the neo-liberal economic policies of the World Bank, The IMF, and WTO and the American discourse of creating jobs and expanding the middle class. And finally our total embrace of the logic of exchange value has prevented us from exploring the myriad ways in which it is indeed possible for poor households to gain access to basic values far more directly.

Once a household is defined as poor using an income threshold it entered the dizzying world of exchange, and is subjected to the entire force of exchange value whose circuits have now assumed global proportions.

#### 4. Shadow work and the Two Meanings of Commodity

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<sup>4</sup> I am only too aware that military hardware and luxury items of consumption are also use values and that is why I couched this discussion of poverty in the language of BASIC use values.

<sup>5</sup> See Danziger and Haveman (2001), Iceland (2006), and Sachs, Mellinger, and Gallup (2001); Murray (1984).

In 1981, Illich published his thoughts on the informal sector of the economy. Drawing on what researchers in the sixties had begun to call “the reproductive economy,” Illich offered a bold new analysis under the title *Shadow Work*. (1981) In the past the household had created most of what it needed to exist. But Illich’s interest is:

“... in that entirely different form of unpaid work which an industrial society demands as a necessary complement to the production of goods and services. This kind of unpaid servitude does not contribute to subsistence. Quite the contrary, equally with wage-labor, it ravages subsistence. I call this complement to wage labor "shadow-work". It comprises most housework women do in their homes and apartments, the activities connected with shopping, most of the homework of students cramming for exams, the toil expended commuting to and from the job. It includes the stress of forced consumption, the tedious and regimented surrender to therapists, compliance with bureaucrats, the preparation for work to which one is compelled, and many of the activities usually labeled "family life" (1981, p. 100).

According to Illich the family is the site through which these two complementary forms of industrial labor are fused. He maintains that shadow work is not about subsistence, it is simply unpaid work in the service of industrial labor. In his labor theory of value Marx had argued that capital accumulation came from unpaid wages of industrial labor which he called surplus value. Following Illich, if we add the subsidy which capital receives from unpaid shadow work, then the surplus value appropriated by capitalist is much larger than what Marx ever imagined.

To describe subsistence oriented activities in contrast to those of the formal economy (paid + {unpaid = shadow work}) Illich proposes the term “vernacular.” He uses the term “to designate the activities of people when they are not motivated by thoughts of exchange, a word that denotes autonomous, non-market related actions through which people satisfy their everyday needs” (1981, p. 57). Illich says there is a class of words that designate the satisfaction of needs that economists cannot measure such as “use values” and “household economics.” These terms he says are too specialized, tainted with ideological prejudice, and “badly limps.”

The term he favors is “the vernacular,” a term he believes that is broad enough to include everything from the preparation of food and the shaping of language, to childbirth and recreation, without including a commodified but unpaid activity akin to the traditional housework of women.

In the light of the distinction I made earlier about exchange value, use value, and basic use values, I find Illich's presentation of the vernacular a bit problematic on several counts. Consider a poor woman homemaker who is married to a wageworker and is raising a child at home—in my judgment this is a basic use value of this household. It may well be that such work subsidizes the accumulation of industrial capital but by what logic chopping device do we deem this as “unproductive shadow work” and not vernacular in the sense that Illich defines it (see figure 1). Illich's exclusiveness in the definition of vernacular creates more problems than it solves. And the language seemed so exotic that I found I could not use it in my conversations with the residents of West Philadelphia during the 10 years I directed a community outreach project.

The conception of a Basic Needs Economy and the Social Construction of Scarcity, that is, the proposition that poverty arises from the subjugation of use values by exchange value and the incorporation of households in the circuit of exchange values has the advantage that it diagnoses the problem while simultaneously pointing a way towards the resolution of the problem.

There is a second source of confusion that arises from the way both Marx and Illich use the term “commodity.” Illich uses the term vernacular to oppose all commodities that include both paid labor and the unpaid labor of shadow work.

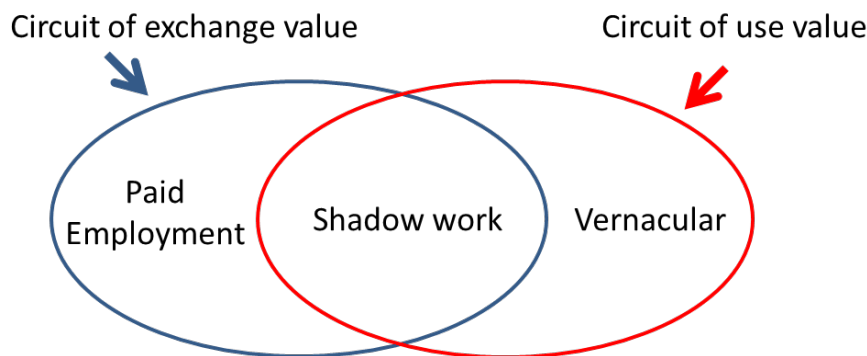


Figure 1. Economic categories employed by Marx and Illich

Marx uses the concept of commodity in both his fundamental circuits of exchange: the circuit of use value (C–M–C) and his circuit of exchange value (M–C–M'). But the manner in which the concept of commodity appears in these two terms is very different and a distinction that must be made explicit.



In the use value circuit the production of the commodity is for exchange in the sense that money facilitates what would otherwise be a barter trade. The transaction happens in the market, but the purpose of commodity production is not the expansion of exchange value or the creation of profit. By contrast, in the circuit of exchange value the intent of commodity production is the expansion of exchange value—the exact nature of the use value is almost entirely incidental as long as it can be sold for a profit.

Clearly a commodity can enter the economy in one of two ways: to facilitate exchange between households or to expand exchange value for the capitalist. Illich's language of the vernacular does not help us to make this important distinction. As for Marx, even though he opens *Capital* with a discussion of the two faces of a commodity—use value and exchange value—use value is not a concept he explores at depth. Marx's attention was completely focused on uncovering the mechanism by which the capitalist appropriates surplus value for the expansion of capital. In my judgment an opposition should not be created with the vernacular and the commodity. The production of commodities as a simple act of exchange (instead of bartering) within the use value circuit (C->M->C) is quite compatible with Illich's desire to give priority to the production of basic use values.

## 5. Finding Agency

In the first chapter of *Shadow Work* titled, "The three dimensions of public choice" Illich lays out a vision of the society he would like to live in and help bring to realization. "A mode of life characterized by austerity, modesty, modern yet hand-made and built on a small scale that does not lend itself to propagation through marketing. For the first time in history, poor and rich societies would be effectively placed on equal terms. But for this to come true, the present perception of international north-south relations in terms of development must first be superseded." (1981, p. 12) This is a very ambitious vision to say the least. However, as inspiring and insightful as Illich is in his analysis, nowhere does he write about how to get from there from here. This is not meant as a criticism of Illich, rather it is an invitation to those of us who learned so much from him to turn away from exegesis, and make him alive, relevant and contemporary. That is not only a way to honor our debt to his work, but also an urgent need.

The economic development that Illich so loudly objected to is driven by a system of global capital, which, as he himself said in *Tools* is dangerously out of balance. Ecological degradation, radical monopoly, overprogramming, social polarization, and planned obsolescence—these elements are essentially a structural description of the capitalist market economy we live in today. However, global capitalism—conceived in the womb of colonial history and functioning today through international trade, multinational corporations, internet finance capital, aid, debt, military intervention, armament sales, espionage, bribery, corruption, and even terrorism is a vast discursive material formation. No sovereign power—no president, parliament, social movement or army—has the power to change this system, let alone guide it towards a mode of life characterized by austerity, modesty, and frugality. So where and how do we find agency to eradicate poverty if our analysis tell us that poverty is caused by a vast system over which we have no power? Furthermore, the system we speak of is not only the material manifestation of global capital, but is also the confluence of a consumerist culture that equates success with income and the amount of stuff we possess, the academic disciplines, (particularly the discipline of economics that provides the theoretical rationale for development), and a political system fully beholden to support from capital. So what is to be done?

The seeds of the answer lie very much in Illich's work. As the economic geographer Gibson-Graham, writes "What if we were to accept that the goal of thinking is not to extend knowledge by confirming what we already know, that the world is a place of domination and oppression? What if instead we thought about openings and strategic possibilities in the cracks?" (2008, p. 619). However, to make Illich's critique of exchange value relevant for today we need a program to resurrect the theory and practice of use values.

First, it requires a change in epistemology, that is, about how we know what we know. Disciplines such as economics, anthropology, sociology, political science, and human geography need to incorporate the implications of post-structural discourse theory developed by thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze, and Guattari. Traditional social science has to recognize the importance of semiotics and discourse theory of social construction to view how social science understands the world.

Second, we need an elaboration of the claim that poverty is the opportunity cost of development. The Marxian critique of capitalism is not enough because Marxists too work

within the framework of development, albeit socialist development. Illich is strongest here and most of his writing can be harnessed to make a critique of the circuit of exchange value.

Third, we need to focus on how to resurrect a theory of use values, or as I call it the Basic Needs Economy. We are rich with knowledges on how to produce basic use values at affordable prices; these knowledges exist in the fields of nutrition, agriculture, health, housing, energy, transport, and health. The literature is vast and too numerous to list here, a point we should all find encouraging.

Fourth, we need to contest the idea that people are poor because the places they live in have no resources. What we call a “resource” is in fact a relation discursively born at the intersection of supply and demand. For all practical purposes solar energy is not a resource for driving a car but it can be a resource for heating a home. What exactly is a resource cannot be decided without first asking what the end-use is and then seeing what sources can meet that end-use. Although of course petroleum can be used to heat a house, it is enormously wasteful, most particularly because there are other less-resource intensive ways to heat a house. In each of these cases we must first begin with a statement of end-use values, then a statement of all sources of available supply, and try to match sources to end-uses. From the viewpoint of matching end-uses to possible sources, heating a house with oil has been likened to cutting butter with a chainsaw. Matching end-use to resources and energy appropriate supply is not the way we use resources now in the US or any place else in the world. When we declare that Saudi Arabia is rich in resources, but Bangladesh is not, what we are really saying is that Saudi Arabia has resources needed by industrial economies. The fact is that the physical geography of Bangladesh is not at all an impediment to banish hunger from that nation, nor to meet the basic use values of its people.

Fifth, we need an explicit conversation about power and agency. Here I wish to invoke Foucault who in his *History of Sexuality* invites us to move away from sovereign power which subjugates us where “. . . the individual in question is the subject opposite the monarch, the citizen opposite the state, the child opposite the parent, or the disciple opposite the master. A legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other. (1990, p. 85)” “. . . Representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king.” (1990, p. 89) In the theory of scarcity advanced in this paper the subjugation of basic use values by the hegemony of exchange value

happens within a very large diffused network of discursive-material relations. Development-induced poverty cannot be banished by changing governments at election time. However, a detailed analysis of the subjugation of use values will reveal the tens of thousands of sites at which the process occurs through technical, social, cultural, political, ecological, and academic relations. Relative to our subject-specific knowledge, all of these sites are also sites of opportunity for resistance and action. As Foucault writes, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere, . . . these points of resistance are everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellion, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case.” (1990, p. 96) We should view the basic use values of food, health, energy, housing, transport, and education as existing in subject specific networks of power/knowledge. For example, a community garden in the inner-city producing and sharing vegetables is a site at which scarcities induced by a food desert can be engaged.

Sixth, there is the question of scale for social action. Just as much as food, health, and housing provide sites for non-sovereign action, such actions should also take place along a range of scales beginning with the body and expanding to the family, the neighborhood, the community, the region, and beyond. Participating in a national struggle for food security does not mean that actions at an individual or personal level are less important. One of the best examples of action at an individual scale that has profound implications for the exchange value driven by the food and health industry are the choices we make about what we eat and how we care for our bodies. The body is, and must be, used as an instrument in resisting the hegemony of the valorization of exchange value.

Finally, we need documentation of actual case studies showing efforts designed to resurrect basic values. For example, for 12 years from 1998 to 2010, I conducted a Penn State community outreach course titled “Rethinking Urban Poverty: The Philadelphia Field Project.” The theory behind the course was to help households gain some independence from the larger circuit of exchange value. Even within the context of the larger market economy it is still possible to create spaces that produce basic use values at costs affordable to the poor. As mentioned earlier I call this concept The Basic Needs economy.

In West Philadelphia, instead of talking about eradicating poverty or why poor people don’t have more income we opened with three leading questions. Within the local area we

asked: (1) Can the quality of life in all sectors of basic use values be improved at affordable prices?; (2) Since many poor people are on fixed incomes is it possible to bring down the cost of living?; and (3) Can a basic use values economy create jobs to address the question of widespread unemployment? The answer to all three questions was a resounding “Yes.”

What is required will be the building of discursive spaces which cogently confront existing economic theories of scarcity. Yet more than thirty years ago a man pointed to exactly this. Illich, among other things, laid the framework and foundation for this work: the use of substantive knowledge in nutrition, health, housing, energy, transport, and education to produce basic use values at affordable prices; create means of employment that produce basic use values; and make visible those places where people have demonstrated how basic needs economies work.

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### **Author's bio**

Lakshman Yapa is Professor in Penn State University's Department of Geography. His research interests combine theories of economic development, postmodern discourse theory, and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). His research and outreach work, *Rethinking Urban Poverty in the United States*, is an academic program that combines teaching, research, and service learning in West Philadelphia. Lakshman utilizes postmodern discourse theory to clarify the impasse of the "crisis of development." Lakshman was recognized in 2000 with the University's highest award for faculty outreach. Recent publications include: "What is Scarcity?" *A Dictionary for the Twenty-First Century: The Ambivalent Future of Knowledge and Culture* edited by A. Nandy and V. Lal. In press.

De-Linking Peace and Globalization

Sajay Samuel

*Laudatio*

On October 4, 2002 I arrived in Lucca. I was accompanying Ivan Illich on his first visit there. On that late summer day I could not imagine a summer without him. On that day, close to the end of a year, I did not consider it possible that I would not hear his voice the next year. That day has passed, as have many others. Yet I cannot forget that day. It remains radiant in my memory like few others. I remember him sitting at this table: white shirt and dark blue tie slightly askew, a sheaf of papers by his side, one leg folded under him, his head cocked to one side; his skin glowing like onion skin parchment, his clear gray eyes touching this face then that one; spinning out his thoughts in a weave of words that entranced and captivated—almost exactly as when I first laid eyes on him in a lecture room—this room-- at Penn State university 12 years ago. Thankfully, Penn State has not yet found the money to remodel this room as it has done so much of the campus. It remains recognizably familiar from more than a decade ago. My memory of this his last public talk is brilliant and bright. It glows like the red tips of the flame he brought to my life.

By inviting me to this celebration on the tenth anniversary of his death, you, Dana, offer me an occasion to praise and honor him. And to do so in the company of friends: Lucky, Gene Bazan, Greg. There are some people who re-orient, fundamentally, how one thinks and speaks. One cannot speak about such people. One can only speak with them. I cannot speak about Ivan. Today, I hope he forgives my free use of his writings with the same generosity and patience with which he accepted me as a student so many years ago.

It is perhaps simple but certainly not simplistic to say that all of Ivan's work was in the cause of protecting and fostering friendship. The special sense he gives to it can be gleaned from his remarks to David Cayley and published in *Rivers North of the Future*. Friendship is rarely on the surface of his writings; occasionally, it is bashfully buried; most often however, Ivan defends friendship by not speaking about it directly. He defends friendship by writing about what destroys the possibility for it. This is how I understand his writings as a so-called "social critic": of schools, hospitals, transportation, development, and so on.

About 40 years ago, Ivan was one of the first to challenge and criticize the idea and

programs of development, long before that became a fashion. He was also one of the first to point out, in the mid to late 1980's, that the idea of development was made obsolete by the idea of globalization or global management. By now the critique of globalization is almost fashionable, though not at the business school from which I earn my keep. Globalization is still all the rage there. But fashions are ephemeral and fickle, like ripples on the surface of a pond. Ivan's critique of development, and *a fortiori* of globalization, was fundamental, like the deep currents of a sea.

Ivan's talk to the Asian Peace Research Association more than 20 years ago, titled "The De-linking of Peace and Development" is a doorway to much of his writings that pose a radical challenge to economics. A slow and patient reader of this talk will thereby avoid confusing surface ripples for deep currents. I also think that his argument warns those who correctly counter economic optimism—now under the name of anti-globalization—of how they could become unwitting collaborators in the destruction of what is left of "people's peace." Today I would like to briefly comment on his argument that *Pax oeconomica* destroys 'people's peace'; that a commodity intensive society wages endless war on customs, on nature, and on gender. I chose to focus on this here, also because many in the administration and faculty at Penn State are doing their bit to push the globalization agenda. For them, globalization is a good thing; the newest wrinkle on that old burden to help the oppressed, feed the hungry and cure the sick.

#### *Notion of Pax Oeconomica*

*Pax oeconomica* is the notion that peace means a truce between economic powers, whether individual or corporate. The idea that commerce or commodity-intensive exchange is an antidote to war and the ground of peace is a uniquely European idea. Jean Monnet, a founder of the EU, believed in it strongly enough so that Italians and Greeks are now members of an economic union originally conceived to prevent another war in Europe. Apparently, George Bush and the gang of 8 G-8) are also firm believers in *Pax oeconomica*. They think that the terrorist is an unsatisfied consumer; that economic growth will eradicate the evil of terrorism.

*Pax oeconomica* is a modern idea, which nevertheless, by now, has been exported all over the world whether it is written as peace, *paix* or *pace*. I want to emphasize the lowly and modern assumption underpinning *pax oeconomica*. Today, *Pax oeconomica* is taken as valuable as an antidote to war and as a ground of peace. But this value is based on the assumption that the natural condition of man is war. This assumption is modern for two



reasons. First, for all ancients, whether Greek or Christian, civil war--war against one's one--was prohibited and considered evil. After all, that was the only reason why Athenians required no justification for war against the Spartans, and that both Christians and Muslims required divine justification for war. Second, it is considered an assumption because it is scientific. The preference for scientific hypotheses instead of concepts rooted in common sense is a modern bad habit. Arbitrary and fanciful assumptions permit all kinds of non-sense. The notion that there is one homogenous and universal motivating impulse behind all human action makes no sense; which is why the ancients did not presume to know as much as we moderns do. The assumption that civil war is a natural condition of man legitimizes what was prohibited and naturalizes evil. Instead of recognizing man's highest aspirations, it casts men with beasts. In this it justifies political arrangements ordered by what is base and lowly in man instead of what is highest in him. *Pax oeconomica* is therefore what is valuable for beastly men.

Through the mouths of political authorities since the 1600's, allow me to sketch the form of *pax oeconomica* that is now identified with peace. Thomas Hobbes, who is most often considered the first modern thinker on politics, wrote that people everywhere are moved solely by the desire for power and are therefore led to a "war of all against all." According to Hobbes, since the fear of death makes all men equal, they are impelled to contract for a sovereign: a Leviathan so strong and powerful that it can put a stop to civil war with the threat of overwhelming violence. For Hobbes then, domestic peace is the truce that results from trading in certain annihilation for possible death.

After Hobbes came John Locke with the idea that the natural desire motivating men was not the desire for power but the desire for money, for purchasing power. Therefore, he argued, people would contract for a State ruled by law and not a sovereign. The rule of law is less arbitrary than the rule of the sovereign because the inclination to possessions is satisfied in more predictable ways than the inclination to power. The desire for possessions is satisfied by economic exchange and domestic peace is ensured, for Locke, when commercial activity flourishes. Yet, for Locke, foreign relations between nation states are plagued by war since the desire for power still afflicts sovereign states.

But Montesquieu writing in 1748 on the benefits of commerce says: "the natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace. Two nations that trade with each other become reciprocally dependent; if one has an interest in buying, the other has an interest in selling, and all unions are founded on natural needs." For Montesquieu, unlike Locke, even foreign

relations between states can be peaceful when founded on economic exchange. Yet, like Locke before him, Montesquieu agreed that economic exchange is prompted by the “natural needs,” whether of persons or of nation states.

By now you can see that the Lockean desire for possessions is a softer version of the Hobbesian desire for power. By the time of Montesquieu, war is the absence of peace and commerce is the basis or ground of peace. Commerce is sweet, *doux commerce*, because it softens the passions that lead to war and wickedness; because the rational calculation of commercial self-interest overcomes the war-prone passions of men. Within a hundred years, by the nineteenth century, *pax oeconomica* is given its full form as, for example, in the writings of Benjamin Constant and the American Founding Fathers. The full form of *pax oeconomica* is that economic exchange is a peaceful alternative to war and is the ground of peace; and that both the desire to trade and to war are natural conditions of man.

As proved by the beliefs and statements of Jean Monnet and George Bush, not to mention the legion of contemporary economists and political scientists, I think that *pax oeconomica* understood in this way is fundamental to modern political self-understanding. We can read this in Benjamin Constant who wrote that, “war and commerce are only two different means to attain the same end, that of possessing what is desired.... It is clear that the more the commercial tendency prevails, the weaker must the tendency to war become.” Or we can recognize this in the Federalist papers and Constitution of the United States, which underscore the commercial nature of peace by constructing government as a force to protect the pursuit of “happiness” meant as property.

This modern and by now worldwide link between peace and economics hides three truths. First, peace was never before thought as the opposite of war or as the fruit of commerce. Second economic growth whether under the name of development or globalization is a form of war itself: unbridled economic exchange destroys nature and cultures. Third, commerce was never before rooted in human nature; neither negatively in the so-called natural inclination to war (Hobbes) nor positively in the so-called natural desire for material improvements (Adam Smith).

#### *History of “Peace”*

Today peace has the same meaning of *Pax oeconomica* all over the world but that was not always true. I have already suggested that domestic peace as the opposite of civil war and peace as the opposite of war between nation states was a specifically modern Anglo-European idea. But more deeply as Illich showed, peace was not an abstract idea but a very

specific and particular spirit that was enjoyed by each community uniquely. The Roman *Pax* announced the annexation of a conquered territory to the law and order of the imperial city Rome. The Jewish *Shalom* refers to the grace flowing from heaven like oil dripping through the beard of Aaron the forefather. The Athenian *philia* speaks of the friendship between free men of a city. The Japanese *foodo*, the Chinese *Huo'ping* and the Indian *Shanti* have incomparable meanings, though all are today usually translated as “peace.” Historically then, what now goes under the name “peace” was neither related to economics or to war. Each people, each *ethnos* had its own *ethos* of peace; each culture claimed its own kind of peace; each community had its own way of being left in peace.

#### *Pax Populi or People's Peace*

This was true, even for Europe until the early modern period. *Pax populi*, or people's peace did not mean the absence of war between feuding lords. Rather, the *pax* that the Church and emperor protected in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was the peace of the land. The customary rights of way to water and pasture; the safety of grain and livestock; the integrity of fields and dwellings; all these were the subject of the *pax*. *Pax populi* ensured that people were at peace even if the lords were at war.

*Pax populi* protected vernacular autonomy. Vernacular means everything that is homemade, homegrown, and homebred. What is vernacular is not economic; vernacular activities are neither paid for nor exchanged; modes of vernacular subsistence do not separate production from consumption; vernacular autonomy refers to the countless different ways that people all through history and in places as different as Peru and Iran have subsisted without being dependent on markets or the State. What is customary here is different from what is customary there: even in India, we know well that until quite recently, Keralites and Tamilians spoke, dressed, walked, ate, and built very differently from the Maharastrians and the Gujaratis. During the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, when European merchants, craftsmen, or even town dwellers wanted to incorporate their bonds of customary practice, they did so by a legalizing an oath—a *conjuratio*—blessed by God and not a contract.

Neither the 12<sup>th</sup> century serf nor the 14<sup>th</sup> century merchant thought that peace was the opposite of war, as did Montesquieu. Neither the serf nor lord thought that peace was rooted in commerce, as did Locke. Neither lord nor guild merchant imagined that there was a natural inclination to commerce as did Constant, or that there was a natural inclination to war as did Hobbes. For commerce to be thought of as the ground of peace, the *conjuratio* or oath blessed by God would have to become a contract between free individuals guaranteed by the State;

*pax populi*—the customary protection of vernacular culture would have to be replaced by *pax oeconomica*—legally enforced economic contracts.

### *Economy Destroys the Vernacular*

*Pax oeconomica* has replaced *pax populi*. But this is no simple replacement as when you replace one light bulb for another. *Pax oeconomica* is founded on the destruction of *pax populi*; market-intensive society destroys vernacular cultures; and economic contracts transform independent people into wage-dependent needy humans. Economic peace is like war: just as war makes all combatants similar, so also economic peace replaces the great variety of vernacular cultures with commodity intensive markets. Market society propagates a continuous kind of low-intensity war. It is a kind of low-intensity war because economic existence is based on endless competition and insatiable envy: neighbor and friend must turn into stranger and potential competitor for scarce resources. Envy fuels needs and therefore needs knows no bounds: is this not why the richest time in history is also plagued by the perpetual fear of scarcity?

It is also deadly. *Pax oeconomica* is deadly because it destroys nature and culture. We are all familiar by now with the immense destruction of nature—after all, from the Club of Rome to the failed Copenhagen non-agreements; that has been the great political theme of the last half-century. The war on nature can be understood as a war on the commons: what in Italian is called *gli usi civici*. The commons is that part of the earth that is outside the household but still open to its subsistence. The well-known enclosure of the pastures in England is an example of how the commons—whether of grasslands or of silence—is destroyed. Economic exchange encloses all commons by transforming the earth into either private or public domains. Both private and public domains are owned as economic resources to be used—euphemistically called “the environment.”

Market society devastates vernacular culture and introduces industrialized man to a kind of frustration unknown to human history. People are not only utterly dependent on institutions but must suffer the inevitable frustrations that these institutions cause when they grow beyond a certain intensity. Traffic jams that kill about 50,000 a year in the US, doctor induced deaths that kill twice that number; schools that produce more failures than graduates; these are the trivial consequences of the counter-productivity of modern institutions. Modernized poverty—where the industrial poor are prevented from subsisting outside the market or the government handout; and shadow work—which requires people to participate

in destroying their own abilities at subsistence are two less trivial consequences of market society.

Market society also destroys gender. It is founded on the scientific hypothesis that all people, everywhere, are human. To be human is to be individual; to be human is to be without gender; to be human is to belong nowhere. One can find no better definition of the human than the Declaration on Human Rights, which states that —“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” Only he who is shorn of all marks of social and personal distinction and reduced to biological functions is entitled by the name human. Devoid of all status and opinion, the subject of modern rights and freedoms is exactly as John Locke imagined it: as an “X”—a nothing that is free because radically undetermined. To be human is, “to be whatever you want to be.” Since whatever you want to be is increasingly obtained through economic exchange, the human is also the abstract subject of economic peace and is better named *homo economicus*. *Homo economicus* replaces gender just as *pax oeconomica* replaces *pax populi*. The propagation of *homo economicus* under the banner of market society is the hidden conceit of human rights and individual freedom no less than that of development and globalization.

Market society has now penetrated to all corners of the earth; it is now global. There are many who fight against economic development and globalization—the hooks through which market society is inserted into vernacular culture. But these are unwitting collaborators in the spread of market society when they defend the environment and the ecology whether through “natural contracts” (Serres) or environmental risk assessments. They are collaborators when they defend cultural identities as human rights, whether through “peace-keeping” by force or by promoting the ethnic by making it chic. They are collaborators when they defend economic peace whether through government regulations or corporate ethics. They are collaborators when they are seduced by the many guises of market society to forget that the only true enemy of market society is vernacular culture and that only *pax populi* is a permanent threat to *pax oeconomica*.

I am mindful of those who think that Kyoto-style agreements are different in kind from those of the WTO. I am mindful of those who argue that because vernacular cultures are almost entirely destroyed and because market society is a worldwide fact, we who see it as a great threat to life and liberty should be practical in our criticisms. It is occasionally useful to

remind such practical wolves in sheep's clothes that it is a mark of courage to continue the battle even if the war be lost.

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### **Author's Bio**

Sajay Samuel is Clinical Associate Professor of Accounting in Penn State University's Smeal College of Business. He regularly teaches management accounting and related subjects to undergraduates, graduates, MBA's and Executives. Sajay was awarded the 2006 Lester J. Shonto Faculty Award for Excellence in Accounting Education. His current research aims at clarifying the political implications of accounting practice. With Samar Farage, Sajay collaborated with Ivan Illich in Germany, Italy and the United States. Sajay's recent publication includes an edited volume of Illich essays titled, *Beyond Economics and Ecology: The Radical Thought of Ivan Illich* (preface by Governor Jerry Brown).

A Flame In the Dark

Samar Farage

“A l’uomo che cavalca lungamente per terreni selvatici viene desiderio d’una città. Finalmente giunge a Isidora. Città dove i palazzi hanno scale a chiocciola incrostate di chioccioline marine, dove si fabbricano a regola d’arte cannocchiali e violini, dove quando il forestiero é incerto tra due donne ne incontra sempre una terza, dove le lotte dei galli degenerano in risse sanguinose tra gli scommettitori. A tutte queste cose egli pensava quando desiderava una città. Isidora é dunque la città dei suoi sogni: con una differenza. La città sognata conteneva lui giovane: a Isidora arriva in tarda età. Nella piazza c’è il muretto dei vecchi che guardano passare al gioventù; lui è seduto in fila con loro. I desideri sono già ricordi.” (Calvino: Le città e la memoria)

Translation

*“When a man rides a long time through wild regions he feels the desire for a city. Finally he comes to Isidora, a city where the buildings have spiral staircases encrusted with spiral seashells, where perfect telescopes and violins are made, where the foreigner hesitating between two women always encounters a third, where cockfights degenerate into bloody brawls among the bettors. He was thinking of all these things when he desired a city. Isidora, therefore, is the city of his dreams: with one difference. The dreamed-of city contained him as a young man; he arrives at Isidora in his old age. In the square there is the wall where the old men sit and watch the young go by; he is seated in a row with them. Desires are already memories.”*

In Florence, during the autumn of 2002, for one hour each day, the voice of Ivan sounded these lines again and again in his effort at teaching me Italian. He believed that memorizing such beautiful lines would lead me to love a language he felt entirely at home in; a language that in its rhythms and sounds profoundly resonated his yearnings for the blue waters of the Adriatic, for the green hills dotted with olive trees, the landscape that evoked the atmosphere of his childhood.

Today, many years later, his voice still faintly accompanies these lines from Calvino but his glittering eyes and benevolent smile are not there to forgive me my mistakes. I have

attempted to speak Italian with his Italian friends several times not only because I think he would have insisted that my fear not overshadow my respect for his listeners, but also as a homage to his efforts to teach me. I trusted that they would excuse my mistakes. Even though Ivan is no longer here physically, I suspect that for many of those who have known him well, he is somewhere close, laughing gently, his toes dipped in the waters of Lethe that wash memories from the feet of the dead and carries them to the pool of Mnemosyne where poets can find them.

I would like to write about a theme that was fundamental to Illich's life, thought and writings, though one that was not often noted: how to foster and cultivate the ground for friendship, as the ability to face one another in a mutual commitment to the truth. In this short paper, I can only give a glimpse of the importance he placed on friendship; on how he practiced friendship through conversations around a table.

Illich described his life as a pilgrimage among friends. Reflecting on what mattered most deeply to him, he stated it with surprising simplicity: to pursue disciplined and committed learning with a group of friends who trust one another. It is best to hear him again describing what, I have come to believe, was the central question guiding his work. He asked: "How I can live in the world into which I was born, the world where I experience increasingly that I am caught in a kind of imprisonment? How can I be true to whoever stands before me? How do I keep a space open when I find myself in the face and pupil of the other while the other finds himself in my face and gaze?"

In the light of these questions, his critique of modernity and technology attains a new coherence and clarity: The gift and surprise that is the Other can only wander in when that space is open. The immediacy, intimacy and freedom of my encounter with the other is threatened and even destroyed by what he once called non-convivial tools: for example, by schools that package knowledge and grade people; by diagnoses that prevent the arts of healing and suffering; by professions that impute needs to their clients; by screens that hide you from me. The question of how to be true to the one who stands before me is central because, ethics, in a world without an *ethnos*, can only truly be rooted in my relation to someone and not guided by unquestioned submission to positive laws and abstract norms.

Ivan was able to capture how artifacts deform and distort sensual perceptions in his unique way because he was an old witch. As he said, "I am hedge-straddler, a *zaunreiter* in German, which is an old name for a witch. With one foot I stand on my home ground in the tradition of Catholic philosophy in which more than two dozen generations have prayerfully



cultivated a garden into whose trees they carefully grafted pagan Greek and Roman shoots. My other foot, the one dangling on the outside is heavy with mud clots and scented by exotic herbs through which I have trampled.” Elsewhere, he introduced himself as a xenocryst, a mineral foreign to the rock in which it is embedded or as an extravagant thinker: from *extra-vagare*, he who walks outside.

Ivan felt estranged in a world where increasingly our feelings and thoughts about others and ourselves are deliberated designed. Estrangement did not lead him to withdraw from the world—but to live in it with courage and clarity. In this modern desert, his search for truth—*philosophia*-- was oriented by and in the service of *philia*-- friendship. In this, he emulated his master and friend from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the philosopher Hugh of St. Victor who had said: “For I was a foreigner and met you in a strange land, but the land was not really strange for I found friends there. I don’t know whether I first made friends or was made one, but I found charity there and I loved it; and could not tire of it for it was sweet to me, and I filled my heart with it, and was sad that my heart could hold so little. I could not take in all there was, but I took in as much as I could. I filled up all the space I had but I could not fit in all I found. So I accepted what I could, and weighed down with this precious gift, I did not feel any burden because my full heart sustained me. And now, having made a long journey, I find my heart still warmed, and none of the gift has been lost; for charity never ends.”

The question of how to face the other invokes the question of the Good as what is appropriate, fitting and harmonious. This question cannot be answered in schools and universities, which historically have been founded on the separation of sensual and ascetical living from critical intellectual pursuits, of habits of the heart and habits of the mind. In fact, such institutionalized learning is almost the enemy of learning how to live virtuously with the other. It contributes instead to deepening the sterile and senseless indifference towards the Other and reality. Universities have become cold laboratories where the absolute nature of the Good has been replaced by a relative calculus of positive and negative values. As such, universities have eroded our ability to trust our common sense as our guide for what is most fitting and proportionate, what the Greeks called *mesotes* or middle ground. Common sense, our first organ of judgment, was a physical faculty located in the heart for Aristotle and in the anterior cavity in the head for medieval philosophers. Historically, the common sense or *sensus communis* was the passage way between the external senses and internal senses. It was the site for the proportionate comingling of the senses before passage to the intellect. Understanding was primarily a sensual grasping of the world, best expressed in the medieval

adage: “*nihil potest esse in intellectu si non fuerat prius in sensu.*” With modern philosophy, such wisdom is reversed. Sense perception is doubted, mind and body are separated and people feel what has first been abstractly constructed in thought. The statement ushering modernity is Descartes, ‘I think therefore I am.’ This modern position sums up the disenfranchisement and disembodiment that Ivan fought against.

Illich’s critique of schools, universities and institutions was hence a critique of their power to hinder our ability to live decently with one another. Early on, he gave “*faute de mieux*” the name “research by people” to the disciplined search for truth outside institutions. He contrasted “research or science for people” conducted in the universities, with “science by people”: a type of research that is not sponsored by corporate clients, not published in prestigious academic journals and without much value for the supermarket. Such research done alone or in small groups has a direct bearing on the one who is engaged in it. Such research directly transforms who we are and how we live with one another. It permits a hospitable and convivial conversation. Illich stated that: ‘learned and leisured hospitality is the only antidote to the stance of deadly cleverness that is acquired in the pursuit of objectively secured knowledge.’ He called it “conversations around a table,” for what is better than a table to allow guests and host to face each other generously in a common pursuit?

A table is the occasion for the gathering of friends engaged in serious inquiry on matters that have a direct bearing on how they live, points to how, for Illich, philosophy always implied a way of life, a daily endeavor, a practice of graceful playfulness. Wherever he went a table was set: a host would invite the guests over a threshold to a table where others assembled; to a place that was personal without being private. This open and generous hospitality was symbolized by a candle that stood lit on the table: a flame that stood for a third that could knock at the door. There were no stated rules, but friends partaking the soup ensured that the table was set, dishes were washed and soup was stretched for the latecomers. This studium was a convivium.

The conversation around the table was unrelenting but disciplined. The rigor demanded by Illich implied an *askesis*, a training into arts of thinking and virtuous living so they become a second nature. It implied the cultivation of a *hexis*, a stance in the world. The *askesis* of friendship also implied rigorous cultivation of habits of the mind in concordance to habits of the heart. He often spoke with the Cappadocian fathers, of *nepsis*, a guarding of the senses from the allurements of images and artifacts in order to purify and sharpen them. For

an Aristotelian, all senses converge in the heart. Thus to avoid staining the heart, one should guard the eyes to avoid phantasms of optical make-believe; one should free the sense of smell in order to inhale the other and tune our ears to listen for harmonies in the words of our friend.

Friendship was an ongoing practice that cultivated a mutual trust, respect and commitment. He sometimes made me smile, with embarrassment, with his simple statement: “Tell me what to do and I will obey you.” For us moderns, obedience is a strange concept and harsh burden; for Illich, fidelity between friends demanded obedience to each other. In his conversations with Cayley, he explains: “Obedience in the biblical sense means unobstructed listening, unconditional readiness to hear, and untrammelled disposition to be surprised by the Other’s word. ...When I submit my heart, my mind and my body I come to be below the other. When I listen unconditionally, respectfully, courageously with the readiness to take in the other as a radical surprise, I do something else. I bow, I bend over the total otherness of someone. But I renounce searching for bridges between the other and me, recognizing the gulf that separates us. Leaning into this chasm makes aware of the depth of my loneliness and able to bear it in the light of the substantial likeness between the other and myself. All that reaches me in the other is his word, which I accept on faith. But by the strength of this word, I now can trust myself to walk on the surface without being engulfed by institutional power...” Ivan was an exemplary model of such complete openness. Anyone who has met him remembers his total presence in both body and mind in his devotion to friends.

Philosophical quest in the company of friends implied a criticism of everything that made life unphilosophical, everything “that castrates and sterilizes the heart and enervates ethical sensibilities.” The refinement of the habits of the mind implied first a distancing from certainties of the present, or an estrangement from what is familiar and taken for granted. Such distancing is necessary, Ivan thought, to free oneself from disabling perceptions and beliefs. He used historical studies as a road to gain such distance and often anchored himself in the study of changing word fields: by listening to their sounds and uncovering their historicity, Ivan shook up the foundations of modern prejudices. He used to say that even verbs have a history: in the age of the car, walking becomes a different activity; in the age of the image, seeing changes; in the age of the screen, reading no longer signifies what it did for the pre-12<sup>th</sup> century philosopher.

To understand ourselves better by weakening our certainties, Illich recommended a historiography described beautifully by one of his friends, Ludolf Kuchenbuch, as a “like a

crab crawling through landscapes of past innocence.” When faced by a danger most animals turn around and run away, but the crab crawls backwards while its bulging eyes remain fixed on the object it flees: the recovery of the past necessitates never forgetting the present danger. Historical excursions of this kind were demanded by Illich not only to distance ourselves but also to protect us against excessive sentimentalism and apocalyptic exaggeration. He insisted on a clear-eyed renunciation of fantasies of power to change the world. Instead of feeling responsibility for the world’s problems, Illich recommended an attitude of wakeful hope. I remember his recounting, as a parable, the courage of his friend Helder Camara, a Brazilian priest under the dictatorship, who when asked how he faced the horror of the atrocious acts he had witnessed, replied: “you must never give up. As long as a person is alive, somewhere beneath the ashes there is a bit of remaining fire and our entire task is to blow very carefully ...you’ll see whether it lights up. You must not worry whether it takes fire again or not. All you have to do is blow.” For Illich, all we could often do is to carry a candle in the dark, be a candle in the dark, know that you are a flame in the dark.

Ivan found the word “Peace” to describe or explain what he hoped for and worked towards all his life. He has wonderfully explained this in his text “The Cultivation of Conspiracy,” from which I draw freely now. Ivan argued that each circle of friends engenders its own aura, its atmosphere. Atmosphere is the “smell,” the emanation that gives each table, each gathering, its unique and personal quality. Every place has a smell and still in German one can say, “I can smell you well”; or say, “I can suffer you” to his friend. Atmosphere can only emerge when people face each other in trust. After 30 years of reflection and thinking, he found the word *pax* or “peace” to be most suitable for naming this atmosphere or aura created by a circle of friends engaged in joint study oriented by and devoted to mutual commitment and fidelity. In retracing the particular historical nature of the foundation of European communities, he states that peace was never an abstract condition but for each community a specific spirit to be cherished in its uniqueness. This spirit was sealed by the *conspiratio* or *osculum*: the mouth to mouth kiss or sharing of breath by which participants in a community (called the *ecclesia*) shared their breath with one another and their union with one holy spirit. Around 300 BCE, *pax* became a key word in the Christian liturgy, camouflaging the scandalous nature of the *osculum*. The European roots of peace are synonymous with this somatic incorporation of equals into a community.

The atmosphere of Illich’s *convivium* was one of *sobria ebrietas*- drunkness sobriety: pleasurable study, graceful playfulness, and embodied reading. In this, he followed the advice

of his teacher Hugh of St. Victor who stood against hundreds of years of Christian shunning of the flesh and the laughter that might ripple it and encouraged his teaching monks to foster merriment, “for serious matters are absorbed more easily and with more pleasure when mixed with humor.”

For his friends and me the gift of his friendship has been our candle in the dark. Ivan and I did not finish reading Calvino together but the choice of the path described in the last lines of the book could not have been made clear without him:

“L’inferno dei viventi non e qualcosa che sarà; se c’è ne uno, é quello che é già qui, l’inferno che abitiamo tutti i giorni, che formiamo stando insieme. Due modi ci sono per non soffrirne. Il primo riesce facile a molti: accettare l’inferno e diventarne parte fino al punto di non vederlo piu. Il secondo é rischioso ed esige attenzione e apprendimento continui; cercare e saper riconoscere , chi e cosa, in mezzo all’inferno, non é inferno, e farlo durare e dargli spazio.” (Marco polo a Kublay Khan)

*“The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space.” (Marco Polo to Kublay Khan)*

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#### **Author’s Bio**

Samar Farage is a Senior Lecturer in Penn State University’s Department of Sociology & Criminology. She regularly teaches courses in social theory and social change. Samar was born and raised in Lebanon, having studied political theory, philosophy, and classical Arabic in France and the United States. For over a decade she traveled, studied, and collaborated with Ivan Illich and his close circle of friends in Germany, Italy, and the United States.

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

Transcribed by: Gregory N. Bourassa, Engin Atasay, and Richard Kahn

**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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 a 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>

### **Bios of Video Contributors**

Carlos Alberto Torres is the Director of Paulo Freire Institute, Professor in Social Sciences and Comparative Education in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, and Associate Dean for Global Programs at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Douglas Kellner is the George Kneller Chair in the Philosophy of Education and Professor in the Division of Social Sciences and Comparative Education in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Peter McLaren is Professor of Urban Schooling in the Department of Education and Information Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles and Distinguished Fellow in Critical Studies at Chapman University.

### **Transcribers**

Gregory N. Bourassa is a PhD candidate in the Department of Education, Culture and Society at the University of Utah. His interests are driven by the recognition that schools are important political and cultural sites that play a vital role in constituting and shaping subjectivities. His work promotes an educational life that explores possibilities where education meets an affirmative biopolitics.

Engin Atasay is a PhD candidate at the Department of Education, Culture and Society at the University of Utah. His research interests include examining the role of education within neoliberal discourses and its impact on emerging learning subjectivities. Atasay's work is also centered on processes of learning and knowledge production as areas of performance and improvisation as productive and positive potentialities for fostering progressive change.

Richard Kahn is Core Faculty at Antioch University Los Angeles and Founder of the International Journal of Illich Studies. His writing and other information can be found at: [richardkahn.org](http://richardkahn.org).

Illich Beyond Illich: Convivial Tools for Illichean Readings  
A Rejoinder to UCLA's 2003 Roundtable on Illich

Engin Atasay and Gregory N. Bourassa

In his classic text, *Tools for Conviviality*, Ivan Illich offers a devastating critique of industrial society and conceptualizes the possibility of new modes and relations of being that would characterize a politics of conviviality—one based on communal creativity and a reconstruction of democratic ethics. Such a radical new politics, which entails an “inversion of present institutional purposes,” would rely upon the use of convivial tools, or tools that achieve in enabling “creative persons to meet their needs both as producers and as users.”<sup>1</sup> These convivial tools, Illich argues, are “intrinsic to social relationships” and can offer new alternative visions to industrial existence.<sup>2</sup> Yet far from offering a blueprint or “engineering manual” for the design of a new society, Illich points readers to the unwritten potentiality residing within such a society characterized by the autonomous use of tools as means.<sup>3</sup> For Illich, this entails creating contexts where “the public learns to value the potential of a convivial society over the illusion of progress.”<sup>4</sup> Here, Illich suggests that recognition of the value of such tools and their indeterminate potential “could generate a new flowering of surprises far beyond anyone’s imagination and hope.”<sup>5</sup> Thus Illich invites readers to ponder the horizons of possibility that await us when we develop a politics of conviviality and attain autonomous control over our tools.

What is perhaps most provocative, then, about Illich’s conception of convivial tools is their expansive and enabling tendencies.<sup>6</sup> Convivial tools allow users to creatively devise means that address their particular and self-determined needs. In this way, convivial tools are expansive as opposed to being restricted by a monopolized “production process” which “exercises an exclusive control over the satisfaction of a pressing need.”<sup>7</sup> For Illich, this “production process”

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<sup>1</sup> Ivan Illich and Etienne Verne, *Imprisoned in the Global Classroom* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976), 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>6</sup> The practical significance of such enabling tendencies has recently been emphasized in an elaboration of Illich’s analysis of *institutional spectrum*. See Aysem Mert and Eleni Dellas, “Technology Transfer through Water Partnerships: A Radical Framework of Assessment for Legitimacy.” (Global Governance Working Paper No 42. Amsterdam et al.: The Global Governance Project, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Illich, “Tools for Conviviality,” 52.

constrains and exhausts the autonomous turn to the creative and productive dimensions of convivial tools. Whereas manipulative tools restrict by casting a monopoly that bars alternatives, convivial tools “foster conviviality to the extent to which they can be easily used, by anybody, as often or as seldom as desired, for the accomplishment of a purpose chosen by the user.”<sup>8</sup> It is important to point out, as does Erich Fromm, that these are not merely a set of ideas for Illich, but rather a radical “approach” at the core of his vocation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, there is always present in Illich a tendency to embrace the convivial horizon. With this, we can look to the construction of Illich’s texts to understand how this ethic of the convivial guided his own writing. That is, rather than following an instrumental approach of resonating with already available grammars, Illich sought to develop an unrestricted vernacular domain free from the constraints of ideological classification. In a similar vein, it can be said that Illich was theoretically and pedagogically nomadic, and edifyingly so, for his writing triumphantly rejected immutable theoretical categorizations and prefigured solutions. In short, we could say that his writing was an exercise in conviviality—a radical invitation to readers.

We suggest, then, that because convivial tools, for Illich, are necessary for political inversion, they also come to emblemize a pedagogical praxis that attends Illich’s writing. That is, Illich’s texts seem to take on the character of convivial tools. It follows then, that if Illich’s approach is one that pedagogically offers readers convivial tools, then Illich should also be engaged through a type of *Illichean reading* that seeks to recognize the potentiality within his texts. In sum, we find that Illich, in his writing, offers conceptual tools and ways of thinking that are meant to be expansive and appropriated by readers to meet their own particular needs. The use of such tools should always extend beyond mere critique and welcome the unforeseen potential, along with the already present energies, of convivial communities and events. Therefore an Illichean reading is a process whereby readers approach the text by asking *how they can use it* to autonomously pursue means that satisfy needs, which are also autonomously identified. In this sense, an *Illichean reading is a tactical reading that seeks to explore use-value, or perhaps more accurately, a convivial-value of the textual tools rather than a consumptive reading for the sake of consumption.*

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<sup>8</sup> Illich, “Tools for Conviviality,” 22.

<sup>9</sup> Erich Fromm, “Introduction,” in Ivan Illich, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), 7.

With this said, it can be a rather challenging task to merely talk *about* Ivan Illich. That is, discussions about *who* Ivan Illich was or attempts to precisely ascertain *the essence* of his ideas will often be bounded if they are not inspired by a particular struggle or problematic. The preceding discussion featuring three of the most renowned figures in critical pedagogy, while thought provoking in myriad ways, ultimately encounters the limitations of theoretically indulging Illich in a context seemingly lacking political urgency. These limitations emerge as the dialogue attempts to cast Illich, challenging readers to playfully situate his thought on already plotted terrains of theory. For instance, Torres, Kellner, and McLaren contemplate Illich's Marxist sensibilities and consider how strands of his thought resonate with the Frankfurt School tradition. While many readers who enjoy the disciplinary enclosures of theory will find the discussion of such questions to be quite inadequate, it still may pique the interest of other readers. Yet, we want to contend that it is precisely these types of contrived inquiries and attempts to situate Illich—independent of a particular problematic—that highlight many of the difficulties, limitations and shortcomings of the academic “production process.”

Perhaps the point is that critical theorists should caution against the tendency to treat Illich and his ideas as if they are static entities to be abstractly grasped or conveniently stashed within an academic camp. In other words, striving to ascertain an essence of his ideas, or attempting to situate Illich within a particular tradition, in the end, obscures the potentiality that resides in his texts. Such endeavors ultimately reside within a consumptive economy that asks, “who is Ivan Illich and what are his ideas?” We wish to suggest that a tactical Illichean reading operates in an alternative convivial economy that asks, “what can we do with the tools offered by Illich?” The precise virtue of the latter question is its expansive orientation—an orientation that moves away from a restrictive expert society and affirms the potentiality and autonomy of the convivial.

The problem, then, with the preceding discussion is that Torres, Kellner, and McLaren were discursively placed in a constraining economy in trying to answer the question of who Illich was. While such discussions might arguably have their place, we find that they tend to close off more fruitful endeavors, namely Illichean readings that involve tactical methods of exploration, seeking new depths and zones of the convivial, ultimately displacing a dependency on that which is already established, monopolized and cartographically mapped. Moreover, a tactical Illichean reading starts with “politically interrelated individuals” within a vernacular and

concrete community.<sup>10</sup> Whereas constrained readings tend to subordinate the political and conceal more than they reveal, a tactical Illichean reading sees the text as an open-ended tool and makes use of what is at hand in order to “enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision.”<sup>11</sup>

In order to disrupt the academic “production process,” we propose approaching theoretical traditions as unstable terrains, perpetually evolving and always already transforming. Thus part of an Illichean reading entails treating texts, theories and practices as intrinsically and positively productive. For example, an Illichean reading of Freire is a reading that recognizes Freire’s ideas and practices as open-ended tools. The notion of *dialogue* plays a significant role in Freire’s critical pedagogy and his quest for introducing a new mode of reflection and praxis for the oppressed. For Freire, through dialogue, the oppressed acquires a new situation that he/she invents and reinvents through critical consciousness. Freire’s dialogue is dynamic and constantly reinvents reality. It requires people “to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming.”<sup>12</sup> Freire believes that the oppressed must discover that they are oppressed and, in order to achieve their liberation, critical dialoguers must address the world through a unified dialogue and action. This dialogue must be carried out in democratic solidarity and, in order to avoid becoming teleological, should not rely on a particular will. However, Freire’s notion of dialogue, which he initially advocated through rural communities in Brazil, was implemented too literally in contemporary urban education settings and became a rigid practical roadmap. Therefore, an Illichean reading of a Freirian dialogue may allow urban educators to *poach* useful tools from processes of dialogue; such as the notion of *love*, outlined by the preceding discussion, which for Freire “is at the same time the foundation of dialogue itself.”<sup>13</sup>

An Illichean reading of Freire—without being rooted in the theoretical underpinnings of Freire—can extract tools from dialogue, which can be utilized in expansive and enabling processes as tactical approaches for a convivial society. Such a society with an imminent potential for positively productive openings can defy the constraints of an already determined oppressed consciousness. As Fromm notes, the importance of Illich’s writings resides in the fact

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<sup>10</sup> Illich, “Tools for Conviviality,” xxiv.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), 88.

<sup>13</sup> Freire, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” 89.



that they “have a liberating effect on the mind by showing entirely new possibilities; they make the reader more alive because they open the door that leads out of the prison of routinized, sterile, preconceived notions.”<sup>14</sup> To explore the horizons of the convivial, Illich asks us to focus “on the structure of tools, not on the character structure of their users.”<sup>15</sup> What this entails is an expansive engagement with the analysis of industrialism, institutions and society in such a way that it utilizes tools to foster convivial existence that stems from a particular problematic. This enabling approach allows the Illichean reader to extract tools from other disciplines. The Illichean reader then becomes a rootless examiner of his/her conduct, theoretical conceptualizations and social relations under which he or she embraces a nomadic engagement with tools that enables the continual contestation and re-negotiation of multiplicities of disciplines.

### **Author Bios**

Gregory N. Bourassa is a PhD candidate in the Department of Education, Culture and Society at the University of Utah. His interests are driven by the recognition that schools are important political and cultural sites that play a vital role in constituting and shaping subjectivities. His work promotes an educational life that explores possibilities where education meets an affirmative biopolitics.

Engin Atasay is a PhD candidate at the Department of Education, Culture and Society at the University of Utah. His research interests include examining the role of education within neoliberal discourses and its impact on emerging learning subjectivities. Atasay's work is also centered on processes of learning and knowledge production as areas of performance and improvisation as productive and positive potentialities for fostering progressive change.

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<sup>14</sup> Fromm, “Introduction,” 10.

<sup>15</sup> Illich, “Tools for Conviviality,” xxiv.