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Learning without Education:
Ivan Illich and the Sanctuary of Real Human Presence

by

Daniel Henry Bogert-O'Brien 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Foundations

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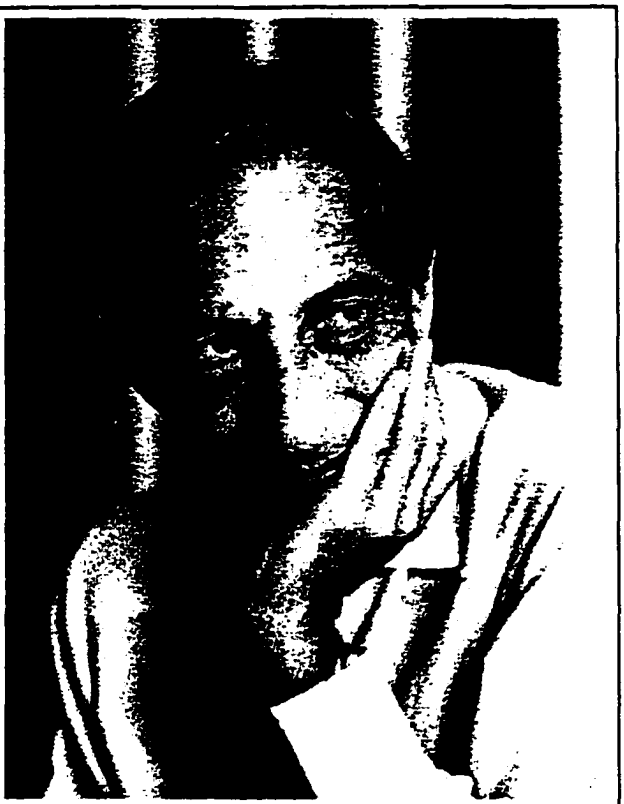

Ivan Illich
(1926 -)

If you want to be universal, sing your village.
-Leo Tolstoy

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Learning Without Education: Ivan Illich and the Sanctuary of Real Human Presence submitted by Daniel Henry Bogert-O'Brien in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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To friends and students of real presence Brian D., David G., David R., George H., Henriette K., Doug T., Stu L., Martin S., and others who have taught me by their presence
To my children, Adina and Wade
But most to Loretta
from whose face I am given the gift of real presence

ABSTRACT

Learning without Education:

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Philosophical discourse on learning, or on any other human activity, may give but a generic human who is a no-body. But this idea of a human is only ever a part truth, for every thought is a kind of exposition of a particular human face. In the case of a philosopher like Ivan Illich the particular human face is at the critical centre of the work. Illich questions the validity and benign heuristic value of theoretical, technical, or institutional devices for the focal practice of human learning. It could be said that his position is his attempt to be obedient to "presence" prefaced by the word "real."

Illich is ultimately proposing that the confusion and contradictions of contemporary life are the expression of a misplaced faith in rationalism, technology, and an accompanying disfiguring of human nature. Simply stated, Illich does not believe in educational, technological, and institutional solutions or the capacity of calculative rationality to bring fitting and human learning. Illich argues that education and the technological character of contemporary life mask, pervert, and manipulate the somatic gravity of human encounters.

Illich attends to the dilemmas posed by modernity because he wishes to remain loyal to an image of humanity as a somatic presence that is not defined by either modern atomistic individualism or systematic collectivism. He seeks a spiritual austerity that conserves traditions of dependence and communion in communities of locally and somatically felt conviviality. These local communities of friendship may take new forms, but they remain continuous with traditions that honour the wisdom of past practices over the novelty of any "postmodern" devices.

To move beyond the despair Illich's critique may inspire, this thesis sees hope for learning in sanctuaries for real human presence. In or outside educational institutions, sanctuaries must be found or be founded that encourage learning built upon the virtues of friendship and in resistance to the values implicit in institutionalized and technically defined education. Bianchi, Borgmann, Orr, Berry, and Vanier give some clues for the founding and finding of sanctuary. The image of sanctuary is a modest constructive proposal appreciative of Illich's foundational critique.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Nullum hominem a me alienum puto: I am a man; therefore no other man do I deem a stranger.[1]
>
> Miguel De Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*

The Challenge of Real Human Presence and the Work of Ivan Illich

In the adventure of human society, the dislodging of presupposed assumptions and the move from one paradigmatic order to another requires the awareness of the contingency, if not the wreckage, of present orders.[2] That education is nearly universally assumed as the necessary social device for human learning in contemporary societies may be said to be a condition not unlike that of pre-Copernican astronomy. To question the need and necessity of education as a compulsory and justifiably complex and stratified institutional process is to claim the contingency of what was assumed to be universally present and necessary. I have an identity, for example, as a middle-aged adult based upon the number of years counted since graduation from educational institutions. The measurement of human maturation, while not solely determined by educational institutions, is in a large part determined, in most developed and in many developing nations, by the years of attendance in a compulsory education system. Not many question this definition of maturation as measured by educational attainment.

While it is possible to trace this measurement back to the cycles of the sun and moon, the growth of the body, and perhaps the natural maturation of a human being, it is not a device of universal or invariable determination. The age measurement of maturation is not an instinctual pattern. The idea of the infant, child, and adult as measured stages in human development beginning at a certain age and coming to an end at another age, with exceptions only proving the

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[1] Miguel De Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (London: Collins, 1962), 21. This is Unamuno's re-rendering of Terence, *homo sum: nihil humani a me alienum puto.*

[2] A. N. Whitehead, *The Adventure of Ideas*, 1st ed., (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 7.

norm, are, as Philippe Ariès has documented, one of modern derivation.[3] The assumption of these measurements and the system of age divisions they suggest are part of the presupposed order of contemporary education.

Illich turns on the presupposed contemporary systems of thought, age and maturation, institution and endless technological and economic advance, and imagines what life would be like without the hegemony of such systems of measurement. He looks to the past as a mirror to reveal the confines of contemporary life. He turns to the modern idea of education and suggests that schools are defined by the paradigmatic idea of childhood. This idea, neither necessary nor simply natural, imposes a certain system or pattern upon human experience. Illich claims that the imposition, while intended to guarantee wider access and thoughtful guidance to all the young, in fact predisposes them to understand all human values and activities as products measured and defined by institution and system. Education becomes the nemesis of learning as the reception of the real, undefined by the global ideology of contemporary society.

However, we might suggest that system and institution, education, childhood, and family are simply givens of human experience. Again, there is much evidence to suggest that contemporary life as defined by system, institution, childhood, and family is a unique creation of particular ideas and modes of activity that have come into existence since the collapse of the Middle Ages.[4] The paradigms of education, consumer economy, endless progress, technical measurement, and planned and engineered processes, have historical origins and might one day disappear. The assumptions that they represent the end of history, its completion and the logical conclusion of rational inquiry is part of the myth or global ideology of the contemporary situation. To demythologize the contemporary situation is Illich's fundamental task.[5] He suggests not that we can live without

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[3] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), passim.

[4] Ibid., passim.

[5] Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 40.

mythic structure, but that a richer mythic structure can only be found outside the inadequate mythology of contemporary discursive techniques. His exploration of human learning and institutional structures leads him into the complex and immeasurable presence of the human other.

However, philosophical discourse on learning, or on any other human activity, may give but the idea of human presence. That is to say, a generic human singularity with no social body, a heuristic "nobody". This idea may inspire humane ideals. The ideogram of a universal humanity, for example, has encouraged concern for the plight of the poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed. But this idea of a generic humanity is only ever a part truth, for every thought is rooted in and an exposition of a particular human face.[6] There is something too convenient about this generic construction. It saves us from the unsettling, uncertain, unsystematic business of encountering a living human other by offering an efficient ideological shorthand. But even more, the shorthand may harm in its attempt to preserve order and bring symbolic logic to a complex encounter. In an attempt to bring the other into systematic consideration or into a plan for universal salvation, I may exclude or damn all that makes her other.

The other, recalcitrant, resistant to tyranny, or amenable to altruistic authority, is always in fact a presence whose reality is specific, more than any generic idea. In the case of a philosopher like Ivan Illich, the particular human other is at the critical centre of the work. In Illich, "the man we have to do with is the man of flesh and bone."[7] Illich's aim is to provoke and celebrate real human presence in a time of deceptive appearances. The celebration and provocation are part of his self-confessed religious vocation. His philosophy of education, like that of Josef Pieper, Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Levinas, and Thomas Aquinas, is rooted in a religious and cultural

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[6] Franz Rosenzweig, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), p. 67; and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1971), 136-156. The point made here is not the weighty one of the critique of the totalising claims of an objective rationality. Rather it is a simpler one, every known idea is known in and by a particular human encounter.

[7] Unamuno, 21.

tradition focussed on the particularity of the human face. The human other is the appropriate and certain incarnation of a Transcendent Other.

The emphasis Illich places upon autonomy with regard to learning is not rooted in Rousseauian or contemporary conceptions of absolute human freedom. The problem is not that human beings are born free and social existence necessarily places them in chains. The problem is that human beings are created as the *imago Dei* for convivial existence, or, as Aristotle suggests, political animals. Attempts to guarantee, simplify, institutionalize, regulate and manage this given conviviality have perverted its course.[8] The perversion of a convivial nature is the ailment not necessarily of socialization but of "a world which worships an ontology of systems."[9] Illich seeks to search out the roots of this perversion while hoping in the revelation of meaning in the art of real human presence.[10]

The art of real presence is not a recovery of some natural but socially constrained autonomy. But neither is it a consequence of instructional or institutional altruism. Rather its art is the somewhat anarchic grace, sacrifice, and hospitality of friendship with others. When summoned by the presence of the other I am called to reply with my human particularity. Summoned by convivial being my autonomy is inter-subjective, in part unpredictable, and responsive.[11] Learning, in this case, begins with receptive humility before the mystery of an other. This is what Aquinas has called the *intellectus*.[12] As Miguel de Unamuno once said, this human other "of flesh and bone

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[8] David Cayley and Ivan Illich, *Ivan Illich In Conversation* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1992), 243.

[9] Ibid., 49.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 116-125.

[12] Josef Pieper, *Leisure, The Basis of Culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (South Bend, Indiana: Augustine's Press, 1998), 11.

is at once the subject and the supreme object of all philosophy."[13] Illich will speak of Levinas' focus on the human face:

> Levinas set out to save "the face." The face of the other stands as the centre of his life's work. The face which he speaks of is not my own, which appears reversed in the mirror. Nor is it the face that a psychologist would describe. For Levinas, face is that which the eye touches, what my eye caresses. Perception of the other's face is never merely optical, nor is it silent; it always speaks to me. Central in what I touch and find in the face of the other is my subjectivity: I cannot but except it as a gift in and from the face of the other.[14]

Real presence is not found in Émile's authenticity as a lack of socialization or in a self-consciously autonomous individuality.[15] The art of presence is a spoken word in flesh, a caress, and never a matter of mere show or optics. It is never strictly measurable or completely available to analysis. The density of a human presence, not merely of abstractable data, communication, or system, is something more or perhaps other than any scale can register. That this transcendent gravity of being is not universally noted may be said to count as proof against its existence. Or it may be said to demonstrate the tragic or monstrous denial that the human face has any significance but as an optical region or a bit of biological matter.

How can the claims of this real presence be made certain? Lear seeks proof of Cordelia's love and brings tragedy. I walk along Sparks Street avoiding eye contact until an old panhandler looks me in the eye. In that moment I see his face as an impossible demand to honour the tragic divide between our presences. That human others, the poor, the despised, the enemy, the slave, the foreigner, have presence has perennially been doubted in human societies. The debate as to whether women were persons under Canadian law, or the racist rhetoric of Apartheid that

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Barbara Duden, Ivan Illich and Mother Jerome, *The Scopic Past and the Ethics of the Gaze: A Plea for the Historical Study of Ocular Perception*, ed. Lee Hoinacki, Science, Technology and Society Working Papers, no. 6 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Studies Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 23.

[15] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: or, On Education*, introd., trans., and notes by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), passim.

suggested black men and women lacked something essential to real human presence, are not anomalous. These doubts of real presence seem to be magnified by the devices of contemporary life. Nearly all experience in urban Europe and North America is mediated by devices, institutional functions, and economic exchanges. In this way human being is assumed to be a transmittable, if not a transmutable, communication, on a screen, in systems, as a bit of scientific, biological, economic, or sociological "life-data." Eerily, on the "information highway" it may not just be discounting the gravity of the presence of that panhandler that is a moral danger but discounting the real presence of our closest neighbours and friends, and perhaps, even ourselves.

Illich sees the hope for real human presence in the pedagogical failure of contemporary expectations. If human presence can be measured, registered, and offered unambiguously in a linear and predictable fashion, all human learning, not just of technical or mechanical matters, can be offered and consumed in a closed curricular package. Eamonn Callan has suggested that no one could seriously hold such a position.[16] That is to say, no one but the naïve believer in, or those so damaged by, systems of intellect, economy, pedagogy, technology, are so dulled to real human presence. The hype of the producers of certain electronic products and certain educators comes close to such a view. Perhaps they do so cynically or delusionally. But the assumption that the whole of human presence is technologically manageable or educable assumes the capacity to fix and manipulate the human face at will. The claims about education's centrality and scope have been, at least since Comenius, extraordinarily inflated.[17] It is not unusual, in either the literature or in public practice, to hear it claimed that education is essential, absolutely necessary, or fundamental to a fully developed humanity.

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[16] Eamonn Callan, *Autonomy and Schooling* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 4-5, 88-90.

[17] Comenius, *Selections*, introduction by Jean Piaget (Paris: UNESCO, 1957), passim; and William Ideson Johnson, "Hermetic Alchemy as the Pattern for Schooling Seen By Ivan Illich in the Works of John Amos Comenius" (Ph. D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1973), passim.

These claims have been met with critical scrutiny. However, they still are convincing enough, if the passion and heat raised in any debate about public education counts for anything. Even if these concerns are largely ruled by strictly utilitarian considerations (e.g., without proper preparation for the work force my son or daughter will not get a good job), education as an institutional process seems to be expected to carry a great deal of the responsibility for human formation. This is not the same as claiming that only education can teach or form an art of real human presence. It does indicate that there is something essential for survival or success in contemporary North American and European society that education provides. If this were simply data, information, and training for the work force, it is remarkable how much time, money, and effort goes into providing learning in activities that are at best background information to the specific demands of driving a bus or designing computer software. It is surely not reasonable to believe that education actually functions in contemporary societies merely to prepare the child for entry into the paid work place. Education is expected, even by the accounts of the most workplace fixated governments, to shape individuals who can function in a social world, perhaps defined by economics and work, but containing a great deal more. Minimally this means education must instill or re-enforce norms of sexual, family, and legal behaviour. There appears to be a deeper aim in education, an aim to shape persons to the mythology of the contemporary situation.

To recognize necessary limits to compulsion in the curricular scope of education and society is commonplace.[18] Commonly held assumptions about the dignity of human being, the multifaceted nature of human life, and the irreducibility of the real presence of the particular human face would seem to dictate some institutional modesty. However, what if most of the exchanges in contemporary society and educational practice subtly and fundamentally diminish the capacity to imagine and appreciate the full dimensions of real human presence? What if the substructures of

[18] Callan, passim.

social practice, technical complexity, and communication involved in the very idea "education" are rooted in a confusion so profound as to promote a cultural amnesia of the dignity and frailty of real human presence? How would I proceed, what would be my practice, if the problem were not simply bad management or callous, self-serving, cynical persons and practices but root presuppositions about human being promoted in contemporary life and learning? Illich sees the evidence of such a radical confusion. But does he offer convincing, or at least some, evidence that the "what ifs" above are in fact the case?

This is, given both his reticence and his tendency to offer conclusions or prophetic aphorism in place of argumentation, difficult to assess. By noting the empirically supported facts, for example, of Ivar Berg's analysis of the gap between schooling and competence in the workplace, he is not providing a conclusive argument, only citing a piece of provocative evidence.[19] Education from the perspective of the majority of the human family (Black and Latino Chicagoans, Native Americans, the welfare recipient, the poor, the Chiapas peasant, and most women), delivers them only into a self-consciousness of being understood as inferior and dependent upon the mercy of the state, the educated experts or the rich. All of this suggests serious problems with the paradigm if not conclusive evidence of the radical roots of these problems.[20] Illich comments about the empirical evidence for his claims:

> We live in a strange society in which people believe that they act on empirical evidence. But the empirical evidence, in relation to schooling is quite obvious and not only with respect to justice. . . . Berg shows you that there is absolutely no connection between the subjects people have learned in school and the effectiveness of those people in jobs requiring preparation in those subjects.[21]

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[19] Ivar Berg, *The Great Training Robbery* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 38-61 and 85-105.

[20] Illich, "Education in the Perspective of the Dropout," *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society* 16 (1996): 257-261.

[21] Cayley and Illich, 69.

Berg's study is empirically convincing and has since been ratified in the surveys and studies of other governmental, non-governmental, and academic institutions.[22] The empirical evidence, in any case, is at least unclear as to the benefits of education.[23] Even after attempts at school reform and massive expenditures of human effort and money, three out of ten school children in Canada do not achieve high school graduation.[24] Despite efforts at inclusion and expansion of educational opportunities, the social conditions and status of women in most "developing" and "developed" nations has barely changed or even worsened in some cases over the last forty years.[25] One could compile a list, debate the significance and bias of various studies, but there is no convincing evidence that education brings the justice and prosperity of which so many assume it to be capable.

It may be that reform of educational institutions was ill founded or that education has been improperly applied. School reform, as Barrow suggests,[26] or the limiting of compulsion within the school system, as Callan argues, might serve to ameliorate these problems.[27] But Illich is not satisfied to reform or deschool or even disestablish schools. He is rather, refusing to accept dropouts, the illiterate, the poor or the uneducated as human failures as defined by social planners, educators, and theorists of education. He wishes to see them as real human faces that demand of those around them not more institutional or systematic treatment but the attention any human presence is due. His quarrel is not with schooling, even though it is the subject of much of his criticism. He wishes, rather, to plea "for research on the history of *homo educandus*. . . . of a

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[22] Centre for Research and Innovation, *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* (Paris: OECD, 1998), passim. This document assumes certain "indicators" but is still statistically supportive of Berg's work

[23] Ibid.

[24] John Taylor, "Tracking the Real School Dropout Rate," *Education Leader* 7, no. 6 (25 March 1994): 3-12. In this article, using StatsCan statistics, the school dropout rate in Canada was estimated to be 30%. This is debated in the literature and some suggest it is closer to 20%.

[25] *Education at a Glance*, 44 ff.; Jane Gaskell, *Issues for Women in Canadian Education* (Ottawa: Economic Council of Canada, 1992), 6-8.

[26] Robin Barrow, *Radical Education, A Critique of Freeschooling and Deschooling* (London: Martin Robertson and Co. Ltd., 1978), 180.

[27] Callan, 85 ff.

social reality within which 'education' is perceived as a basic human need."[28] Illich may inspire school reform, but he intends to call for consideration of the implications of presuming the universal need for education.

What Illich is about in his style of writing, his manner of speaking, and his way of living, is a refusal, as far as possible, to participate in those assumptions and practices of contemporary life that appear to him to mark a "disappearance of human decency."[29] His refusal to be drawn into direct argument on certain matters is based philosophically on the assumption that certain premises, hidden presuppositions, and statements are logically and morally nonsensical to human decency. Wittgenstein suggested, "I will my possessions to you after I die," is a nonsensical statement and so beyond logical consideration. Similarly, Illich locates certain features of contemporary life as being outside moral and logical consideration. This he applies not just to the sophisticated weaponry, implements of torture, and industrial pollution of the "military-industrial complex," but to institutional and social practices that implicitly reduce human encounters to predictable institutional, educational, and economic exchanges. The moral madness or illogical horror of assuming all human needs can be or must be met by institutional function or technological devices suggests to him a disfigurement of the human face so profound as to require "a right to propagate a horrified silence."[30] His startling comments on care only emphasize his refusal to engage in what he judges to be demeaning to love: "I have absolutely no intention, if I'm sincere, of leaving this writing desk . . . or selling that little antique Mexican sculpture . . . and taking that money to go to the Sahel and take the child in my arms. . . .Thinking that I care, first, impedes me from remembering what love would be."[31]

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[28] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past* (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, Ltd., 1992), 113.

[29] Ibid., 30.

[30] Ibid., 31.

[31] Cayley and Illich, 217.

For Illich, real human presence is close at hand and demands a great deal more than institutional altruism. He refuses to compromise the demands of "love of neighbour" to the "intermediary goals" of institutional practices.[32] In some cases the force of his horrified indignation is lost because the reader or listener is not brought to see the full implications of these institutionalized forms of care. Illich has been viewed as a destroyer of civility on behalf of an intellectually and utopian anarchistic elitism. In order to address the deficiencies of his argument, if one wishes to remain true to his intent, one cannot simply write the "how to manual" for an "Illichian revolution." His work of image-breaking and ground-clearing is meant to prepare the mind and the self for the surprise, delight, and demand, in the mystery of the human face as a palpable presence. He regards the attempt "to insure, to guarantee, to regulate the revelation that at any moment we might recognize, even when we are Palestinians, that there is a Jew lying in the ditch whom I can take in my arms and embrace," as corrupting the best intentions of Western Culture.[33] We cannot do without a tradition of compassion, but "its institutionalization is the root of an evil deeper than any evil I could have known with my unaided eyes and mind."[34]

Therefore, both in theory and in fact we must learn first by attending to the real presence of those others close at hand, those we can touch and embrace. This Illich practices as a vocation of learning in friendship:

> Ivan Illich did not speak often. He listens dramatically, his hawklike face intense. Sometimes he sits cross-legged on the floor, chin cradled in hand, eyes fixed on the hardwood boards. . . . A sudden birdlike twist to the side signals he is about to speak. . . . In the course of speaking, he stops, searches, again makes the sudden birdlike twist, utters the found word. He swings his head to look at the different persons his enveloping statement addresses. After the statement consummates itself, he smiles widely, lovingly, expectantly.[35]

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[32] Ibid., 218.

[33] Ibid., 242.

[34] Ibid., 243.

[35] S. Leonard Rubinstein, "Things have Consequence," *Research\ Penn State* 15, no. 1 (Sept. 1994), 23.

Illich intentionally provokes by attending with his human presence the human presence of those gathered in the seminar circle or those whom he imagines to engage with through the mediation of writing or other forms. Perhaps this is the reason so much of what he writes baffles or enrages those who seek in the written text or the method itself the source of his argument. It is not there, he insists. It is here in the gulf and the silence that marks the meeting of one presence and another. This style may inhibit a certain kind of critical thought, as Barrow suggests.[36] But then perhaps the inhibition in Illich's refusal is a disciplined intent to attend not to method or argument but to real human presence. If it is purity of method or even clarity of logic we seek above human presence, Illich would have us think critically in another direction.

Therefore, Illich's thought attends to real human presence not the *artificium scaenicus* (theatrical artifice) in a play of rationalized systematics cast in the role "Everyman or Everywoman." Unfortunately, in Illich's view, this *artificium* has come to dominate the contemporary imagination.[37] Aristotle had insight into the human political being (ζῷον πολιτικοῦ).[38] But sadly the builder of Aristotelian systems misses his point by creating the part "political animal". Rousseau gave us insight into the power of social formation. However, the "noble savage" who must play the role "social contractor" is a denial of the convivial nature of real presence.[39] The Manchester School gave us the *homo economicus*, humanity as player in an economic drama.[40] Educational theorists too often give us only the primal student or *homo educandus*, the *artificium litterarum*.[41] And now, at least for the moment, we have the "user" or the "consumer" of information systems, interactive players in the virtually real world of

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[36] Barrow, 194-197.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), passim.

[39] Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1986), passim.

[40] Unamuno, 21.

[41] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 113-119.

technology, economic system, and education. The attempt in each case is to inform, animate, explain, and direct activity away from the confines of somatic presence and cultural particularity.

Initially these roles were the creations of what Thomas Aquinas called the *ratio*, the measuring and comparative labour of the human intellect.[42] The *ratio's* application for him, and throughout much of Western thought, was as a prosthesis. It was intended to lead to a fuller appreciation of presence sometimes made difficult by various disabilities. It was intended not to replace but aid human receptivity to the particular other, as hearing aids or eye-glasses assist the ears and eyes. Until the modern period, this form of reason was understood to be available and moral only because it was penetrated by the *intellectus* or *simplex intuitus*. This penetration of the *intellectus* is what Heraclitus called a "listening-in to the being of things."[43] Josef Pieper notes that, "not only the Greeks—Aristotle no less than Plato—but the great medieval thinkers as well held . . .the path of discursive reason is accompanied and penetrated by the *intellectus*' untiring vision, which is not active but passive, or better, receptive—a receptively operating power of the intellect."[44]

An Outline of the Thesis

In the second chapter of this thesis a critical reading of Illich's work will be made that argues for a contemporary recovery of the necessary morality of the relationship between the *ratio* and *intellectus*. Human knowledge, the activity of learning, depends on the moral receptivity of the *intellectus* to a given otherness or alterity. Teacher and student are obligated not to system or institutional function but primarily to a disciplined awareness of the real, beyond all attempts to cause the real to conform to our expectations. The bombast and aphoristic density of Illich's work

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[42] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. and notes Edmund Hill (London: Blackfriars, 1964), Vol. 1, 1.

[43] Heraclitus, *Fragments*, trans. and commentary T. M. Robinson (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1991), frag. 112.

[44] Josef Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, 11-12.

can be understood as witness to truth available to human understanding only in a *ratio* penetrated by the gifts of the *intellectus*. What Illich is attempting to recover and cultivate as the heart of all learning is the art of a *vita contemplatio* (contemplative life) coupled with the discursive *ratio*. This gives his "celebration of [an] awareness" prepared to accept the real limitations and possibilities of human presence. The leisure or *scole* (Greek and Latin root of English "school") required in learning is the disposition to, not the institutional mask of, care or receptive understanding of and immersion in real human presence. Josef Pieper's work on leisure, as well as Thomas Aquinas, will be used as exegetical aids in drawing out the philosophical foundations of Illich's celebration of awareness.

Where Illich questions the validity and benign heuristic value of institutional or technical devices it is on behalf of a richer awareness of human presence. He attempts to disembed and disrupt the smooth workings of the devices of *ratio* in so far as they are unrooted in *intellectus*, by offering an analysis using the tradition of real human presence found in the classics of Western culture. By doing so he seeks to recover root meanings. These root meanings are not understood primarily as philological studies but as journeys into the intelligence of the vernacular and traditional origins of incarnate presence. The root meanings are rooted in the "word made flesh" in an anthropology of a *homo habilis* (dwelling human). The root is in the somatic encounters with real presence that finds appropriate dwelling, transcending any prosthesis of technology or institution, in the reality of the flesh. "By going back to the origins. . . I hope to increase the distance between my reader. . .and the activity in which he [she] engages while reading me."[45]

In the third chapter a close reading of *Deschooling Society* is given. The ritual device of schooling is described as an "age-specific, teacher-related process requiring full-time attendance in

[45] Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 2.

an obligatory curriculum."[46] It is a way of training the population for labour in the contemporary systems of making, planning, and raising expectations for products and technical processes. This is directly in contrast to the maturity of leisured practice required for learning as an art of real human presence. The contrast Illich makes between the servile life of making and the leisured life of learning, doing, and being follow on his *theoria* of incarnation. This *theoria* brings him to the work of demythologizing the structures of contemporary life. This is the preoccupation of his seeking to research and encourage others to research the history of needs reflected in contemporary education, technology, health care, transportation, sex, and vision. All of this is on behalf of a recovery of a compassionate clarity and appropriateness in reception of real presence.

Schooling is used by Illich as paradigmatic of the contemporary character of life, the modern institutional and technological definition of human nature. Many of Illich's critics have missed this point. He is not offering a plan for revolutionary social action. He finds that contemporary life has been schooled into accepting servitude to technical devices, processes, and institutional agendas. However, "neither ideological criticism nor social action can bring about a new society. Only disenchantment with and detachment from the central social ritual and reform of the ritual can bring about radical change."[47]

Illich would later suggest that in much of this book he was "barking up the wrong tree," but in the last chapter he was stating the real problem. There the contrast is one between hope, as trust in the surprise of the presence of the other, and expectation, as one's expected due from a predictable technical process. The critical application of *ratio*, the genius of contemporary thought, must recover its moral and necessary relationship with the gifts and surprise of the *intellectus*,

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[46] Illich, *Deschooling*, 25.

[47] Ibid., 38.

receptivity to and reverence of the immeasurability of presence. Promethean planning must come again to appreciate Epimethean hope.

In the fourth chapter of the dissertation Illich's further writings are shown as attempts to recover the leisure and gift of human presence in the shadows of the institutional, professional, sexual, and economic construction of contemporary life. As well, this chapter marks a shift in the strategy of the thesis. In the first half of the thesis a reading of Illich's way of thinking was given and some remarks of his critics considered. The emphasis was on two of his earliest published works in order to cite examples of his hermeneutic of contemporary life and education. In the second half of the thesis the attempt will be made to support a friendly, but alternative, proposal for schooling that is inspired by Illich's various explorations in understanding the contemporary landscape of institutional, educational, and economic systems. The proposal is that the model of "sanctuary," as a place of learning in real presence, may provide a constructive way beyond despair.

Illich has with consistent obedience to real presence attacked the various constructions of contemporary life that give a hyperreal artifice and distract and pollute the perceptions of human nature. The emphasis implicit in his works, from 1973-1982 and beyond, upon transportation, medicine, and city planning, continues to be the conflict between the celebration of incarnation and the vernacular ingenuity of tradition, and the labouring and measuring servility of life under the devices and processes of contemporary life.[48] Illich makes clear his concern about the misperception and warping of human nature in a technological culture. In thinking about learning and presence Illich comes to recognize with others the crippling effect of professionalization upon learning in touch with real human presence. As John McKnight writes, in the book co-authored

[48] *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), *Disabling Professions* (1977), *Shadow Work* (1981), and *Gender* (1982).

with Illich and others, institutionalization, professionalization, and technical processing are "the ugly mask of care."[49]

In *Shadow Work* Illich argues that the arrogant appropriation of the informal sectors of human activity and learning by formal structures, devices, and professions creates the misperception of human nature as *homo faber* (constructing human) rather than *homo habilis* (dwelling human). The resulting invasion cripples and pollutes human presence while being of clearly human construction. *Gender* furthers work started in *Shadow Work.* Illich explores how the construction of sex in contemporary life gives an education for a shallow and oppressive function for both women and men. Some feminist writers were sharply critical of this work. And yet feminists like Barbara Duden and Luce Irigaray can help show how Illich's defence of vernacular gender is an attempt to recover the autonomy of real human presence and learning from a culture of oppressive biological sex, and move towards a gendered culture of dissymetrical differences.

In the fifth chapter Illich will be shown, in the last 15 years of his life up to the present, exploring the history of a catastrophic break with real human presence. This has involved his contemplation of a philosophy of technology in an *ascesis* of attending to real human presence. In the book *ABC* (1988), co-authored with Barry Sanders, Illich joins with Walter Ong, Marshal McLuhan, Millman Parry, Harold Innis, Albert Borgmann, Carl Mitcham and others, in exploring how various technical devices (from the phonetic alphabet of the Greeks to the modern screen and monitor), have carried with them the potential for and actual masking of real presence. He joins with Plato in warning the learner of a false sense of mastery and tendency to a stultifying technical manipulation.

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[49] Jonathan Caplan, Ivan Illich, John McKnight, Harley Shaiken, and Irving Zola, *Disabling Professions: Ideas in Progress* (Don Mills, ON: Burns & MacEachern, 1977), 25.

In his latest published work, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, a commentary on Hugh of St. Victor, Illich makes clearer the roots of all his thinking as his obedience to real human presence in his exercise of friendship in a *vita contemplatio*. His exploration of Hugh of St. Victor's guide to learning and reading gives a vibrant view of the meaning of his own career. As one reads the working papers, articles, introduction to other writers' works, and unpublished writings in the eight years since its publication, his career seems to be achieving a clarity of vocation and thought. The centre of his own learning, as his journey to his own death, has been "a conversion to the human face of God."[50]

The crisis in human learning and to the human soul, perceived so long ago by Plato in the device of writing and the phonetic alphabet, is one Illich and Sanders see as central to the current radical shift from bookish culture to the video monitor and wireless information technologies. The discipline of reading and learning, understood by Illich in conversation with his "friend" from twelfth century Paris, Hugh of St. Victor, is always imperiled by the hubris of technique, rational mastery, and clerical control. The radical sea change of Hugh's time is seen as a mirror revealing the dilemmas of contemporary information systems. The fifth chapter will show how these particular works suggest disciplines for learning in sanctuary.

In the concluding chapter it will be argued that it is possible to discern in all of Illich's work the passion of a mind and a vocation exhibiting faith in the rich Western tradition of real presence. This causes Illich to doubt and say "no!" to the tech-gnostic guarantees and promises implicitly made in contemporary life. His daily focal practice of the Christian Eucharist, and his loyalty to friends past and present demonstrate Illich's vocation of renouncing dependence on contemporary devices in faithful obedience and dependence upon the anarchic real presence of others. Illich sees salvation as the surprise in meeting the human faces of a transcendent alterity.

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[50] Cayley and Illich, 56.

Guarding the eye as it is seduced by various technological products and processes and relearning human proportions are the dominant concerns of Illich's philosophy of learning.[51] His disciplined dissidence is a chaste anarchism with respect to institutional, political, technical, and pedagogical systems, and hope in voluntary simplicity and human proportion. The passion of his discourse, the prophetic thrust, is intended to draw human attention back from the distractions of the glittering contemporary show of technique and artifice to the sweet and bitter reality of human presence. The joy and celebration at recovering a prodigal humanity is itself an antidote to the addictions of consumption and production prevalent in contemporary life.

The difficulty Illich presents, despite the joy and celebration he encourages, is the despair that can be promoted by a renunciation of the core faith of contemporary life. The despair at the catastrophic break in contemporary life, the distrust and doubt of recovering a sense of real presence, and sadness at the broken relationship with those who seek institutional reform can be overwhelming. However, Albert Borgmann, Josef Pieper, Barbara Duden, Herman Bianchi, David Orr, Jean Vanier, and Wendell Berry seem to offer resources for a response beyond such despair. Borgmann offers patience. Pieper offers leisured celebration. Orr offers a wider kind of literacy. Vanier offers a living community rooted in a tradition of compassion. Berry offers the loyalty of life in place as loving disobedience to the conformal violence of technology. Learning as obedience to real presence seems to require patience, a living community of tradition, and a lovingly placed, but not passive, resistance to the "powers and principalities" of our technically educated age. To understand Illich's philosophy of learning is to see it as rooted in his spiritual vocation. To practice a similar vocation is to move past his impatient renunciation in obedience to receptivity, patience, community life and active resistance. It may be said to be about the construction of a

[51] Ivan Illich, Matthias Rieger, Lee Hoinacki, and Joseph Mokos, *Papers on Proportionality*, Science, Technology, and Society Working Paper, no. 8 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Program, 1996).

sanctuary for learning as a dwelling with real presence. The re-uniting of Prometheus and Epimetheus, of the *ratio* and the *intellectus*, provides the hope necessary to resist and learn an art of real presence in a place of disciplined dissidence to the age of the ephemeral show of technique.

Conclusion

The whole of this study is written in critical appreciation of Illich as a prophetic gadfly. His has been a vocation, and not merely an academic career, of learning and leaning into the chasm between one self and an other. It has given him sometimes to hyperbolic exaggeration and lamentation as broad as Jeremiah's. But like Jeremiah, his work should be judged by his loyalty to a transcendent moral claim. Lee Hoinacki, a friend and conversation partner of Illich, writes: "I think that if you look at his writing in this perspective—mindful of his practices, the narrative structure of his life and work, and his faithfulness to the Christian tradition—you will see that it continually points in one direction: toward making moral, prophetic judgments."[52]

This makes his work more difficult to exegete. Real presence is assumed as the basis for "making moral and prophetic judgments." He is not intending to provide proof for real presence. He is assuming none is necessary, or rather only necessary when the capacity to contemplate (*intellectus*) real presence has been diminished by an unrooted *ratio*. Rather, in showing what he takes to be the misplaced faith of contemporary life, he hopes to recover a way of life that seeks a "fitting, appropriate, proper or, in the concept used by Illich, proportionate" structure.[53] This concept of "proportionate," which Illich develops from Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kohr,[54] refers back to his *theoria* of incarnation.[55] To be proportionate is to have a "fitting" life humbly learning in the real presence of the other. Illich's philosophical practice either demonstrates or fails

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[52] Lee Hoinacki, "Ivan Illich - A View of his Work," photocopy, Bremen, March 16, 1996, 2.

[53] Ibid., 7.

[54] Illich, "The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr," in *Papers on Proportionality*, 1-15.

[55] W. J. O'Shea, "Ordination in the Roman Rite," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1st ed.; and Bernardin Goebel, *Seven Steps to the Altar: Preparation for Priesthood* (New York: 1963), passim.

as a convincing narrative of such a proportionate life: "As a child of my tradition, I believe that, ultimately, I shall be judged as I have loved. . . . Therefore, the subject of my meditation and teaching is how the love of friendship, *philia*, can be practiced under the conditions socially and symbolically engendered by modern artifacts."[56]

In order to judge "as he has loved," the dissertation will move, after clarifying its hermeneutical key, to see how his intellectual journey has demonstrated his faith in real presence. It will try to see how "under the conditions socially and symbolically engendered" by the character of contemporary life, learning might be a disciplined attention to the surprises of real presence.[57] In the last part it will attempt to recover and construct a sanctuary for the learning of real presence. There is no blueprint offered. To offer such would be to betray trust in real human presence. Any blueprints must be tentative and come from the vernacular and communal life of presence incarnate in all the particularity of place.

The dangers of building a philosophical argument on the metaphors of a particular religious tradition are recognized. However, Illich's use of these metaphors is intended not to close down conversation in dogmatic assertions. Rather, he uses the metaphors of incarnation, Real Presence, crucifixion, and so on, as a way to approach philosophical conversation attuned to the significance of cultural, physical, philosophical, and religious difference. His rootedness in a tradition, its fallible and human face, is precisely that which opens him up to receiving the wisdom of the other human and vernacular tradition as fertile with the promise of wisdom and friendship. His confession of "Christ crucified and risen" is a confession that only in being radically available to the other, admitting the limit and confines of one's own knowledge, somatic, and cultural formation, can deeper wisdom be found. Like Socrates, he seeks friendship in clarifying

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[56] Illich, "Philosophy....Artifacts.....Friendship," in *American Catholic Philosophical Association Proceedings* LXX (1996), 9.

[57] Cayley, 5; and Miguel de Unamuno, 51-53.

conversation, through an admission of his own ignorance of the full mystery of another's human presence.

The immeasurable and ineffable depth of presence and human friendship is affirmed. The unique character of Illich's philosophy is that it promotes a convivial pattern without offering a "systematics" of friendship as a device for producing awareness of human presence.[58] It gives an ordering by a disciplined, if dissident, receptivity to an other never completely grasped. Illich, as he converses with Aquinas, Hugh of St. Victor, Heloise, Barbara Duden and other friends and voices of his tradition, offers a focal practice and not a device to solve social problems. The viability of a traditional vocation of learning rooted in a contemplation of real presence even "under the conditions socially and symbolically engendered by modern artifacts" is demonstrated only in the quality of friendship and intensity of awareness.[59] There is no systemic completion.

An evaluation of the explanatory power of Illich's vocation will be offered along with a constructive proposal in the form of the idea of sanctuary. However, as with any consideration of Illich, the encounter will likely mean some revisions of Promethean forethought by Epimethean hindsight.[60] The surprise of the encounter will inevitably reveal Illich's and this writer's human face as an opening of Pandora's box, holding only to an embodied hope in expectation's flight.[61] Then again, it may be judged to reveal only the sound and fury of an escaping yet futile rage at a predictable and necessary, if tragic, institutional order.

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[58] Illich, "The Educational Enterprise," as quoted in Cayley, 56.

[59] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?, Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 403.

[60] Cayley, 9.

[61] Illich, *Deschooling*, 105-116.

CHAPTER 2

THE CELEBRATION OF AWARENESS

Introduction: The *Ratio* and the *Intellectus*

Erich Fromm, a friend and neighbour of Illich in his early days at Cuernavaca, wrote in introduction to *Celebration of Awareness*, ". . . he has remained true to himself in the very core of his approach and it is this core that we share."[1] In identifying this core he suggests that Illich be called a radical humanist in the Western tradition. Radical means in this case, "*de omnibus dubitandum*; everything must be doubted, particularly the ideological concepts that are virtually shared by everybody and have consequently assumed the role of indubitable commonsensical axioms."[2] Fromm makes clear that Illich is not thereby expressing either an undisciplined rebellion against tradition or an inability to live according to deeply held convictions. Rather, Illich has the capacity, from his place within a particular tradition, to critically question the rationality and authority of the roles thought necessary, commonsensical, and logical for contemporary life.[3]

There are, in Illich's judgment, commonly held certainties about human nature and reality that "undermine and obscure the most basic of human relations, friend to friend."[4] In Socratic fashion, Illich pursues a dialogue with friends in order to demonstrate the richness and limitation of human awareness. The pursuit is in a vocation of loyalty to the realities of human presence, in compassionate appreciation for the uniqueness of each presence, community, and place. In loyalty to human presence and appreciation of its radical cultural diversity, he doubts the necessary superiority of contemporary technological and institutional devices and processes. Further,

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[1] Eric Fromm, introduction to *Celebration of Awareness*, by Ivan Illich (London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd., 1970), 7.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 8.

[4] Carl Mitcham, "The Argument of *Tools for Conviviality* and Beyond," *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society* 16, no. 5/6 (1996): 251.

because of the real and unavoidable distance between calculative reason and the actual existential experience of human presence, he trusts no technical or intellectual advance as subtle enough to grasp the full weight and significance of human others and cultures. There will always be human error and the need, therefore, for receptive and disciplined attention to an ineffable yet somatically known other outside our own unconscious cultural projections: "This radical questioning is possible only if one does not take the concepts of one's own society or even of an entire historical period—like Western culture since the Renaissance—for granted, and furthermore if one enlarges the scope of one's awareness and penetrates into the unconscious aspects of one's thinking."[5]

The assumptions of contemporary life are rooted in the powers of a calculating intellect to make and manage the human environment. This is the ideal of a discursive intellectual power, what Medieval thinkers called in Latin the *ratio*, freed from the prejudice and limitations of tradition and place. The *ratio* was understood by Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and most of the key thinkers in the Western tradition for over two millennium, to be only a part of the "spiritual knowing power" of humanity.[6] The Greek tragedians, the Hebrew prophets, the fables and myths of Rome and Medieval Europe, and Shakespeare's tragedies, all speak of the tragic consequences for humanity when the hubris of the *ratio* attempts to govern action by calculation alone. Oedipus, Job, and Lear, come immediately to mind. The inflated *ratio* creates havoc and despair when it pretends to have mastered the mysterious and never completely comprehensible patterns of human relationships, nature, and the love of an other.

The knowledge of the *ratio*, in its calculative and systematic method, was understood as having a necessary but limited function. It provided, as Aquinas noted, the tool for "searching and

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[5] Fromm, 8.

[6] Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, new trans. Gerald Malsby, with new introduction by Roger Scruton (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), 11.

re-searching, abstracting, refining, and concluding."[7] This tool, like all tools, has limited application. Wittgenstein, as William Barrett points out, has demonstrated that the *ratio* "fails to determine philosophy."[8] Illich recognizes the failure, rooting his philosophy in the living tension between the *ratio* and the *intellectus*. In Illich, the *ratio* awakens the human mind, as Heidegger might have put it, to Being unmastered by technique.[9]

The *intellectus*, the Latin name for the capacity to simply receive reality, is the necessary companion of the *ratio*. Aquinas calls this the "simple knowing which takes place in higher natures, and [by which] we can thus conclude that human beings possess a power of intellectual vision."[10] Aquinas is not speaking of the calculative power of the intellect, what is assumed by the English word "intellect". Rather, he is referring to an awareness, rather than a calculated description, of living beings, not the sum of parts or the predictable function of systems. To become "aware" is in this sense to recognize the irreducible reality of human others. Being aware of the human other therefore implies an awareness different from the rational accounting of the characteristics of their parts or systematic function.

Human beings can assume the power to speak with the infallible clarity of the gods. The demigoddery of ecclesial and political leaders was a tyranny the enlightenment thinkers hoped to escape in their application of the *ratio*. History reminds us, the assumption to have correctly interpreted the human condition, in tradition and practice, is not innocent. The *intellectus* is a respectful awareness of depths that cannot be formally penetrated, in contrast to a simple accounting of characteristics. It gives an intellectual "hospitality" to the "surprise" of the other beyond calculation. The "data" it brings are literally inexpressible because they are irreducibly

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[7] Ibid.

[8] William Barrett, *The Illusion of Technique* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press Doubleday, 1978), xviii.

[9] Ibid., xix.

[10] Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, in *Thomas Aquinas, Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerny (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), question 15, 1.

unique individuals. The *intellectus* is the mode of awareness that apprehends the irreducible individuality of others.

Illich's philosophy, rooted as it is in this Western spirit, claims that the particular, somatic, and historical limits of human existence require a modesty informed by the tension between the *ratio* and the *intellectus*. The assumption that the *ratio*, if freed from the received limits of tradition and ignorance, could refashion reality at whim plagues contemporary life. Over-extended expectations of the *ratio* allow the manufacture of a world in which amoral development and technogenic diseases are accepted as inevitable. All the images that human industry, institution, and technique are capable of producing are judged only by their calculable efficiency and not by their subtler effect on the fragile yet complex patterns, and *bouquet des ésprits*, of human presence and community.[11] Everything, including the human image itself, may become just a resource to be re-fashioned by technical devices and managed in a technical process. The dominance of the *ratio* in contemporary life causes Illich to highlight the gifts of the *intellectus*, the celebration of an awareness beyond calculation.

In the twelve essays and manifestoes gathered in his first published work, *Celebration of Awareness*, Illich uses the discursive powers of the *ratio* to expose the inappropriate use of institutional and technical values in the ecclesial, educational, and social developments that have impelled the contemporary world of technical affluence. In the second essay "Violence: A Mirror for Americans," Illich uses the *ratio* to unearth the paradigmatic assumptions held by both the "hawks and doves" during the war in Vietnam. By standing at a distance from the culture of these North Americans, seeing them through the eyes of Latin American or Asian recipients of their good will, he exposes an underlying assumption: "The compulsion to do good is an innate American

[11] Illich, "The Cultivation of Conspiracy," photocopy, April 1999, 4. Illich is speaking of "the scent those present contribute to a meeting."

trait. Only North Americans seem to believe that they always should, may, and actually can choose somebody with whom to share their blessings. Ultimately, this attitude leads to bombing people into the acceptance of gifts."[12]

These hybrid Euro-Americans assume the power to save others by having them re-made to fit the institutional and technical devices and processes said to guarantee a certain freedom. Illich wonders if the chaos and poverty of rejecting these coercive "blessings" might not be preferable to the loss of dignity, diversity, and to the "intimacy of the human heart."[13] He observed the North American students and friends he welcomed to his centre in Cuernavaca Mexico as they experienced a loss of faith in the capacity of their solutions, religious, technical, political or moral, to solve the problems of those "poor" others:

> The study of violence in Latin America deeply touches the life of the United States observer, but—for a moment still—allows him to stay disengaged. It is always easier to see the illusions in one's neighbor's eyes than the delusion in one's own. A critical examination of the effect that intense social change has on the intimacy of the human heart in Latin America is a fruitful way to gain insight into the intimacy of the human heart in the United States.[14]

The loss of faith in the solutions of technical affluence has most often caused the affluent to see only the "illusions in one's neighbor's eyes" and seldom the delusion in one's own techniques or claim to moral superiority. Their prideful compulsion to do good gives an escalation in the application and growing complexity of technically refined solutions, a "bombing people into the acceptance of gifts."[15] However, when one experiences the frustrating reality that these "solutions" and "blessings" often create greater problems, a modest examination of the nature of the relationships involved may bring one to a receptivity to the other, not as a problem, but as a real human presence. This may slow and even stop the "bombing" by encouraging reflection upon the

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[12] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, 19.

[13] Ibid., 28.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

effect such technical, military, or social engineering, has on the largely incalculable cultural and personal well-being of a human other.[16]

The essays in *Celebration* expose, in a particular time and place, the violence inherent in assuming that human needs can be met by institutional solutions, and the technical devices and processes taken for granted in affluent contemporary society. It asks if the actual encounter with other human beings and cultures may not expose the poverty and ignorance of technically and institutionally complex societies. What Illich suggests is that the technical and institutional efficiency of any society may bring a moral confusion. Over-extended expectations of the *ratio* allow an insensitivity to the actual presence of particular others on behalf of corporate guarantees of religious, social, educational or economic improvement.

This insight is not easily understood by those who feel compelled to change the social conditions of Asian or Latin American peoples "for their own good" through religion, politics, economic development or military intervention. It appears that the violence implicit in the work of military and civilian "do-gooders" who "bomb" others on behalf of economic or social improvement is difficult to see when the *ratio* is not disciplined by a patient contemplation of the real predicament of human presence, the art of the *intellectus*. A co-ordination of the analytical *ratio* to the attentive, and never completed receptivity, of the *intellectus* resists the hubris of technical, institutional, economic, and educational systems as easy resolutions to perennial human ignorance and limitations.

The work of the *ratio* without the *intellectus*, "becomes predatory, self-aggrandizing, one-sided, and, ultimately, heartless," as it must when others are considered as statistical variables or alien groups, rather than as fellow human presences.[17] This is particularly dangerous when

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[16] Ibid., 28.

[17] David Cayley, introduction to *Ivan Illich in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press, 1992), 4.

coupled with the sentimental compulsion to do good to those others. The technical devices and processes of affluence distort the perception of human presence and the appropriate reach of technical function. The compulsion to do good, by applying a technical or institutional process, because one has received an unambiguous divine mandate or simply has a "rational solution" to save the other, can itself be predatory and self aggrandizing. Often, the "nonconformity" of the other becomes something to be eradicated in a "fierce violence against it" hidden behind the mask of care:[18]

> The man who can construct sentences with words and grammar may be much further from reality than he who knows that he does not speak a language. I saw how intensely Puerto Ricans rejected the Americano who studied them for the purpose of "integrating them" in the city. They even refused to answer in Spanish, because behind his benevolence they sensed the condescension, and often the contempt. A program was needed to help Native New Yorkers to enter into the spirit of poverty.[19]

The learning of the rules for a language of difference, a technique for speaking or writing across linguistic and cultural divides, is not enough. The *ratio* may expose the patterns of linguistic difference, poverty, health, or social order. These exposed patterns of difference may be calculated only as another technical detail requiring the application or extension of institutional or technical processes. However, the occasion of learning an other's living tongue can bring, with the *intellectus*, "a deep experience of poverty, of weakness, and of dependence on the good will of another."[20] The difficult and disciplined work of the *intellectus* requires the maturity and patience of confessing ignorance and a hard won awareness of the gulf between the other's unique experience and presence and one's own.

The *intellectus* encourages the patient attending, beyond despair, to the human other as the

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[18] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, 28.

[19] Ibid., 41-42.

[20] Ibid., 42.

one who has a surprising gift to share.[21] Illich spoke to his students of this patient attending as "the silence beyond bewilderment and questions; it is a silence beyond the possibility of an answer, or even reference to a word which preceded."[22] This disciplined attention, while it may prepare the powerful to be receptive by awakening doubts of the capacity to ever fully understand an other, must not end with despair or cynicism at the failure to solve or satisfy all human desires. Rather, it is aware of a paradoxical reality; only continued mutual engagement and recognition of failure and ignorance prevents even greater tragedy and tyranny.

The discipline of attending to the real presence of the other is an overcoming of the fallacies of the human imagination by refusing to shape the other or construct the other in or as a technical and institutional process. Illich's vocation is to real human presence as it comes as a gift of an other who is outside the institutionally or technically managed. This other is a gift, a given other, that makes the self, that seeks only institutional or technical solutions, uncomfortable. The presence of this nonconforming other is deconstructive, disturbing, and surprising, by being unconfined by any logic of system, social organization or even as a product of some act of intentional individuation. Therefore, Illich's dissident vocation of fidelity to this other is not simply outward, to the correction of social organization and historical reifications, but inward, to find an antidote to the hubris of categorization, in friendship with the other. I cannot easily reduce the other to a category or statistical variation when she is known in all her unique humanity as a friend. This does not guarantee just or humane treatment, but it does create a deeper resistance to the consumption of her presence as a product.

Friendship, and the awareness it brings, does not preclude calculation or analytical thought. Rather, friendship is a celebration of a uniqueness that analysis can perhaps heighten but not

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[21] Ibid., 49.

[22] Ibid., 51.

reduce. While friendship is often trivialized as a calculated or prudent behaviour, Illich sees it as a gift of a living receptivity to an other who is not an exchangeable value but a living being.

Therefore, Illich claims the dichotomy between *ratio* and *intellectus* to be false ontologically, while having devastating consequences on human being.[23] There is nothing in human being and activity that necessarily separates work, measurement, comparison, and manufacture, from leisure, celebration, creativity, and receptivity. There is a need for conceptual clarification and demarcation in order to have any successful human engagement with the world. From the gathering of food to the building of dwellings, the *ratio* is a required intelligence. But without the wider sensitivity to and mutual engagement with the other and the otherness of the world, the *ratio* can both destroy the sources of sustenance and habitation, and erode the rich world of moral and cultural significance. Thus the Western tradition has, until the last 400-500 years, always attempted a co-ordination of the powers of the *ratio* with the receptive vision of the *intellectus*.

The essays in *Celebration* name the central crisis of contemporary life. Illich claims it is a crisis due to the severing of the critically important relationship between *ratio* and *intellectus*. The problem of contemporary education, therefore, consists in the dichotomization and fragmentation of two qualities whose interactions are necessary for any depth of human understanding. Illich celebrates an awareness of both mutual receptivity and conceptual demarcation, the *intellectus* and the *ratio*.[24] It may be that Illich's own polarization of institution, education, and curriculum, over against community, learning, and autonomy, merely continues, rather than challenges, through a *via media*, this dichotomization.[25] However, his intent is to say "No!" to the spirits of this age on

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[23] Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past* (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1992), Part 1; and Illich, *The Right to Useful Unemployment* (London: Marion Boyars Press Ltd., 1978), 65-95. In many places Illich speaks of work as noble but labour or jobs as ignobling.

[24] Illich, *Celebration*, 16-18.

[25] Eamonn Callan, *Autonomy and Schooling* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 4-5, 88-90.

behalf of those traditions of Western civilization that have promoted a larger sense of human presence. He encourages the awareness of the "facts" of demarcation as limit and dependence on the unavoidable and incalculable presence of the other.[26]

The essays of *Celebration* illustrate how the continuities of tradition, community, place, family, and friendship, are viewed as encumbrances in the contemporary concern for progress, educational advance, economic growth, and technical expansion. CIDOC in Cuernavaca, Illich's centre for the study of the impact and character of these changes, was meant to be a place for encouraging awareness of what change means to the "heart of the other."[27] Illich is intent on focusing attention on the presence of the other by recovering the discipline of the *intellectus*. Illich is not opposed to change. Rather, he is concerned that change is judged in contemporary society only by a *ratio* undisciplined and unnourished by the receptive patience of the *intellectus*:

> Neither efficiency nor comfort nor affluence is a criterion for the quality of change. Only the reaction of the human heart to change indicates the objective value of that change. All measures of change which disregard the response of the human heart are either evil or naïve. Development is not judged against a rule but against an experience. And this experience is not available through the study of tables but through the celebration of shared experience: dialogue, controversy, play, poetry—in short, self-realization in creative leisure.[28]

The ambiguous and inefficient "celebration of shared experience" is for Illich the only place where empirical evidence is available to affirm the positive value of any change. The *ratio* is used as a tool to clear away the dangerous fantasies of utopians, the delusional technical solutions of social engineers, and presuppositions of intellectual mastery. When disciplined by the *intellectus*, one is sensitive to, without assuming to grasp, the whole being of the other. This is an appreciative awareness that comes, beyond all the calculations of the *ratio*, in the creative interplay, fulfilling or vacuous, damaging or healing, understood or unseen, between presences. The immediately felt

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[26] Illich, *Celebration*, 13.

[27] Illich, *Celebration*, 99.

[28] Ibid.

shared experience in human communities is the final court for evaluating the significance of any technical or social innovation.

Seeking a healthy interplay between the *intellectus* and *ratio*, receptive appreciation and evaluation, celebration and effort, provides a way of exegeting and creatively responding to Ivan Illich's radical educational proposals and to his critics. Giving philosophical importance to celebration, leisure, and awareness makes clear what is sometimes obscured by the aphoristic sharpness of his insight. It may be that, as Socrates has put it, "wise, we may not call him." But as a lover of wisdom, as a philosopher, Illich can be understood as unearthing the presuppositions of contemporary life. He exposes a flaw in contemporary life's best intentions, tripping us all up by allowing a freer pursuit of wisdom.[29] Even if his own argument is inadequate it gives witness to needed reconsideration of philosophical traditions and contemporary presuppositions. He gives a critical voice to a tradition in Western philosophy ignored by the more pragmatic and productive concerns of professional educators and philosophers. This is the tradition of friendship and the appreciation of the gulf between human calculation and the ineffable and finally inexpressible reality of human presence.

Much in this style of philosophy may not attend as closely as we might wish to the rules of the *ratio*. As we have seen, thinking that places in doubt broadly accepted pragmatic and productive considerations can appear to run counter to the rules of *ratio*. However, by receptivity to real presence through the *intellectus* this thinking can provide an intellectual vision of troubling yet compelling insight. To recover and place celebration, leisure, and contemplative receptivity, at the *hub* of culture and learning is as alien to contemporary sensibilities as was Socrates' distinction between the noble of birth, and the brave and wise, to his listeners. Perhaps, in this sense, Illich's call for a celebration of awareness is a continuation of a Western tradition in a contemporary

[29] *Phaedrus*, 207.

dialogue. It may inspire a confession of confusion by the powerful in respect for, and perhaps friendship with, the nonconforming presence of human others. In Illich we see the curious juxtaposition of awareness and uncertainty, celebration and radical doubt.

Celebration and Radical Doubt

> This "call to celebration" was a manifesto jointly enunciated by and reflecting the mood of a group of friends in 1967, among them Robert Fox and Robert Theobald. It was written at the time of the March on the Pentagon. This call to face facts, rather than deal in illusions—to live change, rather than rely on engineering—is an attempt to re-introduce the word "celebration" into ordinary English.[30]

The re-introduction of a word that has lost its fuller meaning is an apt way of viewing much of Illich's writing. While radically critical, he seeks the recovery of a language of celebration and gift. For the moment, gift will have the simple meaning of an unearned surprise of presence rather than an expected outcome of applied technique. Gifts are given freely, expressing the giver's relationship to the recipient, and not as a result of the accomplishments of the recipient.[31]

To recover the word "celebration" means to recover a sense of the gift as a symbol of relationship to an unavoidable presence. For Illich, celebration is another word for the action of the people and priest in the Christian Eucharist as they receive the Real Presence as Divine nonconformity to mere utility.[32] It denotes the thankfulness for the Real Presence of Christ in the elements and amongst the gathered congregation. It is an action that has no other use or meaning than this thankful contemplation and feast of Real Presence.[33] It is an act, therefore, of pure leisure, σχολή (*scole*) as Aristotle has called it, bringing one into intimacy with and disposing one

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[30] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness,* 13.

[31] Monica K. Hellwig, "Eucharist," *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* editor in chief Mircea Eliade (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 185.

[32] "Celebration," *OED.*

[33] Monica K. Hellwig, 185-186.

to receptive contemplation, θεωρία (*theoria*), of presences that do not simply conform to utilitarian expectations.[34]

This is to view human well-being as dependent on gifts given and upon the capacity to receive and creatively respond to their obligations and possibilities. To accept this means to come to radically doubt that any construction, ecclesial, intellectual, social, or technical, can ever guarantee the gift or a creative response to its possibilities. Celebration brings an awareness of the depth of dependence and the choice between destructive or creative response. It is a festival that sees hope in the tension between receptive awareness and response.

Illich sees contemporary institutional life as a destructive response to the gift, collapsing the tension into a technical process. For much of the cultural history of the West, and of other cultures, the appreciation of the ineffable mystery of human others is the "useful" awareness of the complex relational patterns of obligations and gifts found in shared human experience. When the useful became more narrowly defined as a belief, device, process, or object guaranteeing certain expected results, either in religion or social practice, this larger meaning was diminished.

The near insensibility to presence, when human minds are only educated to technical and institutional roles and measures, turns from hope in human contact to expected and managed results. Illich is warning of the loss of a sense of human presence in the domination of the instrumental, institutional, and technical. In a straightforward way, his thought runs counter to those thinkers of the Reformation, and later secular society, who called for the execution of a plan to achieve human salvation.[35] In the tradition of St. Bernard, St. Thomas, Hugh of Saint Victor, and of his teacher and mentor Jacques Maritain, Illich re-claims the celebratory, and therefore the

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[34] Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. and trans. Sir David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 431b.

[35] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 113 ff. Illich names specifically Comenius and some aspects of Calvin's thought.

gift, as a radical, yet orthodox, counter to the perils of planned or predestined outcomes in a utilitarian and device-focussed culture:

> I remember on my next trip to New York going to Princeton to see Jacques Maritain . . . [whose] imaginative Thomism meant a lot to me. . . . I talked to him about the question which bothered me, that in all his philosophy I didn't find any access to the concept of planning. He asked me if this was an English word for accounting, and I told him no . . . if it was for engineering, and I said no . . . and then at a certain moment, he said to me, "Ah! Je comprends, mon cher ami, maintenant je comprends." Now I finally understand. "C'ette une nouvelle espèce du péché de présomption." Planning is a new variety of the sin of pride.[36]

The diminishment of celebration, and lack of willingness to accept limits to conceptual demarcation, impels an endless expansion and use of technical devices and processes to measure and bring forth expected results. Illich is critical of both the Generals at the Pentagon, who engineered carpet bombing of Vietnamese peasants in order to "save" them from Communism, and of revolutionaries, organizing peasants with the idea of "planning" a just society.[37] To celebrate is a call "to face the facts" of human limitation as a gift.[38] Illich is here referring to that discipline of the tradition of Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas à Kempis, "to taste things as they really are."[39] This is the acceptance of things as they are in order to receive them as a gift. The labour necessary to human survival is done, accepting the pain and the joy, in order to have leisure to contemplate in an art of presence the meaning of all labour. It is to, "believe that a contemporary art of living can be recovered. I believe in the art of suffering, in the art of dying, in the art of living and, so long as it is in an austere and clear-sighted way, in the art of enjoyment, the art of 'living it up.'"[40]

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[36] Cayley and Illich, 61-62.

[37] Illich, *Celebration*, 22-23.

[38] Ibid., 13.

[39] Josef Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1965), 5.

[40] Illich, *Blasphemy: A Radical Critique of Technological Culture*, Science, Technology, and Society Working Paper, no. 2 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Program, 1994), 40.

The recovery of "a contemporary art of living" is expressed in the clear refusal to manipulate or engineer any human others for any purpose including their own salvation. It is also reflected in a refusal to imagine that any religious, utopian social arrangement or educational device is capable of solving human problems without creating more complex problems. If we see the other only as a manageable function of biological, social, or institutional structures we fail to receive their gift as a surprise of real presence. If they come to us as only a measured quantity or a useful worker than we can only learn from them their use or function. However, if the others are presences, in some part undefined by institutional or technical category, then they may come to us as a surprise, a gift.

To celebrate, in Illich's estimation, is to radically doubt the capacity of any intellectual, technical, institutional, or economic advance to make redundant or perfect human awareness. Each of the essays in *Celebration* was written to expose "a deception embodied in one of our institutions."[41] The intellectual territory covered in the essays is wide, and the depth of philosophical consideration is not thick or profound. However, the essays encourage the recognition that the *ratio* can bring "an acceptance of one's own nature and needs" without assuming one's nature or needs can find solution or full satisfaction in the products of an "ever-increasing production, consumption, timesaving, maximal efficiency and profit, and calculability."[42] The learning of the *ratio* affords the awareness of social constructions and recognition of the profound difficulty in receiving an other as more than a projection of intellectual, institutional, and technical interpretation. However, Illich does not give in to the inclination of much contemporary philosophy to deny the possibility that human awareness can have any unconstructed apprehension of the other.

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[41] Illich, *Celebration*, 11.

[42] Ibid., 9 and 11.

Illich is naming the confusion caused when the tension in human awareness between the ineffable presence of human others and their *describable* face is imagined to be overcome. The known face of a friend brings to awareness not simply my interpretation and measuring of her affective response. I am aware, in friendship, of being in contact with a *you* whose full measure is beyond the capacity of my *ratio* to measure. The temptation to define *you* by listing *your* physical features, institutional or clinical condition, is naturally felt to be less than what the mutuality of our friendship demands. Thereby, the awareness of friendship gives the unresolvable tension of knowing, while celebrating as a gift, a discernible *you* beyond the measure of the *ratio's* interpretive or calculative capacity. I celebrate the awareness of my friendship with *you* by identifying and receiving your unique presence as in part beyond my calculation.

One cause for the celebration that Illich names is the application of the human *ratio* as "our joint power to provide all human beings with the food, clothing, and shelter they need to delight in living."[43] What Illich seems to be speaking of is the power in modern modes of production to provide the necessities of life. This is a way beyond servility and dull passivity. Friendship can be more richly experienced when the work of the *ratio* is jointly exercised to provide relief from hunger and needless suffering.

However, Illich sees this "joint power" as no more than a prosthetic aid to the "delight in living" in friendship.[44] The next sentence after this call to celebrate "the joint power to provide" speaks of "discovering what we must do to use mankind's power to create the humanity, the dignity, and the joyfulness of each one of us."[45] The word "discovering" is in opposition to planning. It suggests that the way to use power is learned not by obedience to an ideological

[43] Ibid., 15.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

agenda or an economic plan, but by a mutual respect and delight in living with others, discovering and accepting the meaning and reality of our human frailty, dependence, and incompletion:

> We must therefore strive cooperatively to create the new world. . . .We are presently constrained and driven by the impact of man's ever growing powers. Our existing systems force us to develop and accept any weapon system which may be technologically possible; our present systems force us to develop and accept any improvement in machinery, equipment, materials, and supplies which will increase production and lower costs; our present systems force us to develop and accept advertising and consumer seduction.[46]

At first glance, Illich can be clustered with other left-leaning educators. However, there is in all the essays of *Celebration* an attack upon attempts to engineer or "think our way to humanity."[47] It becomes obvious that political revolution is not his final cause. However, he does take aim at those who defend the industrial or post-industrial capitalism of North Atlantic powers. He writes of those who defend and seek to export this development:

> A vulgar example of the first assumption is the Rockerfeller Report on the Americas. Its doctrine is aptly summed up by [then] President Nixon: "This I pledge to you tonight: the nation that went to the moon in peace for all mankind is ready to share its technology in peace with its neighbors." The governor, in turn, proposes that keeping the pledge might require a lot of additional weaponry.[48]

Illich is equally uncomfortable with attempts to engineer a perfectly just system:

> We need an alternative program, an alternative to development and to merely political revolution. Let me call this alternative program either institutional or cultural revolution, because its aim is the transformation of both public and personal reality. . . .
>
> Cultural revolution is a review of the reality of man and a redefinition of the world in terms which support this reality. Development is the attempt to create an environment then educate at great cost to pay for it.[49]

The "review of the reality of man [and woman]" is a philosophical enterprise that calls into question the assumptions of the age. Illich goes about such a review by exposing the diseases and

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[46] Ibid., 16.

[47] Ibid., 15.

[48] Ibid., 177.

[49] Ibid., 180 and 188.

confusion generated by the over-extension of institutional and technical applications. By reference to "the memories stored in the human community" and the ingenuity of local communities to "resist machined might" Illich shows trust in the capacities of the *ratio*, if it is rooted in awareness of the significance of communities of human presence beyond technical calculation.[50] The argument is for a "celebration of awareness" of the irreducible gifts of human community within appropriate limits and with respect to the uniqueness of each human face. The celebration of awareness opens one to discover a fitting place in friendship with others. However, this argument for the celebratory is constructed by encouraging doubts about the capacity of the *ratio* to offer a perfect social order or to master reality.

The works of Plato, Aristotle, the Bible, the traditions of the Western Church in practice and text, the vernacular world of local life, are all crucial "texts" Illich offers as providing insights into and critique of contemporary life. However, by "celebration" Illich means nothing less than what is found in the feast of the Christian Eucharist, an awareness of the tension between an ineffable presence and a measurable element. Therefore, the festivity of this "cultural revolution", unlike Mao's totalitarian *worker's revenge* on the *intellectual class*, is not about asserting a particular political creed. Illich may seek a transformation in public perception, but he does so by recognizing the limits to the power of political, ecclesial, technical, institutional, and educational devices in a celebrative awareness of human presence.

Albert Borgmann would call this the power of a focal practice to transform perception, referring to Capon's *The Supper of the Lamb* or Sheehan's *Running and Being.*[51] These focal practices, like Illich's celebration and cultural revolution, are practices that "review the human

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[50] Ibid., 134 and 174.

[51] Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 201 ff.; Robert Farrar Capon, *The Supper of the Lamb: A Culinary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), passim; and George Sheehan, *Running and Being: The Total Experience* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), passim.

reality" by bringing it in to touch again, in a delicate vibrancy, with somatic realities and limits that carry the complex range of meanings and encumbrances of human communion in place.[52] The taste of bread, wine, sweat, the feel of hands and feet moving with the elements, the rhythm of a familiar journey, the pattern of certain modes of speaking and music, all inter-act to bring the participant into touch with the predicament of human presence, in somatic grace and gravity beyond technical manipulation. The change in sensibility is not available as an applied programme or technical process, "not in politics nor in philosophy in the prevailing idiom," but only as a focal practice.[53] This change, as Illich confesses, "can only be lived." For example, Illich writes of the Eucharistic feast:

> The *ecclesia* came to be through a public ritual action, the liturgy, and the soul of this liturgy was the *conspiratio*. Explicitly, corporeally, the central Christian celebration was understood as a co-breathing, a con-spiracy, the bringing about of a common atmosphere, a divine milieu. . . .
>
> The other eminent moment of the celebration was, of course, the *comestio*, the communion in the flesh . . . but *communio* was theologically linked to the preceding *con-spiratio* . . . the strongest, clearest and most unambiguously somatic expression for the entirely non-hierarchical creation of a fraternal spirit in preparation for the unifying meal. Through the act of eating, the fellow conspirators were transformed into a "we" . . . shading into the "I" . . .[54]

With Illich and Capon the language of the receptive and celebratory is expressed in the hospitality of a meal where by co-breathing "we shade" into each other's "I." This is illustrated beautifully in the visual contrasts and dramatic tension of the film *Babette's Feast.*[55]

Gabriel Axel's film tells the story of two pious sisters, Philippa and Martina, kind-hearted and devoted to their late father's ministries. Long ago, they both turned down the loves of their lives so that they could maintain the religious community gathered about their father's vision of a world

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Borgmann, 201.

[54] Ivan Illich, "The Cultivation of Conspiracy," 8.

[55] Gabriel Axel, dir. and screenplay, *Babette's Feast*, prod. Just Betzer and Bo Christensen. 102 minutes. AøS Panorama Film International, 1987.

transfigured by love. Years after their father has passed away they receive a visitor with a letter from Achille Papin, a French opera singer who fell in love with Philippa. The letter explains how he has sent Babette to them—both her husband and son had been killed. Remembering himself to Philippa after thirty-five years and recalling her own beautiful voice, he, in asking them to accept Babette, writes that in paradise Philippa "will be the great artist God intended her to be."[56]

Babette enters their life from a mysterious past linked to the passions of the artist, becoming their servant. She enters a religious community that has been reduced to backbiting, gossiping, self-righteousness, resentment, and depression. The film visually "contrasts two modalities of Christian apprehension: one [Philippa and Martina] which sees religiosity as primarily a matter of moral living, demeaning sensual engagement in the created world; the other [Babette] which acknowledges the "sacramental" texture and depths of the created order and discovers there the divine."[57]

Under Axel's direction the film "allows the viewer to apprehend reality contemplatively, to take a long, loving look at the real in such away that the hidden, sacred dimension of reality is revealed."[58] Babette's preparation of a sensuous thanksgiving feast occupies the screen, rich with ingredients and human passion.

After fourteen years as their servant Babette has won 10,000 francs in a lottery. The sisters assume that with this windfall she will return to France. However, her only request is that she be allowed to prepare a feast that will celebrate the 100th birthday of their deceased father. The sisters agree to this disruption to their morally correct meals and lives of boiled fish and plain bread. The scenes of the arrival of the strange and opulent ingredients, French wines, quail, and

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Wendy M. Wright, "Babette's Feast: A Religious Film," *The Journal of Religion and Film* 1, no. 2 (1997) [journal on-line] ; available from http://www.unomaha.edu/~wwwjrf; Internet; accessed 9 September 1999.

[58] Ibid.

sea-turtle, excite the senses and fears of Philippa, Martina, and their congregation. They uneasily recall their past loves and passions, and even the passion of their father's vision of a new world permeated by divine love. We learn that Martina's old lover, now a general, has returned and will be a surprise guest at the feast. At the feast, "warmed by the fine wines and the general's example, the guests begin to respond, not only to the feast itself, but to one another. Old quarrels are healed, past sins genuinely forgiven. The general rises and, echoing the deceased pastor's words, acknowledges the reality of a world illuminated by love."[59]

Philippa and Martina, adopting the sheer mechanics of recalling their father's vision, had starved themselves and their congregation by merely recalling its measurable dimensions. In contrast, Babette practices and creates a sensuous celebration of human life, appreciative of its hidden gifts and surprising turns. The feast works its magic, reawakening in the participants a joy and warmth lost in their bitter lives. We learn that Babette has spent all her money, and her satisfaction in the event was in the artistry of preparing the feast: "With Martina and Philippa aghast, she explains that she had given everything not simply for them but because within each artist's soul is the cry to be given the chance to be the best they can be. Philippa, echoing the words Achille Papin had spoken to her, promises that in paradise Babette will be the great artist God intended her to be."[60] All are brought alive by the feast to the ambiguities, the "conspiring" entanglements, and, thereby, vibrancy of real human presence.

The film, however, is not a simple parody of religious piety. Rather, "one feels sympathy for the sisters' earnest and good-hearted efforts, yet one feels something has been lost, something is clearly lacking."[61] That which is lacking was there, we sense, in the initial luminous vision, and is recovered by Babette's focal practice of her art—a feast that is "an affirmation of the ultimate

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

sacramentality of the created order."[62] However, there is nothing romantic in the final scenes, the sisters are not whisked away by their old lovers. Rather, they continue in their lives, but now with an appreciation of hidden depths and beauties: "Grace makes no conditions, it takes all to its bosom and proclaims amnesty. That which we have rejected is poured out on us."[63]

Beyond the narrative structure of *Babette's Feast*, Gabriel Axel and the film's actor's artistry demonstrates the consequence of focal practice:

> Each concrete detail of the world in which Martina and Philippa live and the transfigured world that Babette creates for them are dwelt upon with loving attentiveness. The artistry of Babette's filmmakers allows us to gaze with contemplative awareness upon the world unfolding before our eyes. Reality has revealed its sacred depths. The fig, the bread, the wine are discovered to be more than they appear. It is nothing less than a sacramental vision of the universe. And as such, the film is profoundly religious.[64]

The focal practice of preparing a celebratory feast, making a fine movie, the pain and joy of running a marathon, or the attentive walk along a well loved trail, give an awareness of the vibrant depths of common experience. However, Borgmann and Illich suggest there is also a hospitality—an openness to the complex intertwining of human lives. These focal practices are a kind of visceral dialogue approaching the ultimate virtues incarnate in any rich human experience of shared value. Focal practices are the necessary activities of the *intellectus*, that open the self to receive the virtues of presence, in part ineffable, in reality and the other.

Illich and Borgmann agree, that it is precisely in somatic contact and practice that one uncovers a sensibility that is alive to the presence of things and to the presence within things. Such focal practices, in a time dominated by technical function, accept a certain poverty of technical certainty and definition. However, this simplicity of a focal practice opens the self to an

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Axel, *Babette's Feast*. These are the final words of Martina's old lover, the General, over the feast.

[64] Wright, loc. cit.

intercourse of rich and complex significance. Focal practice allows us to be surprised by presence through stripping the self of pretensions to technically correct and predictable results.

The capacity for surprise is a gift of the *intellectus*. The ability to receive the other as a gift, not as a familiar object or problem, is the focal practice of allowing as unmediated a relationship as possible with reality. This is contrasted with the manufactured environment of ecclesial, institutional, political, and technical devices, that seek to control or overcome the tension in real presence, between a cognitive grasp and an ineffable given, in order to guarantee the salvation of human society. However, what must be even more puzzling, to the political theorist and philosopher of education who knows only the idiom of the *ratio*, is Illich's refusal, on behalf of this celebration, to accept any political or pedagogical strategy that presents a solution as a force imposing a good:

> I can't let anybody insure either the material or the spiritual future for me. . . .
> . . . I'm not condemning anybody who continues to think that democratic politics can be continued. In the tradition of the Western world I, radically, in my roots, have chosen the politics of impotence. I bear witness to my impotence because I think that . . . there is nothing else left, but also because I could argue that, at this moment, it's the right thing to do. Today, politics almost inevitably focusses attention on intermediate goals but does not let you see what the things are to which we have to say NO! . . . as, for instance, to care.[65]

By being too quick to read his proposals as political or practical strategies for education, the radical doubt his celebration brings to any political panacea or utopian plan for education can be lost. Erich Fromm has pointed out that Illich holds, "*de omnibus dubitandum*; everything must be doubted, particularly the ideological concepts that are virtually shared by everybody and have consequently assumed the role of indubitable commonsensical axioms."[66] By choosing the "politics of impotence" Illich is claiming that trust in ideological, technical, and institutional devices is misplaced. Radically doubting the benefit of any institutional or technical manipulation of

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[65] Cayley and Illich, 218.

[66] Fromm, 7.

awareness, Illich turns to trust in the locally found ingenuity, practices, and presence in human community. His "political impotence" is a confession that no change is possible that is not found in the ineffable practices of friendship. The "cultural revolution" he calls for is one of focal practices that give "somatic expression for the entirely non-hierarchical creation of a fraternal spirit."[67]

Celebration is the political expression of those who radically doubt the "indubitable commonsensical axioms" of an over-extension of the work of the *ratio*. It is a practice that "faces the facts" of human dependence and ignorance by identifying the limit, gift, and the ineffable connections in human presence. The *ratio's* interpretative and constructive labour is chastened by the *conspiratio* of the *intellectus*, the conspiring of an awareness in the obligations and delights of friendship. The labour of calculation and intrusive assistance is disrupted by the leisure of the *intellectus*, aware of the unique and incalculable presence of a friend. Illich celebrates this awareness in order not to be deceived by the hard-working and intelligent hubris of the *ratio*. Joseph Pieper gives a clarifying elaboration of Illich's hope in the leisure of the *intellectus*.

Josef Pieper's Theory of Leisure and Illich's Vocation

In *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, Josef Pieper outlines the "altered conception of human being, as such" in the contemporary over-dependence on the work of the *ratio*.[68] By almost eclipsing the leisure of the *intellectus*, the works of the *ratio* have made it difficult to trust in any human presence that is not constructed by institutional, intellectual or technical artifice. The situation Western philosophy faces in the last half of the twentieth century is one of deconstructing interpretive models to reveal their constructive ambitions—intellectual, psychological, or ideological. The aims are to demonstrate a mastery of analytical skills, the relative worth of one

[67] Ivan Illich, "The Cultivation of Conspiracy," 8.

[68] Pieper, *Leisure the Basis, of Culture*, 7.

construction over its rivals, the hidden rule of irrational appetites, or to illustrate the freedom of the human will to construct itself and its world. Few philosophers aim at awakening a receptive capacity to an other who is in some part undefined by intellectual construction. In fact, many doubt that thought can receive anything or any presence that is not a subjective or intellectual construction.[69]

The situation faced by Western philosophy is often portrayed as one where the demands of technical progress make thinking about the world and human presence primarily an act of construction, deconstruction, or re-construction. If Pieper returns to leisure as conceived by Aristotle or Aquinas, it is because leisure, as conceived there, is rooted in a receptivity, the *intellectus*, to real presence as found in the particular somatic occasions of a human life. This is to suggest that, contrary to much in contemporary thought, it is possible to know the presence of another with more than the calculative or interpretive skills of the *ratio*. In contrast, Illich and Pieper, "in the traditional sense of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas," practice,

> The philosophical act (as). . . a fundamental relation to reality, a full, personal attitude which is by no manner of means at the sole disposal of the *ratio*; it is an attitude which presupposes silence, a contemplative attention to things, in which man begins to see how worthy of veneration they really are. And it is perhaps only in this way that it is possible to understand how it was that Plato's philosophical school, the Academy in Athens, was at the same time a sort of club or society for the celebration of the cultus.[70]

The philosophical learning Pieper is speaking of and the practice Illich intends in his social criticism is found in contemplation and in a variety of focal practices. The basis of human being, not merely its linguistic expression, is the fundamental issue. Too often contemporary philosophy has, by either over-emphasizing linguistic analysis or the freedom of self-will in deconstruction, discouraged any hope in a "means not at the sole disposal of the *ratio*." The erosion of the

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[69] William Barrett, ***The Illusion of Technique***, passim.

[70] Ibid., xv-xvi.

imaginative, spiritual, and physical capacity of the *intellectus* is by a contemporary presupposition that the *ratio* and its labour are the only means to fashion or refashion human meaning, culture, and discourse.[71] The loss or diminishment of "celebration" has brought a world of "total work" where human beings live for and as the icons of their own labour, reversing the idea in Western tradition that leisure, as the openness of the *intellectus* to reverence of the other and the world, is at the centre of all human meaning.

Homo habilis is the lost image of a humanity contemplating and creating an appropriate dwelling with respect for and fitting to a certain place in creation. The turning away from the virtues of creating an appropriate dwelling in creation to the fabricating of a world of devices and processes marks a profound shift in human identity. The tradition of the creative soul in Plato and Aristotle, or the *imago Dei* in Augustine and Aquinas, gives a *homo habilis*, contemplating and shaping a fitting presence in creation. Work and fabrication (*fabrica*), come only in service to fitting oneself, proportionately, in a world of real presences. Leisure is the opening to contemplation of real presence in a founding or re-founding of one's home in relationship to all other presences.

"It is very difficult to speak about things which seem to have been obvious and unquestioned during a thousand years of Western tradition."[72] The gap between the present and the "thousand years of Western tradition" is not simply in the tools and techniques of contemporary life, but what those tools and techniques, and the culture they have given, say about the meaning of human life. Pieper and Illich are not just suggesting that new tools and techniques have redefined work. Rather, the very basis of culture and human identity are now given new meaning. The new idea is of *homo faber*, of humanity as the fabricator of its own world with reference to all else as merely

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[71] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, 70.

[72] Ibid., 70, 198, 279-80.

resources for this fabrication, eventually including humanness itself. Illich and Pieper agree that the techniques of an unrooted *ratio* threaten the very possibility of humanity, not merely physically, but as a spiritual sensibility.

It is clear that Illich and Pieper allow the issues of contemporary concern—work, technology, scarcity of resources, education as a device to prepare students for a place in institutional careers, etc.—to come under question as allegedly of perennial human concern. That leisure is the foundation of culture and of schooling is a claim of much more consequence than philological or historical objectivity. Illich makes the claim as way of contesting what he perceives to be a contemporary half-truth. This half-truth is the claim that a human being should be understood as primarily made by, for, and in work. A recovery of the art of living is sought as leisured contemplation and awareness of the limits and possibilities of real human presence:

> Now, the very fact of this difference, of our inability to recover the original meaning of "leisure", will strike us all the more when we realize how extensively the opposing idea of "work" has invaded and taken over the whole realm of human action and of human existence as a whole; when we realize, as well, how ready we are to grant all claims made for the person who "works." [73]

Deeply rooted changes in self image are never easy to uproot. In education, as Pieper points out, such a phrase as "intellectual work" taken as self evident actually indicates the end of a long historical journey in presuppositions that make it easy "to grant all claims made for the person who works." Our economies, our education, and even our relationships, are things we work for or at in order to improve or make them and ourselves more productive. There is something disturbing and subversive about those who refuse or appear not to care for progress or an increase in production and quantity. The world of intellectual activity was defined before the rise of this contemporary

[73] Pieper, *Leisure*, 6.

pattern by Hugh of St. Victor as requiring, "a humble mind, eagerness to inquire, a quiet life, silent scrutiny, poverty, a foreign soil."[74]

The work and the "worker" under consideration with the use of such phrases as "intellectual work" is not merely the proletarian. Rather, what appears in this use is the "worker" as a general human ideal and anthropological definition.[75] The epistemological claims of a Kant or a Foucault suggest that knowledge is always a labour of the will, always an attempt to order, control, or dominate.[76] There is no modest looking that is, as Aquinas has put it, an "intellectual vision" of things as they are. To see is always to measure in order to construct a category or to possess. Knowing is, for much of modern academia, this hard labour of receiving nothing without the strain of torturous examination:

> To Kant, for instance, the human act of knowing is exclusively "discursive," which means not "merely looking." . . . In Kant's view, then, human knowing consists essentially in the act of investigating, articulating, joining, comparing, distinguishing, abstracting, deducing, proving . . . It is no wonder that . . . all knowing . . . should be understood as work.[77]

Kant declares that if it is not work it is not philosophy.[78] This ethic of labour and difficult interrogation is an attempt to give philosophy secure footing in rationally acceptable premises. The *ratio* becomes the sole and merciless judge of adequacy.

Some of the Romantics and some Postmodernists counter Kant by an embrace of the irrational. The work of rational interrogation, exposed as dependent upon irrational, non-rational or extra-rational circumstances, by the application of interrogation upon itself, ends in a Milton-like purgatory of interrogation. Others argue that the way out is through a human effort of self-

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[74] Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon*, trans. with notes Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 94.

[75] Ibid., 6.

[76] Kant, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan Press, 1934), passim.

[77] Pieper, *Leisure*, 10.

[78] Ibid., 10.

construction, straining to create ourselves beyond any givens of the past. The seriousness and strain on the face of intellectual workers who speak of analysis, deconstruction, reconstruction or interrogation, or even those who speak of a carnival of absurdity in a world of "no hope of escape from criticism," is reminiscent of the hardest manual labour, without its physical release.[79] Too often endless mental labour, without leisurely contemplation, is celebrated as the best of educations in contemporary life.

In contrast, Pieper and Illich use the tool of *ratio* in service to leisured awareness. Neither of them denies the place of *ratio*. Pieper explains,

> But the simple act of *intellectus* is *not* work. And whoever thinks, along with the ancients, that human knowing is a mutual interplay of *ratio* and *intellectus*; whoever can recognize an element of intellectual vision within discursive reasoning; whoever, finally, can retain in philosophy an element of contemplation of being as a whole—such a person will have to grant that a characterization of knowing and philosophy as "work" is not only not exhaustive, but does not even reach the core of the matter . . . Certainly, knowing in general and philosophical knowing in particular cannot take place with out the effort and activity of discursive reasoning . . .[80]

The demand placed upon learning is in the insistence that it has value only as much as it is a measurable and difficult exercise of the *ratio*. School is a work place where value is measured, and not a place of *scole* or leisured contemplation of presence. Students are not encouraged to leisured receptivity but to *ascolia*, to busy examination. Learning is not for itself but for work, for the tasks of the work-place. Human knowing, solely understood as a discursive operation, commits itself to an *ascolia*, unleisured duty.

Again, the implication is not that *ratio* or work is to be done away with in a mystical and utopian embrace of the contemplative life. Rather, the objection is to the idea that reliable knowledge is gained only by the labour of the *ratio*. If truth is a mere consequence of discursive

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 13.

operations, the more in strength of power or complexity the greater the truth exacted. Human *ratio* applied with Herculean effort, as Kant spoke of it, seems to guarantee the yielding of something true.[81] The Cynic philosopher Antisthenes, a friend of Plato, gave voice, long before Kant, to this contemporary fixation on Herculean strength. Forgetting, as the Greek legends did not, its tragic limitations, he said, "effort is the good."[82] What has occurred in the history of the West has been an "Antisthenian shift." Knowledge, once understood as receptiveness to the truth of reality, through an obsessive and inflated belief in the capacity of human labour, has become a power of labour, and knowing without effort is disparaged:

> Antisthenes, by the way, was a surprisingly modern figure. He was responsible for the first paradigm of the "worker"—or rather, he represented it himself. He not only came up with the equation of effort with goodness, he also extolled Hercules as the Accomplisher of Superhuman Actions. Now, this is an image that still (or once more?) has a certain compelling attraction: from the motto of Erasmus ["the labours of Hercules"] to the philosophy of Kant, who used the word "Herculean" to praise the heroism of the philosophers, and to Thomas Carlyle, the prophet of the religion of Work: "You must labor like Hercules . . ." . . . Antisthenes had no feeling for cultic celebration . . . no responsiveness to Eros . . . a flat realist . . . [no time for contemplation] . . . traits almost purposely designed to illustrate the very type of the modern "workaholic."[83]

So knowledge is, as most agree in contemporary societies and amongst those so educated, just another name for a kind of power to do work. If so determined, knowledge is gained by the force of interrogation and regarded as "weak" or not trustworthy if received as a gift of the *intellectus*. Again, the logic of saying "effort is required for a grasp of the truth" does not preclude saying, as well, "the effort of the *ratio* without the receptivity of the *intellectus* only gives a dangerous half-truth." The *intellectus* is the discipline of focusing the labour of the mind and hands in order to open the self to receive the other.

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[81] Ibid., 16.

[82] Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Teachings of the Philosophers*, VI, 1, 2.

[83] Pieper, *Leisure*, 16-17.

To know seems to always imply great labour. However, there are those who seem to effortlessly gain hold of a truth. I recall the fine arts student in my Theology class who, never having read theology before, seemed to have an immediate grasp of its nuanced meanings. Many of the theologically trained clerics in the class worked hard, but seemed never to quite grasp what for her was, like her art, a matter of preparation to receive a gift. Barbara McClintock tells how her practice of science depended on the leisure to look and to hear "what the material has to say to you."[84] Her greatest contribution to cytogenetics appeared to have come in the receptivity of a "feeling for the organism."[85]

It is possible to be more guarded about the powers of the *ratio*, while appreciating its importance. We can say, while often great effort appears to be required to gain some truth about reality, that, if by truth we mean insight into something more than the workings of our own minds, receptivity is equally necessary. This is a proposition that allows for both effort and receptivity, *ratio* and *intellectus*. This will allow for trust in knowledge, not simply because of the effort involved, or the complexity of the technical apparatus used. Knowing and learning mean, in this way, that the real presence of things and persons can surprise us with insight, despite all efforts to predict and make the real conform to a functional ideal. This state of creative uncertainty may come by an effort of identifying, stilling, or suspending the working of the *ratio*. Even more, it would suggest that there is nothing necessarily ethically inferior in truths or insights that come as a gift in contemplation or as wisdom from a tradition of focal practices.

There is, also, nothing to suggest that the work of discursive thinking is as opposed to the *intellectus* as has been supposed. There is nothing to suggest that school, technology, institution, system, are necessary to or necessarily in conflict with real human presence. The effort and

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[84] Henriette Kelker, "Endmatter: A Feeling for the Future: The Process of Change as Explored by Fred Polak and Barbara McClintock," *Zygon* 31, no. 2 (June 1996): 369-370.

[85] Ibid.; and Evelyn Fox-Keller, *A Feeling for the Organism* (New York: Freeman, 1983), passim.

struggle of *ratio* can give one to a focal practice, attention to what is for its own sake. The *ratio* can be the means—as Heidegger and Borgmann suggest—of exposing the emptiness of its own struggles.[86] When the *ratio* exposes its own emptiness, the emptiness of technology, education, institution, system, without sensitivity to human presence, it can serve the *intellectus* by drawing the mind back to the immeasurable and somatic gravity of human presence.

The e-mail notes between my friend Brian and I can easily feel like a subjective contrivance. However, our actual conversations when we are able to be physically together—the gestures, expressions, smells—give something irreducible to subjective contrivance. The manipulation of technical and institutional process cannot ease the pain or create the delight we share. By "leaning into the gulf" between our presences we come to a *focus*, as Latin has it, a place at the "hearth" where presence meets presence.[87] We make an effort to come home and be at leisure in the company of a stranger who is a friend. We celebrate an awareness, in vulnerability to the facts of our relational entanglements, that requires a disciplined leisure, a stillness, and attentiveness of mind:

> Leisure is a form of that stillness that is the necessary preparation for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear, and whoever is not still cannot hear. Such stillness as this is not mere soundlessness or a dead muteness; it means, rather, that the soul's power, as real, of responding to the real—a *co*-respondence. . . has not yet descended into words. Leisure is the disposition of receptive understanding, of contemplative beholding, and immersion in the real.[88]

Pieper recalls that any intellectual achievement or social well-being in Western culture has been consequence of the "stillness" of the *intellectus* anchoring the busy work of the *ratio*. Illich's vocation has been one of celebrating the gifts of the *intellectus* as a way of "facing the facts" of human dependence on the unearned relational complexity of the world. These facts of the *ratio*,

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[86] Albert Borgmann, 202.

[87] Illich and Cayley, 56.

[88] Pieper, *Leisure*, 31.

rooted in a complex dance of relational happenings, is best grasped in the ineffable gift of friendship, its patient attending and leaning toward the presence of an other. In touch with the human face of a friend we can no longer be distracted from the entanglements of real presence. The difficult but leisurely conversation between friends is a form of disciplined dissidence in a world socially distracted by the show of technical achievement.

Disciplined Dissidence: Learning in touch with the Human Face

James Adams was 82 years old when I first met him. The green eyes in his heavily lined and weathered face attended closely to every face that came up the wharf. As I grew to know him—sitting at his side on the weathered bench—I understood that his eyes and face were themselves sign of a life-long study of the Human Face. He attended to the speech, patterns of behaviour, and silent communications of others. If I wished to know who I could trust in the village to attend to a task or to come to the aid of another in need, James' knowledge was nearly infallible. He had learned how to read the strength of character potentially and actually present in every soul in that village of 600. Even more amazing was his capacity to learn quickly what new-comers, myself included, attempted to hide—their fears, incompetence or weakness of character. He held no degree in psychology or sociology, but was expert at learning the needs, the strengths and weaknesses, of each human face.

James had mastered the art of attending to real presence. Further he gave freely, without bravado or need for showy demonstration, his own presence as a patient awareness and engagement with any one or event that came to pass in his village. However, he was not passive or compliant. His character, like his face, was strongly lined by his allegiances to a particular people and a particular place. Unlike the politically or intellectually ambitious, his power was palpable in its dissident witness against any device, process, or behaviour that deceived or distracted from attention to the complex relational facts of the place and its people. He distrusted any speedy

technical or institutional solution. He had learned that human well-being is found only in the relational risks and dangers of life together. The important facts of that life seemed not to be present on the agenda of the political and intellectual elite: "I am here to argue for an approach I did not find on your agenda; I want to plead for recognition of the philosophy of technology as an essential element for *ascesis*. . . . By *ascesis* I mean acquisition of habits that foster contemplation. For the believer, contemplation means the conversion to God's human face."[89]

Illich wishes to encourage the "acquisition of habits that foster contemplation." These are habits James Adams embodied. This appears to those loyal to institutional agendas and clarity of intellectual calculation "as a widespread, somewhat mindless attack on the very idea of institutions and a good deal of talk about abolishing them altogether."[90] For example, Hook and Barrow defend the gains of institutional structure against Illich's fuzzy appeal to human presence, celebration, tradition, and friendship.[91] These things cannot be trusted in to give an efficient and systematic training for technical expertise. These critics of Illich are absolutely correct in stating that he does not offer a better method to train for institutional and technical expertise.

Illich is a dissident who does not believe that technical improvement should be the main or dominant goal of human learning or a human life. What he fears most is the reduction of human community to a show of technical or institutional processes. This is easily done in an age that confuses technical and professional assistance with compassion and care. Illich, unlike James Adams, uses texts, intellectual traditions, and academic seminars to encourage disciplined attention to the particularity of the human face.

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[89] Illich, "Philosophy . . . Artifacts . . . Friendship - and the History of the Gaze," *American Catholic Philosophical Association Proceedings* LXX (1996), 59.

[90] John Cogley, "The Storm before the Calm," *Center Magazine* 5, no. 4 (July/August 1972): 3.

[91] Sidney Hook, "Illich's Deschooled Utopia," *Encounter* 38, no. 1 (Jan. 1972): 53-57; and Robin Barrow, *Radical Education: A Critique of Freeschooling and Deschooling* (London: Martin Robertson and Company Ltd., 1978).

However, like James Adams, Illich looks to see the real presence, not merely the show of expertise, of the human character. This means he is not concerned to defend doctrinal or systematic statements. However, Illich's use of scholarly language, procedures, and his dogmatic insistence on attending to the particularity and peculiarity of human presence, is, unlike James Adams, intellectually pretentious. Where he packs into short essays references to Aquinas, McLuhan, and Kepler there can be a feeling of elitism and intellectual over-kill. However, even in this excess Illich is

> extremely wary whenever someone comes forward with a claim to have found the ultimate formula for the universe; it means we must be on guard against every sort of "ism," be it existentialism or Marxism or even Thomism. But guardedness and wariness are only one side of the coin, only half of the conclusion to be drawn from the thesis that things are simultaneously knowable and incomprehensible. The other side is an intrepid frankness of affirmation, an enthusiasm for ever new explorations into the wonders of reality.[92]

Illich is indeed "intrepid" in his "frankness of affirmation" albeit sometimes with a great deal of poetic license. The presences he affirms—God, the world, and the human other—are for him "knowable yet [in part] incomprehensible."[93] His position is not Thomism or Anarchism or even Illichism. It is rather one of a vocation faithful to presence prefaced by the word "real"—not a mere subjective state. At his most convincing his use of the tools of Aristotle's *ratio*, logic, rational argument, and historical analysis, is in service to the *intellectus*. The *intellectus* Illich values is Aquinas' *simplex intuitus* or direct revelation of the other whose "essence is [always in part] unknown to us."[94] This is in continuity with his priestly vocation as he sees it.[95] Long after

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[92] Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 160.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Pieper, *Leisure*, 11.

[95] Illich, *Celebration*, 71-103; and Ivan Illich, *The Church, Change, and Development* (Chicago: Urban Training Center Press, 1970), passim.

he refused, in 1956, to officially "preside over a Christian congregation,"[96] his focal practice continued to be in contemplative obedience to the real presence of the other:

> Obedience in the biblical sense means unobstructed listening, unconditional readiness to hear, untrammeled disposition to be surprised by the Other's word. . . .When I listen unconditionally, respectfully, courageously with the readiness to take in the other as a radical surprise, I do something else. I bow, bend over towards 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 me aware of the depth of my loneliness, and able to bear it in the light of the substantial likeness between the other and myself.[97]

This is a "reaching" that is not engineered or securely "bridged" by a systematic application of reason or doctrine. It is a persistent form of attention, stripped bare of the pretensions of technical expertise. Attention may need the *ratio* to still its fear or distrust in order to "lean into the chasm" between presences. The self is found in the awareness of "the depth of loneliness" and born "in the light of the likeness between the other and myself." The real presence of the other is a "radical surprise" received and celebrated in awareness, not processed or constructed by the *ratio*. This is the core of Illich's *theoria* of Incarnation, a stripping away of all *artificium scaenicus* (theatrical cunning) by a disciplined awareness of an ineffable presence.

However, this awareness—celebrated as a gift in the readiness to receive the surprise of the other—can be weighed down in Illich by his expectation that his own grounding in classical, medieval, and largely Roman Catholic scholarship is common knowledge. His assumption that his reader has had the same teachers too often gives his voice the sound, not of persistent attention to real presence, but of intellectual elitism.

Illich's reliance on the revelation of friendship should have made him more cautious of his own closure of dialogue in his general condemnation of modern institutions. This is the core of

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[96] Du Plessix Gray, "The Rules of the Game," *The New Yorker*, 25 April 1970, 98-99.

[97] Ivan Illich, "The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel," an unpublished lecture delivered in Chicago, Nov. 13, 1988; quoted in Cayley and Illich, 56.

Barrow's important criticism of Illich's work.[98] The danger is that his own *ratio*, uprooted from the *intellectus*, gives the lie and the distorting show of overcoming and abandoning the uncertainties of human institutions. The distortion he so clearly identifies as the mask of technical, educational, systematic, and discursive accomplishment, is not entirely absent from his own work. However, the reference to an intellectual tradition is for Illich defence of an ultimate trust in human presence, flawed and limited, blind or full of insight.[99] He remains a dissident voice by doubting that any religious, intellectual or technical process, institution or advance can replace the care and conversation of friendship.

What this means for education becomes clearer through study of the peculiar historical circumstances that give the idea of the necessity of education. Illich strongly doubts the efficacy of contemporary education and its existence as a natural given in all human cultures.[100] It is important to understand that he holds these doubts not because of some revolutionary or utopian scheme. Rather, he does not believe in education because he believes in the human other, and real presence as the foundation of learning. Learning that is virtuous and fitting for a truly human life must be first anchored in an unconstructed encounter with real presence.[101] Any curriculum or process of the *ratio* may serve only as an aid in attending to real human presence. Like James, Illich's fundamental trust is in the intelligence of human dwelling known through each human face, imperfectly conceived and never a simple calculation.

The problem, as Illich sees it, is that people are contained, and can no longer dwell as human, in the spaces of contemporary life as technically, institutionally, and systematically rendered and

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[98] Robin Barrow, passim.

[99] Barbara Duden, Ivan Illich, Mother Jerome O.S.B., *The Scopic Past and the Ethics of the Gaze*, Science, Technology, and Society Working Papers, no. 6 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Program, 1995), 22-24.

[100] Ivan Illich, *Celebration*, 119-120.

[101] Ibid., 134-135.

managed.[102] We "house" ourselves in sub-urban and urban spaces designed around the operation of institutions and technical functions. Discussion of the ratio implies that we first "house" ourselves in conceptual categories. This has created not merely an outer artificial environment but an inner imaginative poverty.[103] For example, we know water only as a chemical that comes to us through the purification plants and pipes of engineers, H_2O, a cleaning fluid or resource to be managed. Only through a disciplined contemplation, historically at the centre of the Western tradition, can we once again know the significance of water for the human heart and imagination: "H_2O is a social creation of modern times, a resource that is scarce that calls for technical management. It is an observed fluid that has lost the ability to mirror the water of dreams. The city child has no opportunities to come in touch with living water. . . it can only be imagined, by reflecting on the occasional drop or a humble puddle."[104]

Things and persons are reduced to technique, function, and role. Illich contemplates human incarnation in a critical assessment and exposition of the history of the ideas presupposed in contemporary life as they cripple human sensibility to real presence. Just as the advance of technical space marked the "geometrization of human intimacy" so it meant the institutionalization and regulation of learning by education to technical functions.[105] In contrast Illich holds "our hope of salvation lies in our being surprised by the Other. Let us learn always to receive further surprises. I decided long ago to hope for surprise until the final act of my life—that is to say, in death itself."[106]

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., 15-17.

[104] Illich, *H_2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1985), 76.

[105] Ibid., 23.

[106] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness,* 135.

The touch, smell, sight, and human significance of the other is beyond utilitarian, technical, and geometric definition. The inner structure of Illich's argument returns to the surprise, the revelation of a depth of presence, that education, as a planned process or management of scarce learning resources, only unintentionally invokes and most often diminishes. The "gulf that separates" his thinking from other positions is exposed only if one sees his loyalty to human presence as its compelling force. [107] He hopes in the surprise of a human other as a gift of learning that requires no institutional force. This hope is dissident with respect to the application of global institutional and technical processes on behalf of the many faces of human presence.

However, the unique and multiple expressions of human presence, in tradition, local practice, and physical characteristics, reflect for Illich a general principle.[108] Illich argues that the particularity of each culture, local practice, and human experience is universally important.[109] Any universal reason that claims or attempts philosophical, institutional, educational, or technological comprehension, is suspect as a species of technical hubris. This is, as Francis Landy has put it, Illich's attempt to identify "the heresy that imposes conformity."[110] For Illich, the mistake is the belief that "salvation" comes by global application of correct knowledge in a "ritual of education", rather than through disciplined attention to and celebration of the unique presence of each knowable and yet incompletely comprehended other.[111]

The gnostic and the technically educated identify the problems of humanity as lack of correct knowledge that those properly educated have attained.[112] Illich, in naming schooling as "the central

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[107] Illich, "The Educational Enterprise," as quoted in Cayley and Illich, 56.

[108] Lee Hoinacki, "Ivan Illich - A View of his Work," photocopy, Bremen, March 16, 1996, 4-5.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Francis Landy, e-mail message to author, 26 October 1998.

[111] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness,* 198, 278-9.

[112] Iona Petru Culianu, "Gnosticism," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, editor in chief Mircea Eliade (1987), 566-78; Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Book Edition, 1989); Morris Berman, *Coming to Our Senses: Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West* (New York: Simon

myth-making ritual of industrial societies" portrays it as a "Gnostic-like" ritual.[113] Its central error, he thereby suggests, has to do with a misunderstanding of the human condition. Illich holds to the view that salvation is found, not in any secret knowledge, but in attention to the particular dilemmas of human incarnation. The "orthodox" position he takes views assumptions that education can relieve, better, liberate, or save humanity from its condition as misplaced faith. Illich argues it is not education that "saves" but a living awareness of and hospitality towards the real and many faces of the human other.[114] Therefore, Illich resists all contemporary attempts to replace the particular, nonconforming, technically imperfect human practice with the universal, standard, and technically complex.[115]

However, the embracing of the irrational in order to be freed of the oppressive power of rationality is not Illich's counsel. His way is an attempt to hold together the *ratio* and *intellectus* not in any further technical dichotomization. The collapsing of gender, culture, local communities, "left and right," into a monocular perception of reality deadens human sensitivity to the subtle play of presence. Therefore, Illich attempts an art of presence as a

> walking of the middle way, of the ideal of mesotes, of prudence in Christian terms. I like to walk along the watershed and to know that left and right are profoundly different . . . As I walk along, thinking and exploring, I try to find my way between two dissymetric but profoundly unlike fields. Once thinking becomes a monocular perception of reality, it is dead.[116]

It is not across the quicksand to an irrational past or present that Illich walks but along a divide between the *ratio* and *intellectus*. It may be that he looks out at the conditions of

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and Schuster, 1989); and St. Irenaeus, *Irenaeus of Lyons versus Contemporary Gnosticism: A Selection from Books I and II of Adversus Haereses* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979).

[113] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, 121.

[114] Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. and trans. Sir David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 403a and 408; Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, in *Thomas Aquinas, Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerny (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), question 1, 1; and Josef Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, 11.

[115] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, 15.

[116] Cayley and Illich, 241.

contemporary life as a member, as he has put it, of an *Ancien Regime*.[117] However, unlike Cicero, who fought in vain to preserve the Old Republic, he fights to recover a richer way of being, not because it is past, but because it is true to the complexity of real human presence. In doing so, Illich makes no claim to philosophical adequacy, only that what he witnesses to is something critically important for contemporary philosophy. Adequate or inadequate in his thinking about the nature of contemporary life, he is attending to it with the discipline and compassion of his vocation—loyalty to a reason (*logos*) that is incarnate in each human face.

However, the problem of walking the divide when most are firmly on either side is that a *via media* is unintelligible to either side. Any hermeneutics that only carries across a message from side to side, when what is required is the human presence of meaning as found on both sides of the divide, will not suffice. Illich does not care to step off the divide and offer an apologetics, for it appears to him to be a betrayal of faith in real presence as a non-monocular meaning and medium. Rather, and more precariously, he chooses to walk on the divide in "faith" in human others:

> All that reaches me is the other in 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. You certainly remember how Peter just walked out on the waves of the Lake of Genesareth on the Word of his Lord. As soon as he doubted, he began to go under.[118]

Illich does not give an argument outside or against Western tradition. Rather, his is the argument for real presence as defined in a tradition's narrative. It is a way of continuing to affirm the Western tradition, while recognizing its faults and possible perversion. Illich, conscious of particular elements in the Western tradition, appears to have a vantage point from which to see both sides of the divide in contemporary life. Perhaps, and this is what will be argued in the following sections, there is no magnificent grand synthesis available. All Illich can do is resist the

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[117] S. Leonard Rubinstein, "Things have Consequences," *Research/Penn State* 15 (September 1994), 27.

[118] Illich, "The Educational Enterprise," in Cayley and Illich, 56.

catastrophic break between *ratio* and *intellectus* as a contemporary perversion of Western tradition. The contemporary devices and processes that Illich critiques are viewed as the peculiar institutional forms of this tradition. However, Illich continues to appeal to the Western tradition and the revelation of compassion found there as his "foundation for understanding cosmic relations:"[119] "I live also with a sense of profound ambiguity. I can't do without tradition, but I have to recognize that its institutionalization is the root of an evil deeper than any evil I could have known with my unaided eyes and mind."[120]

In *Celebration* Illich gives a sense of the ambiguity faced by any philosophy loyal to human presence. He suggests that this need not give a life of frantic activism or quietistic withdrawal, objective certainty or relativistic despair. There is a kind of paradoxical yes and no to tradition, contemporary conditions, and the human possibilities of objective certainty. If by objective one means the construal of method as an independent and invariable test without regard to the particularities of human experience, then Illich never affirms objectivity. In fact, he consciously intends not to be objective in this sense. Rather, if by objective one means, "critically sifted evidence . . .(and) a critical attitude towards common-sensical premises," then Illich is objective.[121] However, his objectivity in questioning, for example, the necessity and meaning of schooling in Puerto Rico, while filled with analysis of the historical emergence of the idea, does so in his passionate commitment to his vocation and his *theoria* of Incarnation—trust in a reading of the human face.[122]

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[119] Illich, *The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr,* Fourteenth Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures (Great Barrington, MA: E. F. Schumacher Society, 1996), 11.

[120] Illich and Cayley, 243.

[121] Fromm, 9.

[122] Illich, *Celebration,* 105-120.

Illich urges that learning in friendship with and patient attention to human others is the path to well-being.[123] Illich's argument for freedom from the unnecessary institutional, economic, and technical management of human culture is on behalf of self-limitation. Awareness of the mystery of death and the complexity of human inter-dependence is the only security against tyranny and hubris. Rootedness in the real predicament of human dwelling gives an, "awareness of lying in the hands of another, of contingency, and of being myself because I'm constantly being created and sustained."[124]

Mortality, the reality of human somatic limitation, is not an illness in need of cure, but the given truth of human rootedness in "the hands of another."[125] The real presences of human experience do not give a will or identity in isolation but only in the contingency and dependence of relationships. Technical accomplishment, if it ignores the true conditions of human life, gives a religious-like belief in the final technical escape from the real dilemmas of contingency. Learning an art of real presence is growth in awareness of the contingency, dependence, and celebration of "being created and sustained" in a world of presences. If one no longer senses this depth and possibility in the face of particular others, one has already been educated to rootlessness and has lost something essential to a full humanity.

Using Borgmann's categories, Illich's work can be said to expose the technical devices and processes that distract human lives from focal attention to real human presence.[126] If philosophy is a history of disputed orienting foci, Illich wishes to be counted as one who remains centred in obedience to the truly human, whatever the cost. His definition of the truly human involves him in a critique of the contemporary character of life and a recovery of a traditional practice. However,

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[123] Ivan Illich, "From Fast to Quick," unpublished photocopy, 1996, 1.

[124] Cayley and Illich, 198.

[125] Ibid.; and Ivan Illich, *Limits to Medicine* (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), passim.

[126] Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*, 40-48.

this practice is not an attempt to imitate a golden age but to emulate past friendships in a contemporary art of friendship, where "the spark of uniqueness [rooted in the hands of another] . . . must be cherished."[127]

In all cases, his talk of tradition, faith, heresy, obedience, and the past is meant to show his focal practice in contrast to technical processes and devices. Illich makes clear in *Celebration*, for example, that what he is addressing is a contemporary "ritual behaviour" or religious practice that attempts to instill in the student a "universal catechism."[128] This catechism is a confession of belief in the institutional, educational, technological, consumptive, and ritual devices of contemporary life. This is a belief in universally applicable devices that can, in New York City or Old Crow, NWT, be applied with equal disregard to the particularity of the human beings, traditions, landscape, and somatic limits involved. The attempts to universally educate on behalf of the agenda of "progress" do not necessarily correlate with social or political compassion or even rationality: "We now realize that extremes of collective hysteria and savagery can coexists with . . . further development of institutions, bureaucracies and professional codes of high culture."[129]

Increasing the level of universal education guarantees only the furthering of institutes and bureaucracies dedicated to guaranteeing the future of those constructs. Illich can be said to take up the practice of a tradition as a disciplined dissidence with regards to faith in contemporary universals.[130] This "orthodox dissidence" is his "chosen trajectory that runs from his birth to his approaching death."[131] This trajectory of practice, narrative, and tradition exposes a key to understanding the meaning of each of his works. However, the key cannot, unless Illich is exposed

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[127] Cayley and Illich, 78.

[128] Illich, *Celebration*, 111; and Illich, *Deshooling Society*, 34-52.

[129] George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 63.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Hoinacki, "Ivan Illich - A View of his Work," 2.

as simply an ideologue or apologist for a religious system, be merely an opportunity for systematics. In awareness of "the surprise of the other," Illich's dissidence is "what Zen Buddhism calls a beginner's mind. A beginner's mind cannot be feigned or deployed as a Socratic technique that allows you to arrive "dialectically" at where you knew you were going all along. It must arise out of genuine curiosity and a genuine disregard for one's own positions. Illich has this ability."[132]

Socratic practice, rather than a "Socratic technique," is the *intellectus* receptive to the words and presence of the other. To put Illich's own word to what Cayley calls a "beginner's mind," it is hope rather than expectation: "Hope, in its strong sense, means trusting faith...(in) a person from whom we await a gift. Expectation looks forward to satisfaction from a predictable process which will produce what we have a right to claim."[133]

If Illich practices hope he does so in radical discontinuity with the contemporary character of institutions and human life. Illich sees education, economics, consumption, self-conscious individuality, and technological devices as indices of and central forces in the construction of expectations from predictable processes. In contrast, Illich seeks to practice a disruptive obedience to the human other as the only hope of salvation. Theoretically, thereby, he eschews constructed expectation for this radical hope in the gift of real human presence: "I cannot be except as a gift in and from the face of the other."[134] This places, as with Whitehead, Levinas and Rosenzweig, ontological and existential priority upon the encounter with the other.[135]

Radical educational theory can include any approach that refuses the normative boundaries of the discipline and contemporary life. Often associated with Anarchism, Marxism, Feminism,

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[132] Cayley and Illich, xiv.

[133] Illich, *Deschooling*, 105.

[134] Barbara Duden, Ivan Illich, and Mother Jerome, 23.

[135] Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 116-125; Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 178-179; and A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), passim.

Socialism or left wing Freudianism, it in all cases looks to learning or education as a force in the achievement of radical social change.[136] It may do so by seeking to dislodge implicit or explicit curricular or pedagogical patterns within existing educational institutions, or seeking the establishment of alternative schools, or by advocating the abolishment of educational institutions. What is apparent in all radical approaches is the testing or questioning of the normative boundaries and language of the discipline. It is in this last sense that Illich is most clearly a radical. However, his radical questioning is located paradoxically in his orthodoxy: "For one, I did not want to say anything theologically new, daring, or controversial. Only a spelling-out of social consequences can make a thesis as orthodox as mine sufficiently controversial to be discussed . . ."[137]

In the categories philosophers of education have used to define their territory, education is accepted as the ahistorical device required to teach whatever should be known in a particular culture. It is assumed that wherever there is a human culture there is also a system of knowledge that must be implanted in the next generation. Education as a device is nearly universally accepted as existing, either formally or informally, in every human society. Illich questions both the necessity and the required existence of the category "education" as a way to understand human learning. He agrees that "education" may be descriptive of a certain institution that has deeply marked the character of contemporary life. However, it can neither prove helpful in understanding human learning outside this contemporary character nor in radically transforming the social order. It is on this radical ground that Illich argues for the relative adequacy of real presence as the focal practice of learning in contrast to education as a technical device and process embedded in the normative practices of contemporary life.

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[136] John Elias and Sharan Merriam, *Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education* (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1980), 11.

[137] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, 70.

Illich's spiritual vocation uses the *ratio* as a tool in the living of a *vita contemplatio.* The limits of the *ratio*, of education, of ecclesial system, of contemporary life are celebrated in the *intellectus*, the receptivity to the gift of real presence in human community without the deceptions of manufactured expectations. These expectations are viewed as the addictive products of the manipulations of education and contemporary life, of an improperly used *ratio.*[138] The *ratio* is a good but this good is perverted in the hubris of attempting to logically guarantee, manage or make the conditions for human experience. To come to radically doubt such an enterprise, such an utopian and gnostic fantasy, is the cause for the celebration of human awareness as the learning of and loyalty to the endless alterity of the human other. This discipline of dissidence is of the *ratio* serving the *intellectus*, the disciplined learning of the surprise of real presence.

Conclusion: The Awareness of Real Presence

Celebrating an awareness of real human presence does not present a thesis of certain ends or a controlled curricular pattern. Illich does not think that virtue or presence can be taught, only developed and nurtured. Contemporary educators appear to think that every thing can and must be taught. Learning must be guaranteed by institutional process and an endless adaptation to new technological processes is necessary for human well-being. For Illich this reverses the order of things. The virtuous life may be supported by technical process and institutional form, but virtue must guide form. For many modern educators training to a role as defined by technological innovation and institutional form is primary.

Illich believes that human presence and virtue transcend all institutional forms. Institutional roles are not to be served and are only faint reminders of the friendships and obligations of real human presence. The eclipsing of real presence by technical processes and institutional agendas is the central danger faced in contemporary life. Loyalty to the *ratio* and the *intellectus* incarnate in

[138] Ibid., 105-135.

human presence gives Illich what Fromm called a radical humanist view. It is, as the next chapter will illustrate, an Epimethean hope to trip-up Promethean ambitions. Illich insists on the significance of real human presence, in all its complex ambiguity and gravity, against the clarity of technical description. This is not in an attempt to avoid difficulties of thought but rather to suggest that real presence is beyond the grasp of even the most sophisticated thinking of the *ratio*.

The awareness Illich celebrated in the late 1960's and early 1970's was coloured by his sense of the radical hope the times presented. In his attention to the particular cultural practices of that era, is there some enduring vision for human learning? Are there, in his insistence on the significance of the uniqueness of each human presence, clues for the sustaining and creation of sanctuaries for learning the dissident practice of a celebration of awareness in a society "more and more dominated by technique?"[139]

[139] William Barrett, xiii.

CHAPTER 3

DESCHOOLING THE *RATIO*: LEARNING BEYOND THE RITUAL DEVICE OF EDUCATION

> Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance.
>
> Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*

Introduction: The Absurd Utopia of Real Presence

Deschooling Society provokes an examination of education and schooling as institutional and technical devices. Some, like Matt Hern, have taken it as a manifesto for political anarchism and the end of educational institutions.[1] Others, like Barrow and Callan, dismiss its metaphorical excesses but attend to what they see as its defence of the value of human autonomy.[2] Given these critical views, is it possible to recontextualize its arguments and reveal a deeper and still relevant criticism of education as a manipulative force?

In this chapter, the argument of *Deschooling* will be revisited in light of the two poles of the Western intellectual tradition, *ratio* and *intellectus*. In the spirit of the times, Illich intended to encourage counter-cultural behaviours in hope of a cultural revolution. However, the cultural transformation encouraged is anchored in a tradition of real presence, a *theoria* of Incarnation. The recovery of a traditional *ascesis* of the *intellectus*—the disciplined receptivity to the real presence of the human other—would ground the skills of the *ratio*. If the contemporary mind is to receive something truly "other" it must limit its expectation of technical and institutional solutions.

Just as with *Celebration of Awareness* the book named *Deschooling Society* needs to be understood in its historical and existential context. It absorbs some of the energy of the social

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[1] Matt Hern, ed. and introduction, *Deschooling Our Lives* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Press, 1996), v ff.

[2] Eamonn Callan, *Autonomy and Schooling* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988); and Robin Barrow, *Radical Education: A Critique of Freeschooling and Deschooling* (London: Martin Robertson and Company Ltd., 1978).

activism of the late 1960's and early 1970's, while attempting to expose a hidden captivity to institutional expectations. Illich consistently resists the notion that a correct educational model or a particular revolutionary scheme can guarantee the passage into a promised land. The suggestion of social engineering in the title of the collection identified as *Deschooling* was not Illich's choice or intention. Illich explains:

> During the nine months the manuscript was at the publishers, I grew more and more dissatisfied with the text, which, by the way, did not argue for the elimination of schools. This misapprehension I owe to Cass Canfield Sr., Harper's president, who named the book and in so doing misrepresented my thoughts. The book advocates the disestablishment of schools, in the sense in which the Church has been disestablished in the United States. . . . I called for the disestablishment of schools for the sake of improving education and here, I noticed, lay my mistake. Much more important than the disestablishment of schools, I began to see, was the reversal of those trends that make of education a pressing need rather than a gift of gratuitous leisure.[3]

It is true that to disestablish the school was one of the book's intended aims. However, Illich's own critique of the book published in *Saturday Review* argued that the problem was not schools, per se, but the cultural idolization of technical devices.[4] The *ratio*—measuring, managing, and evaluating—that proceeds undisciplined by the receptivity of the *intellectus*, assumes a power to solve and contain the mystery and gravity of real presence. Illich speaks against the hubris of presuming to be able to manage and engineer human learning. Education is learning that takes place under the assumption of the scarcity of means to produce it, thereby requiring technical intervention and manipulation.[5] The proposal Illich makes is that society must be "deschooled" from its faith in technical processes and its acceptance of educational needs as an historical given of human nature:

> When I wrote *Deschooling Society*, the social effects, and not the historical substance of education, were still at the core of my interest. I had questioned schooling as a desirable means, but I had not questioned education as a desirable

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[3] Illich, foreword to *Deschooling Our Lives*, vii-viii.

[4] Illich, "The Alternative to Schooling," *Saturday Review*, (19 June 1971): 44-48.

[5] Illich, foreword to *Deschooling Our Lives*, vii-viii.

> end. I still accepted that, fundamentally, educational needs of some kind were an historical given of human nature. I no longer accept this today.[6]

While the emphasis in *Deschooling* is upon the doubtful desirability of the means, it is not quite true that Illich does not suggest his later doubts about the "historically given." In the last chapter of the book, in the discussion of the Epimethean myth, he is already indicating the need for what he later would call a history of *homo educandus*.[7] The world of educational expectation encourages a view of human nature as an institutional artifice. Illich does suggest that disestablishing schooling would introduce a greater awareness of this one-sided view of human nature, and a greater awareness of the need for a paradigmatic shift:

> So I wrote an article in which I basically said that nothing would be worse than to believe that I considered schools the only technique for creating and establishing and anchoring in souls the myth of education. There are many other ways by which we can make the world into a universal classroom. . . [that] I consider the main criticism of my book.[8]

This self-criticism illustrates Illich's intentions and method. Illich takes seriously the dilemma of human presence and learning, but questions the social conditions dictated by the technical device of schooling and the manufacturing of the need for education. He is offering a report of concern for particular human others and an analysis of the impact the devices of education have on human uniqueness and autonomy.

It was, as so much in his thinking, "meeting the right person at the right moment and being befriended," that gave him to the conversations that took the form of the book.[9] He writes,

> I owe my interest in public education to Everett Reimer. Until we first met in Puerto Rico in 1958, I had never questioned the value of extending obligatory schooling to all people. . . .

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[6] Ibid., viii-ix.

[7] Ivan Illich, "The History of Homo Educandus," *In the Mirror of the Past* (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1992), 113-18.

[8] Illich and Cayley, *Ivan Illich In Conversation* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1992), 73.

[9] Ibid., 61.

> . . .Valentine Borremans, the director of CIDOC, also joined our dialogue. . . . This book reflects her conviction that the ethos, not just the institutions of society ought to be "deschooled.". . .
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> On Wednesday mornings, during the spring and summer of 1970, I submitted various parts of this book to the participants in our center's programs in Cuernavaca. . . .Paulo Freire, Peter Berger, and José Maria Bulnes, as well as Joseph Fitzpatrick, John Holt, Angel Quintero, Layman Allen, Fred Goodman, Gerhard Ladner, Didier Piveteau, Joel Spring, Augusto Salazar Bondy, and Dennis Sulivan.[10]

It becomes clear that the book is a consequence of friendships, conversations, and circumstances of learning. Its text is a piece of these human exchanges, and Illich's method is the "gratuitous leisure" of human presence, curiosity, and conversation. His upbringing had not given him to seriously consider school or education. Diagnosed, on his first encounter with school in Vienna, as too retarded to be enrolled, he continued learning by reading the books in his grandmother's library and exploring his world.[11] He went to school, "but only by bits."[12] Later he would write of his early preparation to doubt the benefits of compulsory schooling:

> This man who speaks to you was born 55 years ago in Vienna. One month after his birth he was put on a train, and then on a ship and brought to the Island of Brac. Here, in a village on the Dalmatian coast, his grandfather wanted to bless him. . . . On the same boat on which I arrived in 1926, the first loudspeaker was landed on the island. As enclosures by the lords increased national productivity by denying the individual peasant to keep a few sheep, so the encroachment of the loudspeaker destroyed that silence which so far had given each man and woman his or her proper and equal voice.[13]

The compulsion to educate destroys "the gratuitous" in learning, just as "the enclosures of the lords" and "the encroachment of the loudspeaker," all technical improvements, brought the loss of a commons and a vernacular. Unique human presences are the concern of Illich's critical study of education. He speaks of Reimer, and notes the other friends and conversation partners involved in

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[10] Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971), ix-xx.

[11] Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past* (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1992), 52-53.

[12] Cayley and Illich, *In Conversation,* 59.

[13] Illich, *In the Mirror,* 52-53.

the writing of *Deschooling*, but the issue is not just a collaborative style of writing. Illich has, from his earliest experiences, a distrust of technical solutions to imputed human needs.

Illich becomes interested in schooling because of the people he had grown to know in New York and Puerto Rico. Their lively tongue and particular faces were badly served and distorted by the ethos of a schooling society. A schooling society is not content to keep the poor in poverty or to tolerate the nonconforming presence. It must educate and absorb all in its own patterns of consumption and production. Peculiarities of human presence are to come under the control of educational technique. Compulsory schooling is a device to manage rather than deepen awareness of difference.

In examining learning under the conditions of contemporary schooling, Illich lives in hope of a practice of *(scole)* leisure, where learning comes in the free contemplation of the human face and its world. This cannot be compelled and orchestrated, or it becomes yet another technical process, rather than a receptive and leisured awareness of the differences of being. This is not a consequence of planning or the expected outcome of social engineering. In this sense it is not a utopian practice at all, it does not strive for the perfection of a world system. Rather, its desire is for a clear reception of the human other. This other can only be received when the self has a disciplined receptive capacity. This discipline is of the *intellectus*. It can only be distracted by the apparatus of most schooling, which seeks a linear, graded, and planned progress. The *intellectus* waits upon, and trusts, in the "words in the flesh" of a human other.

This naïve trust in the differences of being, is what Barrow, Hook, and Callan have identified as an unreasonable utopian response to the serious systematic needs of society. Illich questions these "needs" on behalf of the reality of embodied human experience. However, Illich is not unaware of the difficulty faced. He has, after all, seen, in Puerto Rico, New York, Chicago, and Mexico, the faces of the poor whose poverty was unaddressed, and only compounded, by the law

of compulsory schooling.[14] He has been threatened and beaten by para-military thugs, attacked by left wing critics as elitist, found himself tried by his own church for heresy, and all the while maintaining that no institution, system, revolution, or ecclesial reform can guarantee what is necessary for the learning of real human presence.

Nothing suggests what he hopes for in *Deschooling* more than the witness of his own career. He was capable of ecclesial advance to the upper levels of Rome, and yet his choices and loyalty to friends moved away from such career advancement to a vocation of resistance. He discovered that learning an other's tongue, not simply the grammatical conventions of a linguistic system, "is one of a deep experience of poverty, of weakness and of dependence on the good will of another."[15] It is this experience of poverty before the living speech of another that guided his career of learning. His rage is against all that would abstract, distract from, or seek to manage, this living speech.

The risks and sacrifices Illich made were in hope of learning, and encouraging others to learn, an other's tongue. His language schools, in New York, Puerto Rico, or Cuernavaca, had the singular purpose of allowing the human ear and heart to receive the other as other. His teaching of Spanish, to the American priest, rabbi, social worker, or administrator, attempted to have these figures of ecclesial or secular authority learn how to hear the living tongue of the other, and depend on this living contact as the fundamental root of any further attempt to care or learn. He is aware of the vision of Comenius—a universal education for human salvation—but cannot turn his head from seeing how this has often been used to trample and cripple particular human faces.[16] The

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[14] William Ferree, Ivan Illich, and Joseph Fitzpatrick, eds., *Spiritual care of Puerto Rican Migrants* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), passim.

[15] Ivan Illich, *Celebration of Awareness* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 42.

[16] John Amos Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan, 1972), passim; and William Ideson Johnson, "Hermetic Alchemy as the Pattern for Schooling Seen By Ivan Illich in the Works of John Amos Comenius" (Ph. D. Diss., The Ohio State University, 1973), passim.

native residential school, the school of the American ghetto, and the Prussian *Volksschule* have been ambiguous achievements of compulsion in schooling.

The coming of compulsory schooling was not simply a democratic impulse, but an attempt to control and to fit the native dweller, the immigrant, the poor, and that alien creature, the child, into a social order. Barrow celebrates this fitting of lives into a given institutional order as the form of justice Plato introduces in the *Republic.*[17] One could say this education was for the good of those others. How else would they survive, find employment, or be accepted into the dominant society. There is good sense in what Barrow proposes.

However, as in Socrates' dialogue with Protagoras, Illich opposes such prudent Protagorian teaching on behalf of a larger learning.[18] It is a learning of what might be called the "vernacular of the other." This is the other who brings a tradition, a living way of dwelling, that is not already managed or packaged as a dominant institutional value. It is in the befriending of this other where we might learn how to care and offer assistance. This kind of learning requires a focal practice that opens the self to the other. This opening is not to the other as a social value, or a player in an institutional or economic system, but as a compelling human face. The learning of this fallible, yet persisting, human presence takes place in a web of inter-relationships. The argument for this web of learning is not in its efficiency or its ability to fit the learner to the market or into an information system. If an argument can be given it can be only as a compassionate reach towards understanding an other's immeasurable real presence beyond all artifice. This is the distinction between education as a funneling device and learning as a webbing of focal practices.

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[17] Robin Barrow, *Plato, Utilitarianism and Education* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), passim.

[18] Plato, *Protagoras,* with an introduction by Gregory Vlastos, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1956), passim.

Illich celebrates the "poor" as rich with the wisdom of focal practices of human presence. Their songs and stories, their rituals of community life, their care for young and old, have a depth and somatic profundity missing amongst many "rich" North American lives. Their problem is not ignorance but lack of access to and exclusion from the use and development of convivial tools.

The demand that these poor be educated implies that they lack some piece of knowledge that could free them from their bondage. Illich sees this idea as a *tech-gnostic* heresy. It is a belief that the human problem is ignorance of essential technical knowledge. The development bureaucracy of the Puerto Rican and U.S. governments, the United Nations, and even the Vatican, seem to have faith that human problems can be solved by the importation of doctrinal or technical knowledge and economic management. The idea that the Latino peasant needs to be taught by *gringo* experts how to pray, fish or farm, when for generations she has worshipped, caught fish in the lakes and sea, and survived by farming marginal lands, should seem ludicrous. That they now need to be taught how to survive in a global market place whose rules act to exclude and eliminate their unique presence in its calculations, should seem obscene.

The poor have more than adequate awareness of how to survive. That they are pushed to farm marginal lands by General Foods, or that mercury and lead poison, or the depletion of stocks by industrial fish mining, has meant illness and starvation, hardly indicates their problem is ignorance. A more likely culprit is others' educated greed, economic expansion, and insatiable learned appetite for more and more product. The substitution of technical and institutional devices for convivial tools and patterns encouraged by "development education" only insures that the poor too can learn the frustration and deadening habits of dependence on products and never ending consumption to meet needs manufactured by the corporate and institutional production machine.

The following section will begin by offering an example and then move to offer a theory for understanding the distinction between technical knowledge and devices and learning real presence

by focal practice. The work of Albert Borgmann provides a suitable theoretical outline.[19] There is nothing conclusive in the examples or the theory. It offers a way of seeing and not a total system with expected results. Learning of real presence is an uncertain adventure, and not a utopian plan. It is an absurd kind of utopia, already present in the vulnerability of friendship and patient attention to the fallible patterns of human presence.

Net, Drum and Paddle: Focal Practice and Fallible Human Presence

From 1982-84 I lived in a small native fishing village fourteen miles by sea from Tofino, Vancouver Island. These Ahousaht people still lived largely by fishing. As a young liberal-minded cleric I thought it was to be my duty to help these people learn the meaning of the Gospel as a message of liberation and economic development. The village looked like so many reservations—houses with broken glass, unfinished siding, holes in walls and floors. Social problems seemed to abound. Much development work and education seemed to be called for and I was to be its catalyst. Or so I imagined.

Because I lacked courage to arm my convictions, I soon abandoned my zeal to save these "poor ones of God" and found myself visiting, fishing, listening, laughing, eating, teasing and being teased. My wife joined in the women's circle, pounding Chitin and tasting it as had generations of Ahousaht women. I found myself jumping into a herring skiff and setting a net alongside Eddy and Bishop, and hauling in the silver scaled sockeye. I learned from elder James Adams patience, care, and the meaning of human life on the shoreline between the wild Pacific and the cathedral groves of cedars on the mountain side. What did they need to learn from my education? In what way did they lack human qualities or knowledge my developed theological training could provide?

[19] Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

I might have taught them to trade in their "pagan" focal practices of centring on the world about them—their relatives and friends—for expectations of salvation, products, and services coming from beyond the village. They knew how these things worked. Many owned and used these devices and processes. After all the "gospel" of these devices had been preached by the Church, the Department of Indian Affairs, television, and the school system. In the end I could only give them my lack of courage and my doubt in this salvation.

The devices I was familiar with, the telephone, the radio, the television set, the school, the church, I at first clung to as secure outcroppings of my own culture. I recall that every household had at least three things I understood, radio, television, and telephone. It was remarkable to see their use, like alcohol, as a distraction from the sometimes tragic blows of life. I compare these to the paddle, the net, or the drum.

The paddle, when used, drew the paddler into a rhythm that seemed to connect him to the sea, the tradition of the grandfathers, and the whole of his culture. It required inner discipline, but it meant vulnerability to patterns beyond the self. Sam Jr. and Little Mike could paddle and work their way from feelings of suicide or yearnings for alcohol to a calm disciplined presence[20] In school neither seemed able to concentrate or willing to comply with the discipline of the teacher. Paddling they seemed to make a perfect marriage with *ratio*—a measured, calculated, understood, and examined stroke—and *intellectus*—an openness to patterns and surprises beyond measurement.

The net too seemed to require *ratio* and *intellectus*. I recall elder James Adams sitting on the float repairing one of these nets. He could, with precision, judge the tension required to make the right sized loop, while joking, singing or story telling. He sat with his eighty year old hands, a few fingers missing and half a thumb, deftly working line and knife. His soft voice was all the while

[20] The names used are fictional, the people and events are not.

telling tales or recalling amazing catches and times of wonder, joy, and sadness. He could attend to the world about him and within him, repair the net, and narrate the meaning of this activity without having any one tool or practice distract from the art of his full presence. But before the device of the television set he was silenced, his hands stilled, his sparkling eyes flat.

The drum held as much knowledge as the text of the bible, the distance education kit, or computer access at the North Island College. Its surface often carried a totemic image, a significant sign of where and to whom the drum and drummer belonged. The dried deer-hide gave out a sound that reminded one of the surf pounding on the shore or that inner rhythm of the heart. The songs to emerge from its drumming taught of pains and joys, and the intelligence of a human community. Its rhythm taught of the human place in the cosmos and its complex set of relationships, only vaguely hinted at in that word "ecology." Its network of relationships could cause a hall of a thousand to dance, to weep, to understand the meaning of speech, birth, death, and to viscerally grasp their place in the cosmos.

The examples above can easily be dismissed by saying, "Yes, but these friends would know nothing of Shakespeare, Quantum Theory or the Micro-Chip without education." The reality is more complex. Percy Sr. loved Italian opera, just as he loved playing the traditional gambling game, Lahal. Miss Anne chose to become a "land claims" Lawyer, while learning how to dance the traditional potlatch dances. Their learning or leanings came from their own desires and sense of identity. Each attempt to enforce education, to place them in a process of planned identity formation, was resisted, refused, or sabotaged. Only when and how these people decided to learn did they learn. The attempts to compel or make fit, to grade or orchestrate, only gave a host of disorders or courageous resistance, most often one being the equivalent of the other.

There is, of course, nothing philosophically conclusive or ethically clear-cut in the above observations. Alvin Dixon, a native bureaucrat, used to say that residential schooling was one of

the greatest forces in building the Native Brotherhood, a political lobby network for native rights. "Education" taught these leaders how the European system worked, its operating language, so that they could "hack" into its "central processing unit" and get out of it what they wanted. However, all native persons under its rule suffered some form of loss or crisis of identity. Many, at times, became fundamentally distracted from the world about them. Some simply became passive-aggressive clients of the processing mechanisms of government and industry. What is striking is that even the most dysfunctional in schooled society would come alive with focus and intelligence when their hands touched the drum, net or paddle.

The focal things, drum, net, and paddle, had a remarkably different learning function than did school, television, alcohol, and church. The latter seemed to move along a continuum from use as devices to distract attention from the incarnate, the depth of lived experience, to opportunities for focal practice of awareness. Compulsory education very often discouraged attention to focal traditional activities and encouraged feelings of anger and guilt. What was finally induced, in too many cases, by education, as with television and alcohol, was a passive-aggressive stupor and an addictive appetite for more of the product.

The drum, net, and paddle never seemed to bring such stupor, confusion or distraction. All three brought benefits school, television, alcohol and church claimed to enable. All three involved participation in use, creation, and practice. The drum provided opportunities for entertainment, carrying messages through time and space, teaching, spiritual connection, a contact with deep emotional tones, and gave a profound music. The net gave food, meaning, community, and friendship in its maintenance and use. The paddle gave a disciplined motivation, a way of moving through the geography without loosing touch with its significance. All encouraged an intellectual and physical subtlety in receiving the surprise and complexity of the world of their application. In all three cases the discursive *ratio* was married to a receptive and contemplative *intellectus*.

Albert Borgmann has attempted to offer a theory to help understand how various practices function to instill an attitude towards or rooting in the world.[21] The attempt in his work is to understand the contemporary function and power of technology:

> The advanced technological way of life is usually seen as rich in styles and opportunities, pregnant with radical innovations, and open to a promising future. The problems that beset technological societies are thought to be extrinsic to technology. . . I consider this a serious misreading of our situation. I propose to show that there is a characteristic and constraining pattern to the entire fabric of our lives.[22]

The "constraining pattern" is the dominant way in which contemporary society has taken up the world. This Borgmann calls technology, with its most evident and concrete evidence being the plethora of devices that occupy modern life. These devices not only function to make existence easier but tend to shape and constrain by dulling our awareness of the complex of relationships hidden by their artificiality. The convenience of central heating, for example, may mean I awaken to a warm house, but I no longer have the complex significance of the hearth.[23] That which is a gain in human convenience, hides complex encumbrances and dependencies from awareness.[24]

Borgmann examines a number of philosophical treatments of the technological: the substantive, the instrumentalist, and the pluralist.[25] The substantive position argues that technology is the major force impelling and crippling contemporary life. Borgmann notes that without a sharp critical apparatus the insight is too easily dismissed. Without doubt technology is a substantive force transforming human experience. However, the technical device can highlight the importance of focal practices for contemporary life.[26]

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[21] Borgmann, 3.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 4-5.

[25] Ibid., 9 ff.

[26] Ibid., 9.

The instrumental view regards technology simply as a new and more sophisticated use and development of tools. The tools themselves are neutral. The computer or hammer may be used for evil ends, but of themselves they have no profound force. The tool is not the problem. The problem is the lack of political will or the bad intentions of the user. Instrumental views may go so far as to say that human beings are changed in the process of using various tools. However, this change can be managed by political and ethical structures or is simply the inevitable cost of progress. The tool, the instrumentalist argues, is a mere means.[27]

On this point, Borgmann remarks that the idea of mere means is in fact a construction of the world of modern technology.[28] To recall the examples above, the drum was never a mere means to produce a beat, the paddle never a mere means to move through the water, the net never a mere means to catch food. The encumbrances and human relationships in their use were never understood as secondary or unrelated to their function. Being, the presence of relational depth, was always joined with use. Alcohol, school, or television, are devices, in the context of the native community, capable of being abstracted from the relational depth of presence in their function as means to an end. Instrumentalism, the ideology of most who argue for the unlimited development and use of technology, appears shortsighted in its full grasp of the divide between contemporary institutions and technologies and traditional structures and tools:

> Putting technology in the context of political purposes is itself naive if one fails to consider trenchantly the radical transformation of all policies that technology may bring about. . . . The challenge, briefly, urges that traditionally radical distinctions, say, between socialism and capitalism, between union and management, have been eroded by modern technological or economic developments. Politics, then, is no longer the undisputed master science; it may well be in the thrall of a radically new and different force.[29]

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[27] Ibid., 10.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 11.

Borgmann's key insight is that the instrumentalist view used to defend the free operation of technical systems and devices exposes a "radically new and different force." This force Borgmann calls the technological. By that he means the composite and complex system of devices and processes that have become so abstracted from human presence and encumbrances as to appear as mere means.[30] The instrumentalist view appears naïve in its lack of appreciation of the formative yet dichotomizing force of this new means. The technological means, appearing as abstractable from the complex of relationships and ends, is a force reshaping the natural and social world.

The third approach to technology Borgmann calls the pluralist view. Here the complex of various interactions between evolving forms and continuities creates a sense that no dominant force can be identified. There are always counter examples. The bad use of a particular device can be balanced by pointing to its benefits. Advances in technical control may mean an increase in abstraction from others, but who is to say the advance is not worth the cost? In this view no overall pattern becomes visible and all sustaining values or virtues are relative and can be shown to be so by counter examples. Borgmann objects to this view:

> Technology, in fact, does not take shape in a prohibitively complex way, where for any endeavour there are balancing counterendeavours so that no striking pattern becomes visible. It is intuitively apparent that in modern technology the face of the earth is transformed in a radically novel way; and that transformation is possible only on the basis of strong and pervasive social agreements and by way of highly disciplined and coordinated efforts.[31]

An example from the fishing village immediately comes to mind. In the year 1984 the Japanese industrial fish-mining fleet went on strike. These ocean going ships, with their ten mile or longer dragnets, use a highly organized technology to mine the ocean for fish just outside the two hundred mile limit. The catches of the 20 to 34 foot low-technology trawlers of my fishing friends had, up until this year, gradually diminished. During the time after the strike, catches in all fleets,

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[30] Ibid., 10 ff.

[31] Ibid., 11.

trawlers, seiners, and gill-netters, suddenly returned to levels unseen for years. While careless and greedy trawlers could have their impact on declining stocks, their eight or ten poles and lines never could efficiently, and with technical accuracy, eliminate whole fisheries. A radical and new force was mining the sea and changing its nature in ways unseen ever before. This radical new force was "possible only on the basis of strong and pervasive social agreements and by way of highly disciplined and coordinated efforts."[32]

Borgmann goes on to offer a theory that attempts to offer a sharper distinction between the paradigm of technological devices and that of focal things and practices. His examples of focal things and practices—the great feast, the runners disciplined route, the contemplative walk—are shown to be in contrast to technological devices in their capacity to centre the participant in somatic reality with real presence. These focal practices and things have neither the presumed accuracy nor the efficiency to be untouched in their means by other relational realities and the complex of ends. Focal practice, in its fallibility, infallibly leads to a complex awareness of real presence. The focal thing never accomplishes a single task without the complications of human stories, hands, and faces.

What is helpful in reading *Deschooling* is the definition Borgmann offers of a technological device. This is helpful because what Illich intuitively and imprecisely sketches is a theory of school as a device and education as its ideological or technological engine. The school and education, like all technological devices, "promises to bring the forces of nature and culture under control, to liberate us from misery and toil, and to enrich our lives."[33] Its promise is as a seductive mere means, uncomplicated by political, social, or traditional encumbrances.

The importance of the focal thing is that it resists the reduction of the world and human

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 5.

presence to mere instruments. The pattern of technology, as it defines contemporary life and education, can simplify awareness in the direction of instrumentalisation. Human faces, aspects of the natural world, literature, religious traditions can all be reduced to systems, technical processes, and devices. Focal practices are important because they bring awareness of the complex and subtle relational depths of presence. When one uses a device like a computer without surrounding focal things and practices, experience can be flattened and the human face can be reduced to a biotic formula. Focal practices reform technical devices and processes by deepening awareness of the human dependencies and presences involved. When my use of the computer is surrounded by conversation and friendship it can becomes a prosthetic aid to contact a friend not physically present, and imaginatively allowing her to enter my livng conversation with others.

Eco, Borgmann, Higgs and others, have pointed out that the preponderance of the artificial and the simulated, the world of the virtual, the duplicated, and the classroom, can, when exceeding a certain limit, encourage an insensitivity to the somatic complexity of real life.[34] This is the cause of that plastic existence they have called *hyperreality*, where the artificial is preferred and accepted as natural.[35] There is a cost to human life in community degradation, loss of meaning, corruption of moral character, ecological decay, and inhibition of richly experienced real presence:

> This is the reason for this journey into hyperreality, in search of instances where the. . . imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake; where the boundaries between game and illusion are blurred, the art museum is contaminated by the freak show, and falsehood is enjoyed in a situation of "fullness", of horror vacui.[36]

The fear of being empty (*horror vacui*) and insubstantial creates, ironically, the substantial fake and simulation. The argument Borgmann makes is that the devices of technology have very

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[34] S. Leonard Rubinstein, "Things have Consequences," *Research/Penn State* 14 (Sept. 1994): 25.

[35] Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Pbl., 1986), 18; see also, "Things have Consequences," 25.

[36] Eco, 8.

specific and discernible characteristics that make them distinct from other tools and artifacts in their capacity to hide the depths of somatic complexity. The device masks encumbrances beyond its own specific function. The drum cited above, for example, reveals the "encumbrances" of a skilled player, a community gathering, a totemic design, the lore of other drummers and elders. The drum machine masks its encumbrances behind the electronic panel and the "simple" capacity to flick a switch.

The drum machine intentionally hides a host of complex features and necessary entanglements. It hides from the ears everything from the marketing representative to the micro-chip and circuit-board, and is designed to give to the ear only the sound of the beat. The drum gives to the ear, the eye, the mind, and the heart a whole complex of meanings, from maker, to player, (often the same person) on to audience. Even the invisible aspects of its visceral beat, the meaning, feelings, stories, it carried were not intended to be disguised, or forgotten about, but participated directly in the audible and visible dance and song at its beating.

The technological device can change its parts, its method of construction and production, without threat to the identity and function of the device.[37] The CD player may produce an audibly more pleasing sound than the Sony Walkman or the old turntable, but the sound of Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue" is still reproduced. The three radically different processes and devices all aim at doing the same single thing. They all reproduce the sounds of that music, each using a more complex technology than the other. The concealment, the intentional hiding of the works, is meant to disburden the hearer from the effort to hear and the distance between Miles Davis' performance and the disc player. I can "play" his horn's solo while I drive in my car or brush my teeth without needing to attend to the effort or character of Miles Davis. Its just a wonderful sound, music, that effortlessly, and without a human face, can be heard here or there. However, had I been there at

[37] Borgmann, 43.

the sessions the music would be an unavoidable focal thing and practice giving more than the recording levels registered on the "Sony" three track recording machine.[38]

The point Borgmann makes is that focal things and practices seek to conceal nothing. Focal practices are studies in the complexity of reality and real human presence. They necessarily reveal encumbrances. They are patterns of participation in complex reality. The encumbrances—the human hand, the black experience, the horn players emotional state, the drummer's relatives and place in the tradition, the child running across the hall—are all participants in the focal practice. Focal practice is not an attempt to avoid the unpredictable, the immeasurable, or even the disturbing aspects of reality. It is a disciplining of attention to allow the trip-ups of real presence to centre and prepare the self with real presence in, to, for, and with, the world. Focal practice gives the attentive and receptive "Jazz" as a music of presence, unrepeatable, and unique. The *ratio* is applied to open the self to the receptive capacity of the *intellectus*, responding to presence in the contingencies of the moment.

This is how focal things and practices differ as tools from technical devices. There are many things that appear to have the capacity to be used in both ways. Using Borgmann's definitions too tightly can hamper a subtler understanding. However, the point Borgmann makes is that the technical device, because it must engage in some form of deception, can distract and seduce the user into believing that artificial forms can simply replace the benefit and cost of real presence. The over-arching pattern of technological culture acts to erode the deeper cultural significance of focal things by concealing social interconnections and simplifying them as commodities and mechanical processes. Focal practices and things have a cost and are fallible, but never hide their cost and fallibility from view.

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[38] Robert Palmer, "Kind of Blue," liner notes for Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*, Reissue on Columbia CK 64935, 1997, Compact Disk; and Bill Evans, "Improvisation in Jazz," liner notes for Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*, Columbia CL 1355, 1959, Long Play Recording.

The CD player, now filling my ears with Miles Davis, can fool me into believing I have experienced the full significance of those recording sessions, some forty years ago. I can also ignore the fact that the Panasonic factory has polluted the earth, water, and air with various heavy metals and chemicals in the production of my PCMCIA KXL-D720, as well as forced labourers in China, Mexico or Korea to accept industrially damaged lives. I can ignore Ontario Hydro's increased sulphur emissions and heavy water spills. However, because I know the focal practice of human music, the tension and release of artistic performance, I can experience the deeper music the CD, in all its digitally remastered and computed accuracy, hides.

With focal practice the device can encourage me to listen for a muted presence. Too often, however, the sound, even of Davis' genius of presence in his horn playing, is, through these earbuds, but a pleasant sensation distracting me from encounters with the disturbing music of real presence. The ambiguity in using a technical device is always between ease of method, and abstraction from the real cost to human presence. The ambiguity of focal practices and things is in the natural relationship between effort and ease, pain and joy, found in the human awareness of immeasurable presence.

Deschooling seeks to bring awareness of the hidden costs of using the device called "school." The book exposes the dissonance between social practices and devices, and stated social aims. Illich's aim is to encourage webs of focal practice and attention to the presence of human others. This is not a utopian plan for technical or social perfection. It is the modest claim of focal practices, in a union of the dissymetrical powers of the *ratio* and *intellectus*, necessary for a humbler and richer human learning. Illich encourages an art of real human presence recovering the co-respondence, the human "Jazz" played, between the fallible *ratio* and the fragile *intellectus*.

Ecclesiology as the Study of Devices and Focal practices

Ecclesiology is the disciplined study of focal practices and institutional devices and how they structure an *ecclesia*, a living community. Ecclesiology looks to uncover the origins, nature, and development of an *ecclesia* in its practices and devices. Specifically, it has been the study of the practices and liturgies of the Christian church. For example, the study of liturgy exposes not merely a spoken and discursive theology but the lived and practiced belief of the community. The music, gestures, posture, objects, touch, and words, all participate in the creation of a "communal atmosphere."[39] Ecclesiology can expose a dissonance between this social reality and the stated doctrinal or social aim.

When Reimer draws Illich's attention to public education, Illich examines it using his ecclesial and liturgical instincts. He looks to understand the communal atmosphere. It may be, as Barrow indicates, that his religious language prevents understanding. Illich's ecclesial and liturgical analysis may stretch a point beyond its capacity to spring free any new insight. However, schooling appears to communicate in its institutional practices, just as other institutions, a particular set of values. The dissonance between these values and stated social aims is Illich's topic.

There has always been a temptation in any complex society to collapse the dense and multilayered significance of personal focal practices into a less encumbered universal device. The demand for wide application and co-ordination of diverse local communities was known in the Medieval Church and the Holy Roman Empire. When Illich contrasts the search for new and better "educational funnels" with the "search for their institutional inverse," he is applying an ecclesial criticism applied first to these pre-modern institutions.[40] For example, the struggle for

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[39] Ivan Illich, "The Cultivation of Conspiracy," (a translated, edited, and expanded version of an address given on the occasion of his receiving the Culture and Peace Prize, Bremen, Germany, 14 October 1998), photocopy, 8.

[40] Illich, *Deschooling*, xix.

Episcopal control over the liturgical diversity of the early church was an institutional device attempting to manage the veneration of the Real Presence in local communities.

By contrast to these attempts at institutional conformity the metaphor of webbing Illich introduces is meant to suggest the focal practices of local communities. The participation of learners in the shaping of their own communal atmosphere and focal practices is held as a critical part of learning an art of real presence. Illich's web is meant to suggest a responsive practice where many presences "conspire" and "commune" in a living whole in contrast to the values of institutional conformity and technical efficiency.[41]

In identifying the problem in schools and education as the paradigm of funnels over that of webs, he is repeating what he said in the "Disappearing Clergyman."[42] Care and concern for learning, when understood as locked into the sustaining and expansion of institutional structure, is perverted by a temptation to power. The school as the church, if it is to be a place of encountering the full meaning of real presence, must renounce coercive power and be disestablished. Its very formation as a funnel of authority must be deconstructed. If it is to be a place of learning, it must be entered freely as a sanctuary for focal practices, "heightening the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and caring."[43]

Illich, as a student of liturgy and ecclesiology, is not suggesting that learning requires no social structure. The institutional hubris of education and its device, compulsory schooling, gives a social structure that is without the discipline of focal practice. Institutional values are promoted that make the learner into a consumer of products. The social conditions whereby learners come to a mature and restrained use on behalf of conviviality require a different kind of social structure.

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[41] Ivan Illich, "The Cultivation of Conspiracy," 8.

[42] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness*, 40 ff.

[43] Illich, *Deschooling*, xix-xx.

Illich is not suggesting that human beings are necessarily damaged by all social influences. Rather, he is counseling that the convivial nature of human beings means that learning must be a consequence of the linkages, the meetings, the friendships between one and an other. This is the plea for a culture of real presence that modestly uses focal practices and things, and understands the temptation in and difficulty of all technical devices and processes. Technically complex societies need to discipline over-developed *ratios* to the sensitivity of the *intellectus* open to a nonconforming other.

The modern compulsory school is used by Illich to reveal the institutionalized heart of contemporary life. The substance of learning is, in the meeting of real presence, an encounter with the real as it exists as more than a simulation, artifice or example. The artificial processes to construct learning are confused in schooling, as we now know it, for the substance of learning itself. The pupil is schooled to prefer and confuse the professional teacher, compulsory attendance, and the classroom with the events of learning. The substance of learning, which arises in the relationship between presences, is thought to consist in products that can be consumed. Learning hence becomes an artificial process of ingesting products when they are served.

The inversion of reality where signs, diplomas, grade advancement, attendance records, and so on, are mistaken for the key meanings or substance of learning, is the mistake of attempting to guarantee a certain institutional standard. It is an idea that can be said to exhibit a noble concern that all be saved from ignorance and poverty. However, the impact of such an altruistic aim, when the good is sought irrespective of the particular reality of each human life of learning, is that learning becomes a function of institutional performance. The institutional device hides its own inner workings, but these workings end by governing the world of the user. That which was to serve an imputed human need, comes to dictate and shape those needs. The pedagogical device defines the student.

The task Illich urges be taken up is one of research into the origins of the institutions, processes, and devices that mask and school us in distraction from the full possibilities and encumbrances of real presence. Illich seeks to understand the origins of educational "device-dependence" in order to recover focal practices that can make more human the technologies and institutions we might choose to create. The recovery of real human encounters, webbings and bodies, in meetings of real presence, is a way beyond the manipulations and funneling of a schooled servility to institutional values.

Illich is not attempting, any more than Socrates was, to prompt the end of civil life. Rather, he is suggesting that the civil is best known in convivial, leisured, focal practices and things that bring us from device orientation to an orientation in the hospitable reception of immeasurable others. In these essays "school" is not meant as the only problem or even the principal reason why devices dominate contemporary life. However, compulsory schooling is a central factor in the confusing of process with substance. Schooling is a normalizing ritual that shapes the imagination to see products and devices as substitutes for presence and focal practices.

The ritual device distracts, as Borgmann suggests, from the complex depth of human presence. We are led away from the human encounters that give a learning of subtle, complex, and integral meaning to exchanges of disconnected bits of information, spewing from the complex and hidden workings of an educational device. We are taught to be unreceptive to the complexity of human presence, and to simply isolate the "key facts."

Deschooling begins by asserting that schooling is an icon of contemporary life. It operates to initiate the student into the institutional patterning and technological functioning of the age. It does not primarily function to help the student see that this present paradigm is one of many possible paradigms. Rather, its ritual processes give it to an implicit reading of reality as institutionally defined, a raw resource for supplying human needs. This is the ecclesiology of schooling. It is a

liturgical practice, a ritual, that re-enforces and generates a particular "faith" or way of seeing and being in the world.

Illich suggests that contemporary life is schooled in the rituals of a tech-gnostic (technical knowing) liturgy, expressing and forming the social reality of modern persons. Illich suggests that education and schooling are key forces in the contemporary construction of reality as a technically managed existence. Borgmann shows that the devices of everyday life, in a time defined by technology, tend to distract and inhibit attention to focal practices and things, the disciplines of presence, contemplation, critical thought and religion. So Illich suggests that schooling is a device that inhibits the subtle learning and awareness of the real pains, the joys and complexity of human presence.

There is a consistent vision in Illich's analysis. He looks at the institutional activities and sees the workings of an ecclesial and liturgical structure. The devices, the institutional behaviours and routines, demonstrate the communal atmosphere of the age. Like the time before Galileo, of the flat earth and dome of heaven, the devices and practices of contemporary life are equally illustrative of the social construction and faith of contemporary life. Non-conforming focal practices threaten to give another shape to the world.

Illich's argument is not the same as other radicals. His use of the ecclesial model, seeing how an institutional function engenders and mirrors a certain root belief about reality, is central to his conservative view of the potential of any technique to rid humanity of the tragic and ambiguous dimensions of human existence. The technical way educational devices function is contrasted with the encumbrances and humility of focal practice. Illich sees school as being a ritual learning of technical complexity bringing insensitivity to the complexity and subtlety of human presence.

Disestablishing and Disembedding Ritual Practices and Devices

Focal Practice has a powerful place in the formation of identity. Whether we look to the potter's apprentice, Buddhist meditation or the celebration of a wedding feast, focal practice is an activity of recognizing relational ties and forming identity. These formative practices, explicitly religious or not, are practices that give structure, direction, and stability to human identity. Illich calls for the disestablishing of any focal practice that is made universally compulsory. The compulsory force of schooling both privileges certain focal practices and makes them appear to have unrealistic capacities. Compulsory schooling can confuse, therefore, the appetite for institutionally managed devices and achievements with the patient and personal learning of focal practice.

Illich does not attack school as a tool for learners to gain a particular skill. Indeed, Illich affirms school as a place where the leisure, the absence of laboured compulsion, is given in order to assist concentration on certain practices. However, in contemporary compulsory schooling, "the pupil is schooled to confuse teaching with learning . . ."[44] The pupil begins to believe in her own inertia and his own need to be manipulated by external stimuli in order to learn. The learner must be acted upon or, if she acts upon things, it must be circumscribed by a certain curricular agenda. The meeting between one and an other, between a self and the world, must be mediated by a professional pedagogue and the interaction monitored and planned by administrators. The exchanges if not regarded as crudely the consumption or use of educational products are at least conceived as a managed and highly orchestrated activity.

From Dewey and Piaget on, educators, teachers, and curricular planners have attempted to build in the spontaneity, the real desires, and motivations of students. However, Illich is suggesting that institutional attempts to induce "spontaneity" betray a lack of trust and reverence for the depth

[44] Illich, *Deschooling*, 1.

of real presence. Too easily, the inter-subjective and unpredictable focal practice of learning between living presences gives way to the unencumbered operations of a device or managed process.

These operations all have the function of convincing the student that human presence is defined primarily as the performance of institutional duties and the use of technical devices and products. The educational device, as Borgmann suggests, shapes the user and hides from view a host of interactions and meanings. The device, while appearing to simply be the logical and efficient way to organize behaviour, distracts and abstracts the learner from the world of complex presences.

The culprit is not schools *per se*, but the desire to make routine and technically efficient the learning of certain curricular essentials. In so doing the device, the technique, and the curriculum define the needs and desires of the student. The altruistic aim of schooling and education is perverted by its attempt to guarantee and manage certain and specific results. The will to free human intelligence from technical imperfections only hides the greater tragedy of diminished sensitivity to human difference in technical accomplishment.

Illich's task is to reveal the device, the institution, and their managers and owners as inappropriately invasive of the autonomy of learners as real presences. The appropriate relationships of tool to user and of apprentice to master are not under question. Rather, the concern is that real human presence has in fact become servile to the technical device and the institutional function. What Illich seeks is a recovery or emergence of values, exchanges, and behaviours that are not defined by institutions, economic systems, technologies, corporate managers, and institutional agendas, but by real human presence. This is not about getting rid of civil institutions but of recovering civil society as a convivial place, a commons belonging to no

one but shared by all. Technologies or institutions are not viewed as necessarily demonic, but are called upon to serve convivial purposes and to encourage focal practices.

Contemporary life is under the pedagogy of devices, managers, and professionals. Those things and person who were to be in service to human need have come to dictate and manufacture needs. The priest who was to be the servant of all turns out to demand servility. Taken from the complex of organic relationships, the encumbrances and complications of real presence, we are delivered up to the control of technical devices and technicians. The modern condition combines the lack of power over circumstances with a loss of personal meaning. We now live in a time, Borgmann illustrates, when devices are mere means and thereby personal ends can be abstractable.[45] Meaning, once found in the rich interconnections of personal tool use and creation—social, religious, familial—is muted in a world where devices are manipulated as mere means. The ever changing complexity of technology, institutions, and professional life, takes power away from persons and makes them dependent on technical processes that have no personal meaning.

The cool efficiency of devices and regularity of institutional forms are seductive. With best intentions parents insist on schools and schooling for their children in order that they might get ahead in a technically sophisticated environment. The child is introduced thereby into a pattern of consumption and ever expanding desire for the services and products, technical devices and processes. Hoping to have our children gain access to knowledge, we only expose them to the frustrating and shaping of their needs and desires by institutional products and processes. If we truly focussed on access, on an open contact with the masters and things that provide learning moments, we would be forced to disestablish the social structures that constrain or limit access. Illich suggests that compulsory schooling "sets and holds in place the patterns of norms and

[45] Borgmann, 198 ff.

behaviours which protect and sustain the other institutions."[46] As such, it must be disestablished along with these other devices and institutions: "There are two aspects to deschooling: deschooling education and deschooling society. It is not just education but social reality which has been schooled, and not just education but society which needs to be deschooled."[47]

This is precisely the difficulty Gintis, Barrow, and others see in Illich's proposal. Without the buffer of schooling, they suggest, the worst aspects of "schooled society" would operate without check upon the most vulnerable. Barrow ponders the question as a chicken and egg conundrum.[48] He suggests that it is only confusing to demonize an institution that could be changed. Gintis suggests Illich, by counselling the disestablishment of schools, is deflecting the revolutionary vanguard from the real work of changing the system.[49] Disestablishment would further disable the poor, ensuring their continued marginalization and disempowerment. The schooling system must be changed in order to provide equal access and consciousness raising. Illich replies,

> [to] Mr. Gintis I would say, "You are worried because the poorer part of Americans. . . don't get enough schooling to know what's good for them and so remain independent. Poor people drop out of school before they can fall into your hands and be told that you know what's good for them.[50]

Illich answers his critics by warning of the impact of too easily assuming to know an other's needs. The "Indian" residential school system and the use of napalm on Vietnamese villagers were said to be on behalf of a good. Institutional altruism may be worse than apathy. However, Illich, as Barrow points out, seems to think that simply by ridding compulsory education as a demand upon the poor they will experience a new-found independence from consumer society. This itself

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[46] Leonard J. Waks, "Recontextualizing Illich's Deschooling Society," *Bulletin of Science Technology and Society* 16 (1996): 263.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Barrow, 152-3.

[49] Herbert Gintis, "Towards a Political Economy of Education: A Radical Critique of Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*," in *After Deschooling, What?*, ed. Alan Gartner, (New York, Harper & Row, 1973), 29 ff.

[50] Cayley and Illich, 74.

seems too simple a solution. The school may provide, as Gintis suggests, a "liberated zone" empowering the poor.

Barrow's critique takes all of Illich's proposals to task for their extreme and careless assumptions. At each turn, whether it be the assumption that compulsory schooling fails to teach students reading or that graded curriculum is necessarily an evil, Barrow offers arguments that indicate that compulsory schooling is neither as bad nor as confining as Illich indicates: "[His argument] is astonishing in its naiveté: it has no bearing at all on the question of whether schools do make a contribution towards developing literacy or could make a better one."[51]

Barrow is correct. Much of Illich's argument against compulsory schooling does not ask, even given its many citable deficiencies, if schooling is better than any proposed alternative. However, Illich's purpose is not the defense of an alternative, but a plea that alternatives be considered. Schooling may do some good, but making schooling compulsory and education necessary, assumes that it does everyone the most good. The arguments for schooling are premised on a presupposed universal need.

The purpose of the essays in *Deschooling* are to introduce doubt and encourage research into the common assumption that compulsory schooling is the natural and most efficient way to organize learning. What Illich is not attempting to do is to prove that he has a better plan for learning. Rather, he is suggesting that any plan is faulty and exhibits a large degree of hubris. The metaphors "webbing" and "network" are intended to counter the over-planning of educational devices. Webbing is a metaphor for personal focal practices—subtle linking, relational complexity, improvised responses, and a respect for the immeasurable gifts of real presence.

Barrow recognizes that Illich's analysis illustrates the logic of a hidden curriculum. Illich argues that, despite the content of the curriculum, its ecclesiology "makes them [students, teachers,

[51] Barrow, 135.

and parents] believe . . . that learning can be measured and pieces can be added one to the other; that learning provides value for the objects which then sell in the market." Barrow contends that none of this is necessarily an evil. The hidden curriculum of schooling provides training and skill development that is socially relevant and enables advancement in the dominant culture. Illich contests even this:

> Nowhere else does the treatment of poverty promote such dependence, anger, frustration, and further demands. And nowhere else should it be so evident that poverty—once it has become modernized—has become resistant to treatment with dollars alone and requires an institutional revolution.[52]

Illich is concerned that the practical results of compulsory schooling in poor communities are not as advertised—a gradual lifting up of the poor to be on equal footing with the rich in accessing the tools of society. The practical result seems to be a frustrating dependence on further institutional interventions and an expanding cycle of consuming products and services. For example, the three billion dollars expended in the United States between 1965 and 1968 on upgrading the disadvantaged did not produce the predicted results.[53] While resources were and are not equally distributed between rich and, the problems the poor face are not reducible to a lack of educational opportunity or knowledge.[54]

Berg's well-documented empirical evidence suggests that the amount of money expended on education does roughly correlate with higher salaries.[55] However, his study does not indicate a high degree of correlation between years spent in educational institutions and competence. Illich argues, using this and other studies, that universal schooling creates as many barriers for the poor and marginal in society as it alleviates. Illich argues that compulsory schooling introduces a ritual

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[52] Illich, *Deschooling*, 4.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 5.

[55] Ivar Berg, *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 19-38.

that disables awareness and sensitivity to gifts and wisdom found in the vernacular sphere. It makes it difficult to imagine competence and learning without the incursion of educated experts, products, and institutions.

Barrow, one of Illich's sharpest critics, points to problems in Illich's argument. He does not object to Illich pointing out that contemporary schooling has hidden aims and a ritualizing function. He argues that there is nothing new in this insight nor is it particularly alarming. Schools must inculcate the values and perspective of the society in which they exist. However, they do so flexibly: "Just as we accept without argument the point that there is a hidden curriculum, so we reject the specific suggestion that we are taught this and that as if it admitted of no exception and every child must have imbibed the same cultural values."[56]

Is Barrow saying that contemporary schooling does not seek to inculcate every child with common "cultural values" or that it does so imperfectly? The first half of the sentence accepts a hidden curriculum, but the second rejects the idea that the school explicitly teaches this curriculum. He appears to be saying that schooling gives these hidden cultural values without explicitly seeking to imbue every child with them. If so, this is in agreement with Illich.

The ritual process operates despite what is explicitly taught. It may not imbue every child with "the same cultural values" but it touches every child. Some have successful strategies of resistance and others do not. Obviously it does not imbue every child without exception, and again this is Illich's point. His book begins by pointing out that "Many students, especially the poor, intuitively know what schools do for them."[57] Many students, not all, intuitively resist or seek to

[56] Barrow, 138.

[57] Illich, *Deschooling*, 5.

sabotage the hidden curriculum. Perhaps many caring teachers, such as John Taylor Gatto, resist as well.[58] Illich indicates the predicament of such teachers later on in the book when he writes:

> The "classroom practitioner" who considers himself a liberal teacher is attacked from all sides. The free-school (and de-school) movement, confusing discipline with indoctrination, has painted him into the role of a destructive authoritarian. The educational technologist consistently demonstrates the teacher's inferiority at measuring and modifying behaviour. And the school administration for whom he works forces him to bow to both Summerhill and Skinner.[59]

The examples do date the work, but today's professional teacher is caught between many new rocks and many new hard places. Barrow seems to have missed the clear grasp Illich has of the ambiguities of the educational situation. This is in part what makes Barrow's objection unclear. It would have been clearer to have asked whether the "hidden curriculum" which Barrow accepts as part of all schooling, and which Illich accuses contemporary compulsory schooling of inflicting on its students, has virtue or is as Illich describes it. Barrow, at first, simply appears to agree that the hidden curriculum as outlined is basically the operative one and suggests that it is not such a bad thing.[60] Later, in his "Appendix", Barrow seems to draw back and indicate a disagreement with Illich's assumption about the nature of this curriculum.[61]

Barrow suggests that Illich's thinking places control of the hidden curriculum outside consideration. He argues that since a "hidden curriculum" is a natural consequence of any social arrangement, naming schools as the sole culprit tends to hide consideration of other institutions that may carry such a "hidden curriculum."[62] It is unclear if he intends to show this as counter to Illich's thought or against all "radicals." In any case, he seems to be remaking Illich's point, rather

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[58] John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: the Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (Philadelphia and Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1992), passim.

[59] Illich, *Deschooling*, 65.

[60] Barrow, 138.

[61] Ibid., 194-196.

[62] Ibid., 138-139.

than offering a counter argument. School is a paradigm of the hidden curriculum of contemporary institutions. Illich begins with it because it is a compulsory and universally present institution that touches every life directly. Unlike the stock exchange or even the multi-national corporation, the school is nearly universally accepted as necessary in shaping human lives. The other institutions may have as much influence and power, but they do not make claims to being universally beneficial.

Barrow does make clear that schools, training students in the *ratio*, can aid critical thought by teaching the steps involved in coming to various conclusions. It, thereby, could awaken critical reflection on the process itself, exposing its hidden assumptions. However, as Borgmann notes, there tends to be a safe-guard against such reflexive criticism built into the operations of technical devices—the abstraction of knowledge into technical and professional reserves that inhibit a critical review of the whole process of education.

The proliferation of educational jargon, policy statements, professional associations, and devices has made teaching and learning appear to be scarce and dependent on institutional management. The more compulsion and institutional standardization was deemed to be necessary the less teaching and learning could be understood as natural to maturation and learning a livelihood. Learning came to mean submission to a professionally planned curricular and institutional process. The growth in educational institutions in part "explains why neither Canada nor the United States have good apprenticeship programs, why so many parents have given up on parenting ("Oh the school will teach that!") and why most corporations—from newspapers to mining companies—are cavalier about on-the-job-training."[63]

[63] Andrew Nikiforuk, "Facts and Arguments: Ivan Illich's 24 Year-old Critique of Compulsory Schooling Still Rings True," *The Globe and Mail*, 22 July 1994, A20.

Schooling can encourage an insensibility to the demands and obligations of family, friendship, and place. Seeing learning as a managed and predictable process, can convince the learner that human life is just a matter of choosing from a list of packaged products, and not a matter of deep obligations and sometimes difficult and ambiguous moral decisions. This may be thought of as an "educated" tolerance for the erosion of human communities, traditions, presence, and human touch, in an acceptance of the inevitable and endless expansion of device orientation and technical progress.

Barrow and others of Illich's critics do have an important critical point when they suggest that nothing Illich hopes to attain is precluded by the reform of schools.[64] This is what Callan and Gintis suggest, pointing to specific items of Illich's critique of schooling. Learning autonomy and the raising of political and cultural consciousness are not precluded from schools. For Callan the good of autonomy is responsibly secured alongside other goods in the reform of curriculum and pedagogical structure.[65] In Gintis this reform is rather like the stages of Marxist theory where "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat" is a step in the revolution towards the eschaton of the stateless community.[66] The recognition in both writers is that some practical compromise, some mediation between conflicting needs, values, and desired aims, is required if any useful change is to take place.

To dislodge the domination of the large bureaucratic institutions, the market place and of technological devices, schools must surely become different kinds of places. Illich does not disagree. Illich seeks the end of compulsion in schooling as one way to awaken us to contradictions otherwise hidden by technical devices and processes. However, Illich would issue a

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[64] Barrow, 139.

[65] Eamonn Callan, *Autonomy and Schooling* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 4-5, 88-90.

[66] Herbert Gintis, 30-31.

note of caution that "planning" and "manipulation" are not far apart and doubt about the naturalness of "educational needs" is more critical in deschooling society than reforming the device:

> If there were one thing I would wish for the readers (and some of the writers) of *Deschooling Our Lives*, it would be this: If people are seriously to think about deschooling their lives, and not just escape from the corrosive effects of compulsory schooling, they could do no better than to develop the habit of setting a mental question mark beside all discourse on young people's "educational needs" or "learning needs," or about their need for "preparation for life." I would like them to reflect on the historicity of these very ideas.[67]

The above was written long after *Deschooling* and in reflection upon the use of his book by reformers who "feel impelled to condemn almost everything which characterizes modern schools—and at the same time propose new schools."[68] The "cognitive dissonance" of such reformers was greeted in 1970 by Illich as marking the emergence of an alternative paradigm. He uses the insights of Thomas Kuhn to speak of this dissonance as the hallmark of the coming of a new paradigm.[69] What he did not then understand, but he later came to understand, was the strength and transmutational capacity of the old paradigm. He did not comprehend how easily the generation that spoke of revolution, and of the dissonance and contradictions of contemporary life, could not only continue to live with such dissonance, but could have their aspirations for radical change subverted by the products and operations of institutions and technologies once resisted. In short, Illich was not yet significantly aware of the power of contemporary devices and processes to consume and pervert even good intentions in an escalation of their own operations.

It is true, as Barrow and others have pointed out, that Illich does sacrifice clarity for prophetic indignation. However, the deepest criticism is that the book does not reckon with the capacity of people shaped by the cult of a *tech-gnosticism*—technical knowledge—to continue to live with a

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[67] Illich, Foreword to *Deschooling Our Lives*, ix-x.

[68] Illich, *Deschooling*, 51.

[69] Ibid.

deafening dissonance. As Illich put it in his own critique of the book, "the alternative to schooling was not some other type of educational agency, or the design of educational opportunities in every aspect of life, but a society which fosters a different attitude of people towards tools."[70] What Illich did not count on was the plastic capacity of device-focus to subdue the awareness of focal practice. He writes of this in *Deschooling*:

> The capacity to pursue incongruous goals requires an explanation. According to Max Gluckman all societies have procedures to hide such dissonances from their members. . . this is the purpose of ritual. Rituals can hide from their participants even discrepancies and conflicts between social principle and social organization. As long as an individual is not explicitly conscious of the ritual character of the process through which he was initiated to the forces which shape his cosmos, he cannot break the spell and shape a new cosmos.[71]

The point Illich is making is a point of ecclesiology. The device-focus of contemporary life powerfully maintains and imbues certain beliefs. He is suggesting that before any revolution in social reality can occur, the rituals and the deepest myth-making activities of device-focus must be exposed. The experienced dissonance in contemporary life is a sign of the discrepancy between the reality manipulated by device and process and the real limitations exposed by focal practice. To resist or emerge from this dissonant social reality requires a radical demythologizing of its myth making devices.

Education and Progress

The expansion of educational devices is often defended as a sign of human progress over ignorance. In contrast, Illich speaks of a "lifestyle" of focal attention to others as presences that are always more than intellectual constructs.[72] There is an intellectual modesty necessary that has not forgotten human obligations and will resist definition by technical manipulation. The convivial

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[70] Illich, Foreword to *Deschooling Our Lives*, viii.

[71] Illich, *Deschooling*, 51.

[72] Ibid., 52.

nature of human life is affirmed and this is to be trusted as fundamental to learning. Institutions and devices too often encourage hubris and discourage a convivial modesty.

The institutional spectrum Illich introduces arrays institutions along a continuum from convivial to manipulative.[73] The manipulative institution attempts to convince the client to be shaped to the institutional workings and distrust human presence. The complex workings and bureaucratic structure seek to convince the client of the need for the product or treatment being offered. Compulsory schooling appears to communicate the message, "Without being forced to attend school we cannot be trusted to learn, or at least not well enough." In order to be successful in contemporary society everyone must be educated in proficient use of institutional processes and technical devices.

Illich sees schooling promoting a "lifestyle which only allows us to make and unmake, produce and consume. . ."[74] Schooling, by confusing the process of instruction, the making and storing of information in the student, with the active presence of a learner, reinforces and conditions the student to production and consumption. Learning in school has an end other than growing competence in human presence.[75] It attends to institutional processes and technical devices as the critical values. In contrast, Illich sees the highest human virtues as ways of acting that show a deeper receptivity to human presence.[76] We may bring to the making and storing of information an ethical concern, but the virtuous life is a matter of a meditative *praxis*, and not of technical artifice or product:

> The word which Aristotle employed for making was "poesis," and the word he employed for doing, "praxis." A move to the right implies that an institution is

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[73] Ibid., 55.

[74] Ibid., 52.

[75] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. F. H. Peters (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co. Ltd., 1893), 1140.

[76] Ibid.

> being restructured to increase its ability to "make," while as it moves to the left, it is being restructured to allow increased "doing" or "praxis."[77]

Contemporary schooling moves to the right where it restructures for the progressive making of educational products and institutional values. The rightward restructuring places the *ratio* at the cultic centre. The *ratio* no longer aids the *intellectus* to awareness of real human presence, but turns on the values of its own artifice. Illich is attempting to rehabilitate the *ratio*—measuring, making, and consuming—by rooting it in the arts of the *intellectus*—receptive action, contemplation, and friendship.

It is not that the *ratio* can be abandoned or ignored. Rather, it is that all its "making" should be done proportionately, to free the self for a convivial *praxis*. Right-leaning institutions tend to restructure to increase speed, efficiency, measurability, and quantity of product. The goods made promote an appetite for more product. The problems they create are thought to be signs of the need for expanding, making more efficient and speedy, and seldom as signs that appropriate limits have been exceeded.[78]

In contrast Illich wishes to promote clarity and simplicity in use of the tools of the *ratio*. Learning must focus attention on the subtle and complex relational realities in a *praxis*. The critical skill of the *ratio* must encourage the user to a convivial *praxis* that requires contemplation and attention to the difficulty of virtuous living and not promote the myth of progress away from the obligations of conviviality.

Barrow correctly criticizes Illich for claiming schools can simply be described in terms of production, institutionalization of values and commodification.[79] Public Schools are not perfect models of the free-market, despite the desires of the Fraser Institute. They are complex social

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[77] Illich, *Deschooling*, 62.

[78] Ibid., 60-61.

[79] Barrow, 139.

organisms that express social concern for the educational progress of children and their success in later life. Expressing the expectation that the values of institution, technology, and market place represent human progress, they act to disvalue other practices and patterns.

It is not that teachers or administrators look at children and see only raw resources ready to be packaged and finished for the market place. The talk at the School Board meeting—performance indicators, bottom line behaviour codes, surveying client response, listening to all the "stake-holders", information transmission—is hard to distinguish from that at IBM, but its intention is the betterment of children. The accepted and acceptable view is that school is a place for making students learn and producing results on behalf of progress. It is not a place for leisured contemplation, unless that too has a measurable or manageable result.

Would any government or parent feel at ease supporting a school whose purpose was nothing more than providing a leisured space where friendship, thought, and virtuous behaviour could be cultivated? Parents worry that virtuous behaviour alone does not give a successful career in the competitive global economy. The seductions of passive and self-centred consumption is readily recognized in parental objections to too much television and computer-gaming. However, few parents would risk personal career advancement for encouraging learning of focal practices and convivial disciplines.

Illich and Socrates defend the disciplined and patient attention required for a virtuous and rich human existence against the speed of an immodest Protagorian curricular plan. Illich is concerned that schooling, as it is currently practiced, in fact diminishes the disciplined capacity to attend to the immeasurable subtleties of human experience.[80] Further, he is concerned that the curricular plan, by manipulating and manufacturing expected results, teaches that discipline is something applied externally and made by attending to technical values rather than the virtues of human

[80] Illich, *Deschooling*, 40.

presence. Discipline is a technique applied, rather than a self-limiting of expectation and manipulation in order to receive the truth of the other. Discipline is not seen as the inner focal practice of a master of a particular art, but as technique applied to make the student learn.

This kind of schooling has made it difficult to imagine human progress as anything other than a measurable institutional accomplishment. Discipline, as an inner constraint and focus of desires and energies, is not entirely lost or unadmired, but it is not the main quality deemed necessary to success. The capability to manage a life, to produce measurable results, and to demonstrate self-worth is the desired end of much in contemporary education. The contemplative, the receptive, and hospitable capacities of the *intellectus* are valued only in so far as they support the industry of the *ratio*.

Imagine Jenny, a bright inquisitive child drawn to the study of bird flight. Her busy professional parents, one a computer engineer and the other a doctor, are devastated to find their child has been expelled from school because of unexplained absences and days late. Good parents that they are, they immediately try to discover if Jenny may be participating in extra curricular behaviour that is dangerous or a signal of some deeper problem. What they discover is that Jenny has been skipping class to go to the local lagoon where she has carefully documented the first attempts of a pair of young eaglets at flight. They are relieved, but this, they say, is no excuse. What about your future? Without school you will never make it as a professional.

This is a fairy tale of course. Most young abstainers from school have interests that draw them into use of illegal substances or licit but mind-numbing attention to technical devices. However, suppose the fairy tale to be true. Jenny's practice gives a wide web of learning—the dynamics of bird flight, the ecology of the lagoon, the impact of human habitation, and so on. However, Jenny will not be allowed, except in institutionally controlled circumstances, to explore her passion. The pre-ordained institutional process is regarded as better and surer than her self-

motivated study. After all, her parents would say, you would severely limit your career possibilities without graduation. Institutional responsibility, in this case, comes before Jenny's dissident form of learning.

The disciplined dissidence of focal practices, Borgmann reminds us, inefficiently but organically involves a complex of relationships that reach out in webs to a whole world.[81] On the other hand, the school is designed as an efficient institutional device to bring about a measured effect. Focal practice is not intended to bring a measured effect, but, rather, to bring a living understanding of the world, the self, and the other. Schools radically reconceived and demythologized may support focal practices. However, such schools, at least to Jenny's practical parents, are hard to imagine. The prudence of securing Jenny's future in an institutionally defined world seems in conflict with care for her presence.

While it is possible to learn without professional or institutional devices, these forms of learning are regarded, in the ritual of schooling, as primitive and unreliable.[82] The self-taught person is a romantic or crudely shaped figure. The educated person is warranted and refined by institutional tests to be all and more than this rustic figure. The schooled imagination regards the non-schooled as in some way always inferior or less sophisticated. Illich writes:

> Once a man or a woman has accepted the need for school, he or she is easy prey for other institutions. Once young people have allowed their imaginations to be formed by curricular instruction, they are conditioned to institutional planning of every sort. "Instruction" smothers the horizon of their imaginations. They cannot be betrayed, but only short-changed, because they have been taught to substitute expectations for hope. They will no longer be surprised, for good or ill, by other people, because they have been taught what to expect from every other person who has been taught as they were. This is true in the case of another person or in the case of a machine.[83]

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[81] Borgmann, 7-12.

[82] Callan, 58-9.

[83] Illich, *Deschooling*, 39.

What Illich suggests is that curricular instruction inhibits the dimensions of human experience by reducing it to expectations met or unmet. Protected from experiencing betrayal, or the depth of friendship, I can grow to be less sensitive to the disturbing presence of the other, except as he or she meets or does not meet my expectations in satisfaction of institutionally conditioned and expected rights. This can go so far as to reduce human activity to expected and determined institutional responses. Illich contrasts this guarantee of institutional norms with the surprise and dangers of an art of real presence.

Again, it is not necessary to argue that all sensitivity to friendship or betrayal is lost in a world governed by educated expectation. It is sufficient to understand we are dulled in our capacity to receive the surprise and the full wonder of an other, by living in a world dominated by institutionalized values. Many feel confused and disenchanted with institutional patterns because they transgress the uniqueness of human presence by offering calculated responses and products. There is a feeling of loss when we are forced, by institutional values, to down-play the complexity of human touch for the technically sophisticated and calculated exchange.

The ritual of seeing the world and others as only communicable as measured quantities may allow that the measure is subjective or random. However, loss of confidence in the analytical tools of the enlightenment by the deconstruction of their objective centres of interpretation does not necessarily mean a recovered trust in human presence. It often has meant a retreat from trust in real contact with others for obsessive consideration of interpretive techniques.

Despite an awareness of interpretive pretensions to objectivity, desire for "performance indicators" still dominates public education. The recent change of report cards in the Province of Ontario was driven by parents' desire to see at a glance the numbers and letters judging the performance of their child.[84] The report card should be, so the argument went, as easy to interpret

[84] The Harris government has made universal and "simplified" the report card in the legislation of 1997-8.

and as unencumbered by commentary and relational irrelevancies as a bank statement.[85] This is one part in fitting children for the "competitive job market." Premier Harris has consistently argued that any education funded by the Province should have direct relevance to the market place.[86]

Few parents, teachers, or students question the demand for market relevance. The Ontario Provincial Government, and evidently a majority of voters, agree that education and students are best judged by "market relevance." Moral character, compassion, curiosity, passionate inquiry, and sensitivity, are reduced in such a communal atmosphere to shadow values supporting market relevance. This conformity is not because of evil designs. It is because of a desire to guarantee the best results for our children.

Barrow suggests that there are many places where schools do not behave strictly as places of commodity exchange.[87] Schools, as all places of human encounter, do not function as simple techniques or simply to satisfy the stated aims. The factory floor, or the floor of the stock-exchange, or the mathematics classroom may dull or inhibit awareness of human presence, but they cannot entirely eliminate the unpredictable or spontaneous expression of presence. However, the aim of these devices and processes is increased efficiency of measurable exchanges and a maxim level of commodity production and consumption, not a deepening of human awareness.

The same can be said to be true of schools. Affection, compassion, curiosity, inquiry or unique expression are seen to be in aid of the production of an educated student. Compulsory public schooling is expected to be the production of measured results through the application of curricular devices. School is, in all respects, a serious business. It operates by offering a package

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[85] *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 October 1997, A1.

[86] Ibid. Premier Harris, in defence of his policies on education, has again and again referred to the "common sense of the market place" as the ultimate measure of its effect.

[87] Barrow, 196-197.

of values and a set of commodities: "It is a bundle of planned meanings, a package of values, a commodity whose 'balanced appeal' makes it marketable. . . consumers are taught to make their desires conform to marketable values."[88]

There is now something less startling about the above statement as applied to education than there was thirty years ago. Now, most accept that schools should in some way prepare students as marketable quantities. The point to be made again and again is not that educators are evil. In most cases, they want what is best for student. However, this is now translated into the efficient production of marketable values. The child must not be over sensitive to the feelings of others. He or she must not feel too much guilt at the cost career success exacts on human community and the inevitable degradation of the world. The educator's care for the feelings of the student educated for market evaluation masks moral confusion and inhibits the maturation of a disciplined and careful participant in human community. Even the best of teachers find it difficult not to give way to the forces of instructional efficiency.

The myth of progress, now changed by the products and technical devices thought to be the ends of human progress, supports a determination by market values. The restless demand for ever expanding speed and detail in measurement has brought a sense that the latest technology, the latest product, is needed to keep the economy going and to keep human life moving ahead. The student is taught to seek the newest, the most up-to-date information, to constantly seek "upgrading", and at graduation to seek never-ending consumption and expansion of educational opportunities. Each change in curriculum is an improvement. Last year's graduates are, by this logic, inferior to this years because they were fed on old product and old technology. Open-ended consumption of educational products, just as open-ended consumption of all products, is thought to be the measure of human progress.

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[88] Waks, 264.

This consumptive pattern is the reality each North American, who is not wealthy enough to be unconcerned or poor enough to be beyond caring, faces each day. Education is required to attain the special skills promoted by a system of escalating and manufactured needs. [89] This gives a centrifugal force to a cycle of dependence and addiction to devices and manipulative skills. The idea of human growth as the open-ended expansion of production, technical complexity, and institutional size gives the system of rituals that constructs much of contemporary life:[90] "But growth conceived as open-ended consumption—eternal progress—can never lead to maturity. Commitment to unlimited quantitative increase vitiates the possibility of organic development."[91]

The distinction between organic development to maturity, and planned consumption of educational goods, is not easily understood for thinkers deeply shaped by the mythology of contemporary life. Illich is attempting to show that learning dependence on educational production promotes an immature reliance on artifice rather than growth in a practice attentive to the complex organic relationships of real presence:

> Illich sees each of these myths as obscuring the difference between a life of realizing one's personal meanings through self-defined action and a life of passive expectation and joyless consumption. In the passive life, the personal good becomes re-defined as possession of unequally distributed commodities and services. Power over living is transferred from personal hands to manipulative institutions controlled by elites, and life is reduced to endless consumption of industrially produced products and services, leading to irreversible environmental degradation.[92]

Illich is clearly contrasting self-defined action and passive consumption. However, Illich understands autonomy not as defined by institutional or merely subjective expectation. For Illich autonomy is an expression of an active learning in the meetings and organic connections between

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[89] Illich, *Deschooling*, 39.

[90] Waks, 264.

[91] Illich, *Deschooling*, 43.

[92] Waks, 264.

real presences: "The relational structures we need are those which enable each man to define himself by learning and by contributing to the learning of others."[93]

Liberated from the services offered and products produced by established professionals and institutions, a confusion of human voices may be all that is heard.[94] A complex, fully encumbered learning, that places convivial contact at its centre offers no institutional certainties. Its relational structure means it is not a guide for institutional management. Social confusion, Illich's critics warn, is what *Deschooling* guarantees and not entry into a utopian promised land. Illich offers the recovery of smaller, locally configured, relational bodies. Illich suggests, hope for human progress does not rest in any technical or institutional fix but only in the patient attention to the structures and limitations of real human presence. Hope rests in attending, across a silent gulf, to the words of the other's ineffable presence. In that hope, his critics tell us, is Illich's folly and wisdom.

The Conclusion of Deschooling: Learning as the Opening of Pandora's box

The final chapter of *Deschooling* is one of the two that Illich hoped would receive most attention. He begins that chapter by contrasting two "boxes," the closed box of educated expectations and Pandora's open box:

> Our society resembles the ultimate machine which I once saw in a New York toy shop. It was a metal casket which when you touched a switch, snapped open to reveal a mechanical hand. Chromed fingers reached out for the lid, pulled it down, and locked it from the inside. It was a box; you expected to be able to take something out of it; yet all it contained was a mechanism for closing the cover. This contraption is the opposite of Pandora's "box."[95]

Education appears in contemporary life as the closed box of well managed futures. John Carse speaks of this as being prepared against the future.[96] Education trains us to "look forward to

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[93] Illich, *Deschooling*, 71.

[94] Ibid., 103.

[95] Illich, *Deschooling*, 105.

[96] John Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life as Play and Possibility* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 19.

satisfaction from a predictable process which will produce what we have the right to claim."[97] A schooled society lives, in this way, by trust in technical management and not in human presence. Focal practice opens the box to the surprise of presence. There are always dangers, obligations, vulnerabilities, and ineffable depths.[98] The closed box diminishes openness to developing entanglements, moral and ecological, on behalf of predictable institutional processes. Opening the box is like the art of a Wayne Gretsky, where sensitivity to entanglements creates the great play:

> It is not an Openness as in candor, but an openness as in vulnerability. It is not a matter of exposing one's unchanging identity, the true self that has always been, but a way of exposing one's ceaseless growth, the dynamic self that has yet to be. The infinite player does not expect to be amused by surprise, but to be transformed by it, for surprise does not alter some abstract past, but one's own personal past.[99]

The schooled mind seeks to finish a completed self and past, the lesson learned, in a future. The "infinite player," continues a journey of discovery, not ending a self-definition, but growing in personal awareness and vulnerability to the other beyond definition. The schooled mind sees reality as a place for final definition, roles, titles, and outcomes in a technically managed future.[100] Illich looks behind the pretense of technical efficiency, exposing the closed box of self-perpetuating consumption.

Education almost guarantees learning. Almost, but for the dropout and the dissonance of resisting presences and surprises. This "almost guaranteed" may be welcomed as an avoidance of trouble, inconvenience, and the slow pace of focal attention to real presence. The "almost" is seen as the need for more products and processes. However, learning as an "infinite player" hopes for something unexpected. It is vulnerable to the unexpected developments of real human presence. Death, illness, betrayal, and the limits of human sight were released when Pandora's box was

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[97] Illich, *Deschooling*, 105.

[98] Carse, 18.

[99] Ibid., 18-19.

[100] Ibid.

opened. This world of real presence is of chaos and order. There is an unrealistic expectation that the *ratio* can close Pandora's box again. The best planning will ever be sabotaged and perverted by the unpredictability of real individuals.

The real achievements of compulsory education often hide a loss in inner discipline, a capacity for patient attention to the always difficult focal practice of learning. A society schooled by device orientation is impatient with the immeasurability of human response. Education as a device attempts to make responses conform to the measure and powers of human technique. If it fails, it insists on the need for improved techniques, the inclusion of a more ecological design, or greater force in application of past plans. Disenchantment with technical management, Illich urges, offers learning as the practice of patient attention to the real presence of the other, so as to receive without destroying difference.[101]

The human heart has always feared the unpredictable. In modern times education was created as a device to forward the advance of intellectual and technical mastery over the mysterious. There has always been a temptation in modernity to believe that mastering the cosmos might be possible. Various techniques, ritual behaviours, and religious practices have been imagined to gain such control. However, the contemporary period is remarkable in its success in altering the face of the world on behalf of the desire for the perfect device. As complex technologies hide encumbrances from awareness they become icons of aspirations to completely manage reality. However, in the speed of technological change and economic advance, the patient quickening of local and focal practice is lost.

Tools are now transmuted from their potential as focal things. What once brought us into the creative tension between order and chaos assumes authority over presence. Our unencumbered use of technical devices has created chaotic patterns—weather patterns that have greater extremes,

[101] Cayley and Illich, 282-283.

growth in profits alongside deepening poverty, ignorance of human presence alongside complex intellectual formulations. What used to bring us into contact with the complex orders and spontaneous flow of real presences, our tools, are now more often devices to hide from our eyes the cost of living in the "virtually" real.

What are the origins of this great shift from tool to device, from learning as focal practice to schooling in management techniques? Certainly the origin is in the always present fear of the future, of the unpredictable nature of reality. Certainly it is, as well, in the perversion of compassion in the myth that our own planning may guarantee our own and others salvation from suffering. Illich writes: "The original Pandora was sent to Earth with a jar which contained all ills; of good things, it contained only hope. Primitive man lived in this world of hope."[102]

Illich sees that our most primal experience is one not of a "jar" of devices to help us master the world but of hope in human presence. Hope is open to the surprise of a presence "from whom we await a gift."[103] Hope is vulnerability to the intricacy of relational patterns within human limitations. In hope the *ratio* focusses on the skill needed with awareness of dependence. However, the perversion of skill is found in the pride of technical accomplishment. Illich notes, "classical Greeks began to replace hope with expectations. In their version of Pandora she released both evils and goods. They remembered her mainly for the ills she had unleashed. . . . most significantly, they forgot that the All-Giver was also the keeper of hope."

The Greek story is focussed on two brothers, Prometheus, or foresight, Epimetheus, or hindsight. Prometheus warns his duller brother to leave Pandora alone. Instead, Epimetheus marries her. Prometheus fears Pandora, All-Giver, whose gifts are good and evil. Pandora is a

[102] Illich, *Deschooling*, 106.

[103] Ibid., 105.

presence that is not manageable. Prometheus fears her because, in her presence, his skill is confused by the ambiguities of real presence:

> In classical Greece the name "Epimetheus" which means "hindsight" was interpreted to mean "dull" or "dumb." By the time Hesiod retold the story in its classical form, the Greeks had become moral and misogynous patriarchs who panicked at the thought of the first woman. They built a rational and authoritarian society. Men engineered institutions through which they planned to cope with the rampant ills. They became conscious of their power to fashion the world and make it produce services they also learned to expect. They wanted their own needs and the future demands of their children to be shaped by their artifacts.[104]

Plato recalls the encounter between Socrates and Protagoras as one of a disagreement over the possibility of training for the virtuous life.[105] For Protagoras the true human, the citizen, was a male shaped to the artifacts of society. Prudence required training to the role as defined by institutional form. Socrates taught that this idea of training for virtue as an institutional artifact reversed the order of things. Virtue, he concludes, cannot be taught in this way. Virtue comes before and after any institutional form. It can be developed, as Aristotle and Callan point out, by practice, but is never guaranteed by a certain pedagogical method.[106]

In recalling the birth of human life from Pandora's womb, Illich is suggesting a similar distinction. The Promethean Greek sees human birth as a kind of misfortune of bad planning. Planning must overcome nature in order to give order to human life. Production must overcome reproduction. Promethean skill must refashion the raw product of nature into predictable processes:

> To the primitive the world was governed by fate, fact, and necessity. By stealing fire from the gods, Prometheus turned facts into problems, called necessity into question, and defied fate. Classical man framed a civilized context for human perspective. He was aware that he could defy fate-nature-environment, but only at his own risk. Contemporary man goes further; he attempts to create the world in his image, to build a totally man-made

[104] Ibid., 106.

[105] Plato, *Protagoras*, 318ff.

[106] Callan, 147.

> environment, and then discovers that he can do so only on the condition of constantly remaking himself to fit it.[107]

The over-extension of the *ratio* in contemporary life is in an attempt to craft a world of purely human design. This educates for a fitting of human presence to human artifice. Human artifice and *ratio* are to be served by the resources of the world and humanity. The temptation to create the perfect device has, since the tower of Babel, been alive in human cultures. Illich warns, if unguarded by a modest receptivity to presence, human technical accomplishment may so mute the sense of human meaning as to reduce it to "playing a part in a [planned] world game."[108] Such expectation gives the illusion of safety in an educated sterility. Illich fears "the contemporary ideal is a pan-hygienic world: a world in which all contacts between men, and between men and their world, are the result of foresight and manipulation. School has become the planned process which tools man for a planned world."[109]

Conclusion: From Deschooling to Sanctuary

Illich promotes a disenchantment with compulsory schooling as a closed box of expectation, not with any ordered attempt to learn. His critics hold that the advances gained by institutional manipulation outweigh any loss. The hidden curriculum of the device is defensible because it creates members of the social order able to function in a world of technical complexity. Compulsory schooling, with perhaps some minor alterations, is simply the best of any other alternative.

Barrow and Callan are fearful of disestablishing schools in the contemporary situation. Callan appreciates Illich's evaluation of the threat to human autonomy in present curricular structures. He argues that compulsory schooling need not militate against autonomy, and may be

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[107] Illich, *Deschooling*, 107.

[108] Ibid., 110.

[109] Ibid.

restructured to allow for some student autonomy in curricular matters. Callan would have schools reflect in their treatment of students the values of a certain tradition in liberal democracy.[110] Callan does not suggest that other alternatives might not work, just that under the conditions we currently face, reform is the best way to encourage the development of a competent autonomy.

Callan provides a criticism that attempts to promote participation, conviviality, and autonomy. The focus of his criticism, however, is on the development of autonomy and not on the more troubling questions of technology, human identity, and the recovery of the *intellectus*. Illich views human autonomy as a consequence of personally shaped focal practices that attend to the entanglements of real presence, not just as the self's freedom to choose between technical means and processes.

Illich would appreciate Callan's attempt to use Aristotle's understanding of virtue as developed in practice as a defence of a disciplined autonomy. Callan and Illich look with favour on the Aristotelian idea that the practice of virtue is the best teacher. However, Callan insists, such practice of virtue, if left to the whims of the Deschoolers, would have no effective opportunity to be nurtured or developed for the whole of the civil order. At this point one can agree with Callan, but wish to conclude by suggesting that following Illich's critical thinking beyond Deschooling may provoke another way. This other way would be to reconstruct schools using, in part, Callan's suggestion of greater student participation. However, key to the reconceiving of schools is their recovery as *scole*, places of leisure where focal practices are nurtured.

School needs to be reconceived as a place of sanctuary. Sanctuary is understood as a place for focal practice, reconciliation, and apprehension of real human presence. All its productive or administrative activity is intended to support the leisured and disciplined reception of the real presence of others. There would necessarily be learning of skills and a sharpening of the *ratio*.

[110] Callan, *Autonomy and Schooling*, 147.

However, skill would be learned in order to bring the participants to the *intellectus*, a patient and constant opening to an ineffable other beyond manipulation. The L'Arche communities of Jean Vanier, the "Free House of Learning" of Franz Rosenzweig, and the community of Mary and Nicholas Farrar suggest some possible ways of conceiving of this paradigm of sanctuary.

In following chapters sanctuary is offered as a critical but deeply appreciative appraisal of Illich's developing thought. It is not offered as a blueprint to an educational utopia, only as one possible dwelling for convivial learning. The idea of sanctuary suggests that Promethean planning can guard but not guarantee Epimethean hope by giving birth to convivial institutions. Sanctuary, as conceived in the following sections, is critical of the elitism of those who despise the labour of the *ratio*, and counsel the recovery of the "classical education" of a leisured class. Allan Bloom comes immediately to mind.[111]

Rather, sanctuary builds on trajectories of Illich's thinking on real presence and learning, with a nod in the direction of proposals counter to Bloom.[112] Schooling as sanctuary is hope in a recovery of tools as focal things and practices that bring the *ratio* to the gifts of the *intellectus*. Schooling as sanctuary offers a needed shift to focal practices, preparation, and the measure of the *ratio* as a way to the leisured receptivity of learning. The school as sanctuary could be a place fostering the cultural revolution Illich calls for in a living community and not a revolutionary agenda.

Self-discipline is required to guard the eye from being dazzled by the hyperreal and the complex technical display. This discipline is gained best in a place protected from the manipulative tendencies of right-leaning institutions and the technologically sophisticated. A school, a place of *scole*, needs to be found in communities, but not as another way of molding students in a trained prudence. This sanctuary has all the qualities of the "beloved community"

[111] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), passim.

Wendell Berry calls a "common experience and common effort on a common ground to which one willingly belongs."[113] Illich may distrust the compulsion to build structures, but in a time of perverse social habits, breaking such habits requires some communal organization, if not some hope of convivial tools.

[112] David Orr, *Ecological Literacy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), passim.

[113] Wendell Berry, *What are People For?* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 85.

CHAPTER 4

HOPE IN CONVIVIAL TOOLS: LEARNING IN SANCTUARY:

> Dear soul, do not strive for immortal life, but exhaust the resources of the feasible.
>
> Pindar

Introduction: Sanctuary as a Convivial Tool

In previous chapters the focus of study was primarily on providing a fresh reading of Illich's critique of education. That fresh reading had to do with recovering the creative inter-play between the *ratio* and the *intellectus* in an awareness of human presence. This gave a critical appraisal of the manipulative force of contemporary social devices. As a way of moving from critical appraisal to constructive hope, the convivial tool of sanctuary was proposed.

Illich's critique of technology, manipulated needs, and contemporary configurations of human identity, rests on hope in a locally practiced convivial and vernacular culture. This is furthered by the idea of sanctuary. Sanctuary is a tool for recovering the *ratio* as a practice of convivial tools on common ground for a common good.[1] As such it is a place markedly different from the schools or institutions of contemporary societies.

The sanctuaries of antiquity and the medieval period were places structured by highly disciplined practices but free from the ruling forces of society. Until the sixteenth century, sanctuary was nearly universally respected: "Violation of sanctuary, even by a king, was considered a great crime."[2] The gradual universalizing of the authority of secular law and social devices destroyed the boundary of sanctuaries.[3] The practice of sanctuary was deemed

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[1] Andrew Nikiforuk, *School's Out: The Catastrophe in Public Education and What We Can Do About It* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1993), xii.

[2] Herman Bianchi, *Justice as Sanctuary* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), 143.

[3] John Charles Cox, *The Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers of Mediaeval England* (London: George Allen and Sons, 1911), 1-33 and 319-33.

unnecessary because of technical, legal, and institutional progress. This was expressed dramatically in the law of the citizen in the French revolutionary convention where it is written, "the right of asylum [sanctuary] is being abolished in France, for it is now the law that is the asylum [sanctuary] of the people."[4]

In using the word sanctuary for places of learning in and of real human presence, the hope is to re-sensitize thought to meanings hidden by the assumed benefits of progress. Human life is distorted when learning is understood as the progressive application of social devices. Sanctuary encourages a convivial competence in practices sensitive to the vernacular structures of interaction only partly grasped by progress in technical and institutional structures. It is a place of contemplative rest from the pace of social and cultural change and fragmentation.

In the wisest expressions of the Western tradition, technical competence was always an ancillary goal.[5] In contemporary Western societies it has become the means and ends of nearly all educational institutions. It is proposed that competence in real human presence can only happen in a sanctuary defined by the patience and modesty of focal practice and not the ease of technical application. The fugitive from the punitive judgment of past tyrannies could find asylum in recognized places of sanctuary. The fugitive learner, seeking asylum from the tyranny of contemporary technical obsessions, could find asylum and discipline in a place focussed on competent conviviality:

> A sanctuary used to be a holy place where a fugitive was regarded as a protégé of another authority, usually of divine nature. The deity was believed to protect the locality. The sacred nature of the locality conferred a certain inviolability on a fugitive, who was made holy by religious associations and therefore untouchable by worldly powers.[6]

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Aristotle *Poetics*, ed. and trans. T. A. Moxon (New York: J. M. Dent, 1947), passim; Augustine *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, intro. Thomas Merton (New York: Random House, Inc., 1950), passim; and Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, trans. and notes Edmund Hill (London: Blackfriars, 1964), passim. There are many examples.

[6] Herman Bianchi, 138.

Historically these "holy places" were set aside in order to honour the true nature of the fugitive and the stranger as in the *imago Dei*. The devices and processes of "worldly powers" did not invade the sanctuary because of reverence for the sacred and ineffable nature of the place and the person. The powers of society, church, and state often suffer from a willful amnesia of the ambiguity of human accomplishment. Inside sanctuary, focal practices and things are used to cure this "amnesia" by direct experience of the encumbrances of human presence.

Sanctuaries were a multipurposed but common ground housing saint and sinner alike.[7] They were often whole towns, including agricultural land, apothecaries, potteries, and other areas necessary for the feeding and dwelling of its inhabitants. The sanctuary was rooted in its place by both physical necessity and its *sanctum*, its understanding of being at a threshold between spheres. The presence of the ineffable was anchored in the particular structures of interaction.

The founding of a sanctuary, whether the six sanctuary towns of ancient Israel, or the monastery of Beverly Minster in England, involved a ritual of foundation. The ritual involved something like the Greek *con-templatio*. This was done by focusing on the heavenly *templum*, the cosmic order, and placing it on the ground through a *con-sideratio*:

> In this con-templatio the heavenly templum takes its this-worldly outline. . . .
>
> But con-templatio is not enough. The outline of the templum cannot settle upon the earth unless it is properly con-sidered, aligned with the stars (sidus). Con-sideratio follows con-templatio. Con-sideratio aligns the cardo (the axes) of the templum with the city's "star." The cardo was originally a "hinge" with an explicit, concrete, masculine-feminine symbolism. . . .
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> . . .The founder himself must perform the wedding between this dissymetric templum and the landscape. . . .
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> For this ceremony two white oxen are hitched to a bronze plow, the cow on the inside, drawing the plow. . . thus engraving the templum into the soil. . . . Like the walls that will rise on it, it is under the protection of the gods. To cross the furrow is a sacrilege. To keep the circle open, the plowman lifts the plow when he reaches the spots where the city gates will be.[8]

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[7] Ibid., 139-40

[8] Ivan Illich, *H_2O and the Waters Of Forgetfulness* (Berkeley: Heyday Press, 1985), 13-14.

While Illich's account is of the founding of a classical city, it captures the elements of the founding and meaning of sanctuary beyond the classical world. The *templum* is placed on the ground. Thus grounded, the dissymetrical forces, the irreducible real presences of the place, are hinged by the *cardo*, axes, in a landscape. The aligning of the *cardo*, the axes of the place, is made to a star, a beacon of the particularity of the place in the harmony of the cosmos.

The consideration of place involves the aligning, not the synthesis or management, of dissymetrical presences in a bounded landscape. The boundary is opened by the breaks in the furrow made at its founding where the gates are meant to be. Through these openings, and not by breaking the line of its unique *consideratio*, the fugitive, stranger, or seeker is welcomed into the hospitality of presences defined by the boundary. The inauguration requires the contemplation of the founder, the insight of the augur, the alignment of consideration, and the physical "engraving" of a boundary on the earth by the founder. These are all focal practices, as Borgmann suggests, creating a particular place of hospitality. Focus is key in the practices of sanctuary:

> The inauguration is concluded by the naming of those parts of the city that will be right and left, front and back, and by providing a content for the spaces thus envisioned, fixing (de-signatio) the place for a mundus, or mouth of the underworld, which opens near the focus, the focal (fire) gate to the other world.

The *focus* is the hearth where the fire marks the gate (*mundus* or mouth) to the other world(s). Focus, in English, came to mean the optical practice of bringing something from lack of clarity into clarity. The viewed thing or person is seen in its relationship to a horizon, the edge where visible presence meets invisible presence.[9] When a new person enters the door of a sanctuary they are extended hospitality and oriented (*de-signatio*) by the *focus* of the place. The sanctuary is a place of learning focal practices that respect the difference *de-signat*-ed by the *focus* shared in a place.[10]

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[9] Leon Batista Alberti, *On Painting* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), passim; and John Berger, *About Looking* (London : Writers and Readers, 1980), passim.

[10] *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "cor, cordis."

The doorway, or *porta*, of the place, Illich reminds us, was not guarded by the immortals but by human diligence shaped by care for place. The doorway was opened or closed only by the fallible application of intelligence informed by the *ratio*. The open gate of sanctuary was entry into a place convivially disciplined by focal practices and things.[11] Sanctuary was never intended to be a place of licence for every conceivable practice. The structure of interaction in the place gives particular focal practices.

The focal practices of sanctuaries "provide a center of orientation . . . [where] our relations to technology become clarified and well-defined."[12] From word division, book binding, to various agricultural practices and devices, the sanctuaries of antiquity developed and used technologies. However, change came only organically and gradually as the necessities of conviviality and orientation dictated. The rule of focal practices clarified and defined the appropriate limit and relation to technical innovation and managed social processes.

The caution given in this discussion is the tendency to romanticize the sanctuary or the focal practice. Heidegger's romantic search for "simple and eminent things" drew him to easily embrace the fascist obsession with "blood and nature."[13] In a time when technological process and devices dominate the social imagination

> there are two ways we must go beyond Heidegger [and all those who maintain a romantic nostalgia for the irrational and pre-modern]. One step [is beyond] . . . Heidegger's reflections that we have to seek pretechnological enclaves to encounter focal things . . . Rather we must see any such enclave itself as a focal thing heightened by its technological context. The second move beyond Heidegger is in the direction of practice . . . What must be shown is that focal things can prosper in human practices only.[14]

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[11] Bianchi, 139.

[12] Albert Borgmann, 197.

[13] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," and, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 15-88 and 163-186; Heidegger, *Existence and Being* (London: Vision Press, 1949), passim.

[14] Borgmann, 200.

As George Grant put it in his own reading of Heidegger, "we can hold in our minds the enormous benefits of technological society, but we cannot so easily hold the ways it may have deprived us, because technique is ourselves."[15] The hope of recovery is in the exposure of the difficulties of human encumbrances.[16] The exposed encumbrances may bring into awareness the deprivation suffered when the drum machine replaces the human drummer or the central heating plant replaces the hearth. This means that focal practices and things "attain a new splendor in today's technological context," by revealing difficulties.[17] The sanctuary is not a pre-technological enclave but is a place defined by focal practices. In such a place any technical device assumes an ancillary function to human practices.

The focal practices of sanctuary are its defining and sustaining characteristics. It is, as Illich suggests, only in such practices that learning can recover a deep reverence for presence, and turn from technical mastery to the austerity of friendship.[18] The learning of real presence requires living practice, and not merely educational application. Focal practice brings learning to the convivial limit and place of the self's powers in orientation to the truth of the structure of interactions that make up a place. Sanctuary hinges, in its incarnate and limited form, the local practice of friendship and care for place to a pattern never quite visible or measurable.

The hospitable practice of human hands and minds creates the community of sanctuary. With such practices the discipline of receiving the other, as a gift, precedes and gives deeper meaning to the irreducible givens of self existence. Focal practice does not isolate the will or make it the sole bearer of being. Focal practice opens the self to otherness and, like the marathon runner's practice, compels the self into an acceptance of the givens of nature, the body, and "the good will of

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[15] George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Concord ON: House of Anansi Press, 1969), 137.

[16] Albert Borgmann, 199 ff.

[17] Ibid., 200.

[18] Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), ix.

spectators and fellow runners," beyond will and measure.[19]

The obsession with self image and identity, so common in technologically driven cultures, is a problem of the will over-extending its powers. Enraptured by the feeling of power and ease, the user of a technical device can forget the obligations of culture, place, and family. The truncated identity of technical competence sacrifices human loyalties in its one-sided pursuit of competence and acquisition. In an endless cycle of escalating consumption and growth of complex technical processes, there is a refusal to accept any interaction as beyond technical calculation.[20]

Sanctuaries make one aware of this cycle and of its human costs. Sanctuaries bring into view the challenge of human mortality and dependence. The focal things used, bring awareness of the ecological uniqueness and diversity within the place, and a sense of complex outer entanglements. The focal practice of sanctuary gives a disciplined attention to the complex entanglements of physical and social reality on a specific ground. It seeks to encourage the growth of competent, placed, self-limiting, and morally responsive persons.

The history of those places called sanctuary reveals a social vision at odds with contemporary expectations of retribution or benefit from the application of technical processes and devices.[21] The sanctuary, while bounded and secured from the invasive power of the state or church hierarchy, did not allow the refugee to abandon the consequence of past behaviour. However, retribution was and is not the intent of sanctuary. Rather, the intent was and is the bringing of conflicting parties back into the right relationship. This is not a final synthesis, but an aligning that keeps alive difference within a larger structure of interactions. Sanctuary does not seek application of a technical solution, but a diligent practice aimed at health of relationship.

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[19] Borgmann, 202.

[20] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past* (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1992), 226-231.

[21] Cox, passim.

Foucault, Cayley, and Bianchi, have outlined a history of the loss of sanctuary in the birth of the modern prison system.[22] Foucault and Bianchi have explored how a punitive reason has now come to dominate modern society. The technical rules of contract, and the consequential rewards and punishments, dominates the social world and imagination. The logic of sanctuaries represents a quite different view of social relations and the world.

Bianchi recalls that sanctuary was not founded upon the ideals of technical control or retributive justice. Sanctuary is founded upon a radically different conception of social order rooted in the Hebrew *Tsedeka*, "not an intention but the incessant diligence to make people experience the genuine substantiation of confirmed truth, rights, and duties." The sanctuary is constituted by the practice of an "incessant diligence" and not by technical plan, intention or abstract reason. By such practices, intelligence is attuned to the particular place, as it hinges human and non-human participants to the truth of a structure of interactions. Bianchi goes on to point out:

> Tsedeka has been accomplished, for example, if no one has been given a stone for bread; if people have not been appeased, cajoled, or placated with empty or unreliable promises; or deluded with false hopes never to be substantiated. This means by implication that human beings can never decide upon their own righteousness, never confirm their own authenticity. The conclusion is up to the others concerned . . . As such the concept is other-oriented. Nobody will ever know about himself, even by way of so-called inner conscience. A real tsedek person (a tsaddik) is never aware of being one, according to old rabbinic wisdom.[23]

The focal practices and things of sanctuary are not a self-obsessed search for authenticity. Authenticity in sanctuary is found in the truth of interactions with others in a shared place. The claim of self-sufficient identity and mastery is exposed by the "real *tsedek*" as an immodest fantasy. The truth and the way to truth are incarnate in focal practices that are "other-oriented."

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[22] M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965); and Cayley, *The Expanding Prison* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1998).

[23] Bianchi, 23.

The truth found in focal practices is not an object but a relational event, confirmed only by practice. Sanctuary gives truth as the structure of interactions. This "concept of truth . . . is a relational one. . . impl[ing] that truth is always and everywhere a social notion, part of a structure of interaction. Relational truth is not subjective truth or relative truth."[24] Rather, it "exists between people and is always a datum to be activated."[25]

Truth is the relational ground of dialogue and it requires participation. Thereby, truth found in sanctuary is in the reliability and congruence of its practices, not primarily in technical measurement. There is an order of alignment, but this is a living practice of *Tsedeka*, found by bringing conflicting presences into a harmony that reconciles without diminishing their differences.

Sanctuary has as its central characteristic a refusal to hide encumbrances from view. Further, sanctuary is a place of continual focal practice intent on some practical expression of justice as witnessed by others. It has an understanding of its own limit and continually must reconsider all its rules with incessant diligence for a "humane and sustainable future."[26] It is geographically placed, with no illusion at giving a universally applicable technique. Its members are free from technical hubris by awareness of the difficulties of practice. Thus, they learn together the art of living well in the limits of a place.

Sanctuary is not intended as a utopian scheme. Rather, its practices limit all enjoyments and devices that distract from or destroy personal relatedness.[27] It trusts that individual lives so disciplined will find freedom in self-limitation as an art of real presence. The mediating institution and practice of sanctuary is a work of "revitalizing and sensitizing. . . [such] original meaning."[28] Illich seeks the convivial tools needed for this mediating construction.

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[24] Ibid., 24.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* , Vol. II, question 5 and 6.

[28] Bianchi, 141.

> Alternative devices for the production and marketing of mass education are technically more feasible and ethically less tolerable than compulsory graded schools. Such new educational arrangements are now on the verge of replacing traditional school systems in rich and in poor countries.[29]

The remarkable thing about the above statement is that it was made before the recent proliferation of desk-top, lap-top, or palm held computers. It was written before being on the "information highway" meant electronic tapping into "cyber-space." Illich wrote it as a statement of the awareness the research of his CIDOC institute had come to in the early years of the 1970's. The dangers of the traditional school system were eclipsed by the power of new devices:

> Society can be destroyed when further growth of mass production renders the milieu hostile, when it extinguishes the free use of the natural abilities of society's members, when it isolates people from each other and locks them into a man-made shell, when it undermines the texture of community by promoting extreme social polarization and splintering specialization, or when cancerous acceleration enforces social change at a rate that rules out legal, cultural, and political precedents as formal guidelines to present behaviour.

There has been a radical shift in post-industrial culture. The shift has not only been from the mechanical to the electronic or from manufacturing to data processing. It has been in the undermining of the "texture of community" in the pace of change in mass culture and technology.

As with his arguments against contemporary patterns of schooling, Illich recognizes the danger in proposing alternatives. Alternatives appear "like a return to past oppression or like a Utopian design for noble savages."[30] What Illich seeks is a society of convivial tools where modern technologies serve the interactions of real presence.[31] He seeks this rather than the deprival of a fuller sense of presence in the compulsive use of the latest technical devices and processes.[32]

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[29] Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, xxii.

[30] Ibid., xxiii.

[31] Ibid., xxiv.

[32] Ibid.

Convivial tools are ones that bring human awareness of the encumbrances of presence. This involves the austerity required of friendship. Illich explains:

> "Austerity," which says something about people, has also been degraded and has acquired a bitter taste, while for Aristotle or Aquinas it marked the foundation of friendship. In the *Summa Theologica*, II, II, in the 186th question, article 5, Thomas deals with disciplined and creative playfulness [*eutrapelia*]. In his third response he defines "austerity" as a virtue which does not exclude all enjoyments, but only those which are distracting from or destructive of personal relatedness. For Thomas "austerity" is a complementary part of a more embracing virtue, which he calls friendship or joyfulness. It is the fruit of an apprehension that things or tools could destroy rather than enhance *eutrapelia* (or graceful playfulness) in personal relations.[33]

Aquinas, Aristotle, and the classical philosophers understood the inter-play between *intellectus* and *ratio* in the grace of friendship. Discipline, a measured appropriateness, was penetrated by the graceful receptivity of care. Learning in friendship came as a consequence of the *eutrapelia*, graceful play, of *ratio*, measure, and *intellectus*, receptivity. The austerity of learning was the exclusion of any process or device that might distract from or destroy this *eutrapelia*. The graceful play of measure and receptivity in friendship required learning to limit the will.

The serious business of industry, information packaging, transmission, and marketing becomes deadly without the austerity of the inter-play between *intellectus* and *ratio*. It becomes locked into its own self preoccupations. The austerity of *eutrapelia* is in the refusal to take too seriously the tools and labour of the *ratio* by cultivating a celebrative spirit. Josef Pieper comments, "Leisure is not the attitude of one who intervenes but of the one who opens himself; not of someone who seizes but of one who lets go . . . against the exclusiveness of the paradigm of work as effort, leisure is the condition of considering things in a celebrating spirit."[34]

The austerity in the use of convivial tools comes from the recovery of a leisured place of celebration, a sanctuary from the compulsion of a world of usefulness and efficiency. There would

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[33] Ibid., xxv.

[34] Pieper, *Leisure, The Basis of Culture* (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), 33.

be a recognition that technical knowledge (*tech-gnosis*) and processes are incapable of solving problems without introducing yet further problems. This means a decision for a relative poverty in the products and devices of technology. It expresses faith in and celebration of convivial tools and relationships. Pieper outlines a culture of austere leisure, or place of celebration in sanctuary, by speaking of a disruption of technical efficiency:

> It is not the same as the absence of activity; it is not the same thing as quiet, or even as an inner quiet. It is rather like the stillness in the conversation of lovers, which is fed by their oneness. . . .
>
> . . . The lover, too, stands outside the tight chain of efficiency of this working world, and whoever else approaches the margin of existence through some deep, existential disturbance, or through, say, the proximity of death.[35]

Standing "outside the tight chain of efficiency" is the convivial tool and practice. Just like the net or paddle, discussed in the previous chapter, a convivial tool places the user in a world of complex relationships and presences. Skill in use brings awareness of human entanglements. The chain of efficiency encourages a busyness of technical manipulation with an accompanying slothfulness in attention to human presence. The dazzling display of technical efficiency makes obsolete particular practices in ignorance of the cost to real presence.

With such devices and processes the connections and dependencies, so real in the use of convivial tools, between self and other, human and world, immanent and transcendent meaning, become predictable and sterile. The complexity of convivial tools and their arts is a mere inefficiency in a world dominated by institutional technology. This marks a catastrophic break in contemporary society between the *ratio* and *intellectus*, calculative and receptive intelligence.

Technical divisions and specializations have given us the benefits of extended, healthier, and less servile lives. However, in this age, when above all else the potential of technique is celebrated

[35] Ibid., 33 and 68.

as an absolute, there are signs of a deeper deprival. George Grant writes of the difficulty of discerning this deprival:

> I am not speaking of those temporary deficiencies which we could overcome by better calculations . . . Nor do I mean those recognitions of deprivation from the dispossessed . . .
>
> . . .in listening for the intimations of deprival either in ourselves or others we must strain to distinguish between differing notes: those accidental deprivals which tell us only of the distortions of our own psychic and social histories, and those which suggest the loss of some good which is necessary to man as man.[36]

It is difficult to accept limitation as appropriate and meaningful. Contemporary societies are preoccupied with freedom from all limitations. The power of technology and the potential of technical manipulation are understood simply as devices for improving human life. Acceptance of physical limitation, and attaching meaning to living within appropriate limits, is understood as a betrayal of the human spirit or a nostalgic retreat from the inevitable advance of technical mastery. The difficulty is "we can hold in our minds the enormous benefits of technological society, but we cannot so easily hold the ways it may have deprived us, because technique is ourselves."[37]:

It is not easy to see how the technical devices or processes with which we surround ourselves deprive us of some essential facet of our humanity. The defining characteristics of contemporary life are built upon presupposing that technical mastery, an immodest claim for the powers of the human *ratio* and will, is relatively unambiguous in its accomplishments. There is a danger that focusing on deprivation may only invoke another round of technical or curricular expansion in an attempt to replicate or compensate for a missing dimension of human experience.

In contrast, focal practice and sanctuary exist as living relational practices, requiring diligent attention to others as presences known in interactions. The use of the language of presence will necessarily appear anachronistic to minds educated to exalt in technological progress:

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[36] George Grant, *Technology and Empire*, 139.

[37] Ibid., 137.

> Despite the noblest modern thought . . . the exaltation of potentiality above all that is (presence), has anyone been able to show us conclusively throughout a comprehensive account of both the human and non-human things, that we must discard the idea of a presence above which potentiality cannot be exalted?

The forces of nature, the hurricane, earthquake, and winter storm, still plague and disrupt technical devices. Human behaviour fails to respond to the rationality of the market place, the socially engineered process, or socialist plan. The world is a web of interactions that can never give the certain formal correspondences technical "potentiality" demands. Illich studies the implications of belief in unencumbered technical potential. Automobiles, medicine, and education are cited as examples of how contemporary devices and systems act to exclude convivial patterns and behaviours by introducing and privileging technical routines:

> The exclusion of mothers, aunts, and other nonprofessionals from the care of their pregnant, abnormal, hurt, sick, or dying relatives and friends resulted in new demands for medical services at a much faster rate than the medical establishment could deliver. As the value of services rose, it became almost impossible for people to "care."[38]

Illich is not suggesting that beneficial practices or tools be spurned because they are new, like the technophobe and the personal computer. Rather he is making a plea that practices and tools be evaluated in their full meaning for human conviviality. He asks if certain devices exceed the limits of conviviality and generate iatrogenic illnesses and the idolizing of their own powers. Illich is arguing that all technical devices and processes should be judged by their capacity to deepen or prohibit conviviality. The best "defense of conviviality is . . . undertaken by the people with tools they control. Imperialist mercenaries can poison or maim but never conquer a people who have chosen to set boundaries to their tools for the sake of conviviality."[39]:

Subtly and destructively contemporary imperialism may use and consist in being a system of technological devices and processes. A people who have the strength to continue to live in

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[38] Illich, *Tools*, 3.

[39] Ibid., 110.

sanctuary, or found new sanctuaries, face a difficult foe. Surrounded by the lure of technological ease and convenience, the choice for the austerity of the limited yet convivial life in community is not so easy. To live in a freely chosen place and limitation is something that requires extraordinary courage in a time of compulsory technological advance.

Most of us who live in the developed West instinctively know we have sold out conviviality to the Empire of technical efficiency. The problem is that Illich's view does not help us to recognize that conversion to convivial tools requires trust in convivial means. This is to say what is tautological and obvious, no one can be convivial alone. The choice for a more austere and convivial lifestyle, limiting the use of technological devices and processes, requires the acceptance of dependence on the structures of human interaction.

For Illich the individual is the originator of change. He is concerned that the autonomy of this unique presence not be lost. Ironically, it is often the very language of autonomy, in the technologically driven culture and politics of the developed nations, that promotes the loss he mourns. The way past this is by reclaiming the convivial nature of human autonomy. In the ecology of sanctuary, autonomy, or at least authentic autonomy, is found in a life turned to reconciliation with the other.[40]

Obviously this cannot counter the arguments of those who would absolutize individual autonomy. Ayn Rand and her disciples are not the only example of such an absolute view. Immodest claims for the absolute autonomy of selves who are technically proficient are common in technically sophisticated societies. The austere life, recognizing personal dependence and limitation, in a continuing conversation of ethical interactions and traditions, is a conservatism rare among the technically sophisticated.

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[40] Bianchi, 33-39.

What is the relationship between the authentic and the autonomous life, if to be human is to be a convivial presence? The idea that to be fully human is to be in some way dependent and convivial, if simply accepted, as Illich does, requires attention to the desirability of convivial means and ends. This means that the other, as the self, must not be compelled to convivial being. That would itself be a contradiction. Authentic humanity is the limit of freedom given in the richness of convivial practices. We know, as Bianchi suggests in his discussion of *Tsedeka*, our autonomy as authentic beings only by the fruits of interaction with others. To put it another way, human autonomy is authentic in asmuch as it is a practiced conviviality with others in a place.

The threat to the practice of convivial autonomy is in the idolizing of self-sufficient technological devices and processes. This is the inauthentic autonomy of consumer or product choices, but it is also the inauthentic autonomy of technical mastery of others and the world. In the first, the shallow and constraining aspects of consumer choice—McDonalds or Wendys?—are obvious. In the second, technical mastery, the lack of authentic autonomy is more difficult to grasp, because of the seductive feel of power involved. Buber has called this the reduction of I-Thou relationships to I-It.[41] George Grant has called this the deprival suffered when the technically "possible is exalted above what is."[42]

Sanctuary is a place where persons experience autonomy in the authenticity of self-limitation in convivial practices. Autonomy is defined as the acceptance of inter-dependence, not as the demand of a technical master or contractual construction, but as the somatic weight of human encumbrances. Autonomy is the creative act of attuning our unique presence responsively in the interaction with other presences. The focal practice of this interaction of autonomies constitutes the particularity of place, and thus connecting it, and each constitutive presence, to every other

[41] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. and Prologue by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), passim.

[42] George Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1986), 34.

place. Sanctuary appears, in light of Illich's analysis of the crisis faced by the hegemony of non-convivial tools, as a necessary mediating institution for authentic human autonomy.

Illich sees two transition points in the erosion of authentic autonomy. The first is when the technique or technical product over-takes previous nonprofessional practices or "vernacular" tools. He notes, by example, that the year 1913 marked such a transition point in the practice of modern medicine: "Around that year a patient began to have more than a fifty-fifty chance that a graduate of a medical school would provide him with a specifically effective treatment."[43]

The second transition point is reached when a complex technical and professional order redefines human relationships. The convivial practices of the traditional healer were meant to re-establish appropriate relationships. The physician was consulted as an aid and support in recovering and accepting an appropriate personal balance of forces. The second transition point redefines the self as a technical process to be repaired and improved upon. Physical limitations are not a reminder of the unique balance of well-being, but signs of the need for greater technical manipulation.

This is an inner erosion of an embodied confidence in tools and means that are convivially found. Once the cure or tool, originating and widely accessible in the particularity of place, is totally displaced by technical means, the autonomy of the professionally accredited intervention replaces the autonomy of human interactions. There are benefits to certain medical procedures, but beyond a certain threshold technical means erode trust in convivial practices and tools.

At this second transitional point, technical processes and devices begin to "techno-generate" problems and needs assumed to be solved only by more vigorous application of technical processes and devices. More medical intervention, more educational design, wider use of economic force, more efficient industrial production, greater use of computer technology, faster and more efficient

[43] Ibid., 1.

transportation, are seen as solutions to problems and needs these very devices and processes have created. Illich is suggesting that limits be placed on the growth of these institutions and devices on behalf of healthy convivial communities.[44]

Illich does not advocate a different kind of technical activism. To prevent the well meaning yet imperialist "compulsion to do good" Illich proposes conversion to convivial tools.[45] In all of his constructive proposals he is adamantly not offering a blueprint for revolutionary social engineering. The immeasurable encumbrances and ambiguities of human life are not inefficiencies or primitive functions to be replaced by technical processes. They are the real places of sanctuary from the tyranny of systems and devices abstracting human lives from vital contact. Illich envisages "a modern society, bounded for convivial living . . . generat[ing] a new flowering of surprises beyond anyone's imagination and hope. I am not proposing a Utopia but a procedure that provides each community with the choice of its unique social arrangements."[46]

If a community is to decide upon its "unique social arrangements" it must be something more than a collection of smart consumers. Their cleverness is in the speed of their consumptive and productive manipulation of products, devices, and processes. This kind of clever busyness distracts from the patient practice required in attending to real human presence. The community Illich speaks of would seem to have more in common with a Chiapas village. These poor farmers are grounded in loyalty to each other and their place. They are shaped by a tradition that has grown from the virtues of attending to the encumbrances and obligations of living in a particular place. Words and tools are grounded in shared experience and common practice.[47]

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[44] Carl Mitcham, "Tools for Conviviality and Beyond," *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 16, Nos. 5-6 (1996), 246-251.

[45] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1970), 19.

[46] Illich, *Tools*, 14.

[47] Ivan Illich, *Blasphemy, A Radical Critique of Technological Culture*, Science, Technology, and Society Working Paper, No. 2 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Program, 1994), passim.

Wendell Berry defines community as all of the inhabitants and physical features that together inter-act to create the particular living pattern of a place.[48] Human community is the somatic reality of human lives witnessing to their dependence as a common ground. It is ultimately witnessed to by "faith that all things connect—that we are wholly dependent on a pattern, an all-inclusive form, that we partly understand."[49]

Technical devices and processes surpassing a certain level of complexity abstract human beings from this larger pattern in appearance, but not in fact. By contrast, focal things and practices are "engagement" tools that give awareness of a pattern partly understood.[50] Focal practices are disciplines that reveal participation in a structure of human interactions. Sanctuary is a community patterned by convivial practices of engagement in a wide web of connections.

Sanctuary and Reconstructing the Convivial

Illich considers how to reconstruct convivial practices, given the crossing of certain thresholds in the acceleration and dependence upon technical devices and processes. There is evidence of a high degree of dependency, and shaping of desires, by technical devices and processes in contemporary society. A cultural inversion of the deep structure of tools is required:

> The crisis can be solved only if we learn to invert the present deep structure of tools; if we give people tools that guarantee their right to work with high, independent efficiency, thus simultaneously eliminating the need for either slaves or masters and enhancing each person's range and freedom. People need new tools to work with rather than tools that work with them.[51]

The institutions of technological society have become more and more shaped by devices. This range of participation is manipulated by the technical devices, their managers and marketers. For example, education as a technical device generates learning and the needs and the choices available

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[48] Wendell Berry, *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), ix and 54 -75.

[49] Ibid., ix.

[50] Albert Borgmann, 40 ff..

[51] Illich, *Tools*, 10.

for learning. As well it generates the image of the dropout, the underachiever, and the ignorant unschooled practitioner.

The distinctive character of contemporary technical devices is that they have progressively encouraged their own use over sustained human engagement.[52] Technical devices abstract people from each other's presence, and from the demands and joy of dwelling with others in a place, the life of community. If we live in a modern city we live, perhaps deceived by the green spaces, in an environment almost entirely planned, constructed, and made by technical devices and processes. Each tree, green space, or house is planted where it is because of technical agency.

The ideology of ever escalating development, "more technology, more science, more political management, even more information and interdisciplinary research—is not the solution," but part of the problem.[53] Illich is not attempting a postmodern turn to the irrational, or a return to some pre-industrial golden age, or a political agenda for a utopian age of institutionless anarchism. He is speaking of a politics of convivial tools:

> The individual's autonomy is intolerably reduced by a society that defines the maximum satisfaction of the maximum number as the largest consumption of consumer goods. Alternate political arrangements would have the purpose of permitting all people to define the images of their own future. New politics would aim principally to exclude the design of artifacts and rules that are obstacles to the exercise of this personal freedom. Such politics would limit the scope of tools as demanded by the protection of three values: survival, justice, and self-defined work. I take these values to be fundamental to any convivial society, however different one such society might be from another in practice, institutions, or rationale.[54]

Limitation upon consumption and production is on behalf of survival, justice, and self-defined work. The aim is the transition from "the present politics of tools which promotes the expansive and virtually unlimited development of what might be termed autonomous tools to a more austere

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[52] Carl Mitcham, 247.

[53] Mitcham, 247.

[54] Illich, *Tools*, 12-13.

conviviality of engagement tools."[55] This is the opposite of the expansion of economies and technical "systems" to solve the problems generated by expansion. There is a limit to institutional complexity that exceeded reduces the competence and rich texture of engagement. It may be that "a society whose members know what is enough might be poor. Men with industrial trained minds cannot grasp the rich texture of personal accomplishments . . .much less do most of our contemporaries experience the sober joy of the life in this voluntary though relative poverty that lies within our grasp."[56]

The illusion of autonomy, created by technical proficiency, masks a destructive cycle of dependence. Dependence upon universal compliance, exponential expansion in the consumption of resources, and the inevitable degradation of complex environmental and human relationships, is hidden by the easy use of devices and processes. The practices of survival, justice, and self-defined work, are necessarily inter-relational. Illich assumes the word "autonomy" infers a disciplined and convivial self. However, the image of autonomy popularly promoted is the skilled manipulator of devices.

Illich hopes to awaken us, from complacent consumption and use of technical devices, to an awareness of the damage and perversion they bring. The over-extended tool narrows life to the determinants and measure of artifacts and techniques. The human intellectual capacity to articulate and make rational systems and devices is a great gift. If undisciplined by the deeper connections of creation, the subtle appreciation of the interplay of presences, it comes to be a curse. The skilled manipulator gains autonomy at the loss of convivial disciplines. Autonomy as convivial discipline is sensitivity to the other as a presence beyond the definition of process or device.

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[55] Mitcham, 247.

[56] Illich, *Tools*, 15.

Sanctuary is a place where devices and processes are limited by a profound grasp of the complexity and limitations of real human presence. The "real" is not reduced to a mere resource for the construction of human artifacts. Rather, reality is viewed as a complex order of presences where self-limitation is found in a convivial practice of attending to the structure of interactions. Sanctuary is not necessarily without any technical application, but it is necessarily without any technical application that detracts or distracts from the truth of the structure of interactions.

Bianchi reminds the modern reader that sanctuary was never historically a place of absolute freedom where any practice was permitted. He notes that "in present-day English the term *sanctuary* has received a secondary connotation of a place where everything is allowed."[57] If Illich appears to argue for a maximum of personal freedom in the design of things, it is not in order that human life may proceed without self-control or redress of evils. For Illich autonomy is human engagement free from technical manipulation. The word convivial expresses precisely his recognition of the inter-dependent nature of human autonomy in community.

Sanctuary is a place of conviviality where the *focus* is upon the encumbrances of real presence. Sanctuary is for learning the disciplines (focal practices and things) of the *intellectus*, bringing respect and reverence for each person and the natural world. The focal practices of sanctuary bring awareness of human limits and the unique beauty present in each place. The present structure of tools promotes uniformity and erodes cultural difference:

> The use of industrial tools stamps in an identical way the landscape of cities. . .Highways, hospital wards, classrooms, office buildings, apartments, and stores look everywhere the same. Identical tools also promote the development of the same character types. Policemen in patrol cars or accountants at computers look and act alike all over the world, while their poor cousins using nightstick or pen are different from region to region.[58]

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[57] Herman Bianchi, 141.

[58] Illich, *Tools*, 15.

The human use of technical devices encourages an insensibility to cultural complexity. The McDonald franchises, by technical efficiency, reduce the character of its staff to smiling cybernetic clones from Beijing to the Gaspé, not to mention the bland predictability of its products. The local characteristics of politics and culture are passé in a technology driven "global" economy. Technical devices and processes "make or transform users as much as makers or users transform technologies or the world."[59] The technical force of the over-extended *ratio* homogenizes the user, the world, and the other, in an illusion of seamless artifice and process. This inhibits the further growth of rich, albeit unpredictable, human communities and presences.

The force of technical process cannot be countered by the political reshuffling of consumptive patterns. What is required is a "retooling of society" by limited, but convivial, focal things and practices. This "retooling," of the imagination as well as the body, can only occur in places of sanctuary, where human communities can recover the disciplines of conviviality in a voluntary simplicity.

Automobile use, for example, is a causal factor in so many problems, from global warming, respiratory disease, to community fragmentation. The social encumbrances and limitations of convivial alternatives are replaced with the construction of space and human motion defined by the device. It is easy to see the implicit and dangerous contradictions the continued dependence on this device and process brings. Local life is destroyed by the pollution, express-ways, and the weakening of loyalties and obligations brought on by auto-mobility.

However, take the lap-top computer on which I am currently typing. It too is linked into a whole pattern of destruction promoted by the device paradigm. It exceeds the limits of conviviality in a number of ways. It is not equally accessible to all human beings, nor can I fix or repair its inner workings, nor even vaguely understand how the micro-chips function. It is a magic box into

[59] Carl Mitcham. 248.

which I enter type. It allows me to edit, add footnotes, and highlight, with an ease I never knew on my old Corona Portable. Do I return to this more direct method of rendering text over the ease and flexibility of the lap-top? Would this be an act of voluntary simplicity that supports the development and health of a convivial community?

The question becomes less easy to answer because this device, unlike the automobile, hides more successfully the contradictions of exceeding certain convivial limits. In its use I have become aware of the complex and subtle connections of human presence. However, I am aware only because I have surrounded its use with focal practices—reading, conversation, jogging and so forth. The proper balance between tool and human involvement is threatened not by a single mouse click, but by the re-configuring of reality by over-dependence on devices. Carl Mitcham writes, "There are no purely manipulative or convivial societies. The crucial issue for citizens living with technology in society is to consider the balance between convivial and manipulative tools, to admit the existence of the latter, and to strive to foster and protect the former."[60]

The idea of sanctuary is not to reconstruct an Amish commune. Rather it is to found a place, sheltered from a technologically defined society, where manipulative tools and processes are exposed and morally considered alongside convivial things and practices. The sanctuary does not necessarily exclude any particular device or process. However, it does necessarily limit the invasive and dominating use of technique and technical devices. The idea that there are necessary limits to institutional functions, technical mastery and innovations might appear radical in a culture that places a high value on these devices.

A crisis in cultural identity, moral confusion, technological complexity, and ecological decay is widely recognized. Attempts to address the crisis are, ironically, most often calls for increases in treatment by those very devices and processes that have generated its most chronic features. The

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[60] Ibid., 248-9.

idea of sanctuary is intended as a way of conceiving of places where communities may become aware of the failure of manipulative devices to resolve human problems. Human problems require convivial means and ends.

Work in sanctuary is defined by the convivial nature of human presence, the necessary dependence upon others that is not a form of servitude. The other is not an encumbrance, but a fact of Being. If we seek to move beyond servility, we can do so only if we recognize that the world is a structure of interacting presences and not simply of resources, human and non-human. If we move beyond servility it is not in an escalation of our attempts to manipulate others and the world. Rather freedom is found when we "celebrate it [the world] by using as little as possible . . . [at a] dinner table where aliveness is consciously celebrated as the opposite of [the manipulation of] *life*."[61]

The greatest tyranny is to live in a world where others have ceased to exist save as technical means and measures: "Hell is to be one's own."[62] It may not be a heavenly paradise to choose to live austerely in the obligations and the structure of the interactions of friendship. However, living in such a place of real presences and convivial tools limits the tragic distortions of technical hubris. Sanctuary is not a utopian device but a convivial tool bringing awareness of its limitations.

The Fragile Balance of Care

It may be assumed that Illich, and the ancient sources he relies upon, do not appreciate the power of technology to ameliorate suffering. However, Illich and the ancients have an appreciation for the suffering that ensues when the human *ratio* assumes to have absolute mastery over the fates. The novelty of the current situation is in the power of technical devices not in a novel capacity to identify with the suffering.

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[61] Cayley and Illich, 282.

[62] George Grant, 39.

The capacity to ameliorate human suffering is a function of compassion. Compassion is not analytical knowledge but an awareness of and identification with another being. Where technical devices dominate, Being is identified only as a resource to be analyzed and shaped. "It is in this sense that it has been truthfully said: technology is the ontology of the age. Western peoples (and perhaps soon all peoples) take themselves as subjects confronting otherness as objects—objects lying as raw material at the disposal of knowing and making subjects."[63]

When technology is understood as an "ontological given," calculative and analytical knowing can operate as insensitive to presence. It is not that a technical measure does not tell us something about the real. Nor is it that our instruments are just not fine enough. Rather, what is made of the other in calculation never is equivalent to their real presence, no matter how accurate or sensitive the device. The *ratio* can inform and enlarge the data set, but its artifice of calculation is never coterminous with understanding real presence.

Neither Illich nor the ancients discount the validity of making, measuring, or calculating. The precision of technique or facility with tools is not under question. Rather it is the "ontological" assertion that knowing is solely constructed by the *ratio*. This assumes that making, invention as Piaget has called it, is a sufficient way of knowing Being.[64] The balance between making and knowing, receptivity and calculation, is lost in the dominance of technical devices and processes. Even among opponents to the expansion and use of technical manipulation, the concern is most often for technical problems:

> The opponents of the research could not pass beyond the language of specifiable dangers, because any possible long range intimations of deprival of human good could not be expressed in the ontology they shared with their opponents. The ontology expressed in such terms as 'the ascent of life', 'human beings making

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[63] Ibid., 32.

[64] Jean Piaget, *To Understanding is to Invent: The Future of Education*, trans. George-Anne Roberts (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), passim.

> their own future', 'the progress of knowledge', 'the necessity of interfering with nature for human good' could not be used against itself.[65]

The proliferation of technical devices and knowledge is understood as the moral necessity of a free human will. However, the unlimited production of devices and processes, when it exceeds certain limits, creates demands and problems that only escalate and do not retard an erosion of the balance of care. Care requires an awareness of the limits beyond which we cannot control an other, even for their own good. The equilibrium of care for the unique character of the other is disrupted by a technical manipulation intent on "analyzing" and "fixing" the other by the application of a device or process.

This tipping of the balance is explored by Illich in his attempt to construct a history of the manufacture and endless expansion of needs. In Tools he is just at the beginning of this larger project. The construction of needs by the technical process creates the cycle of dependence on technical devices. Illich names six ways dependence on unnecessarily complex technical devices and processes threatens real human presence:

> (1) Overgrowth threatens the right to the fundamental physical structure of the environment with which man has evolved. (2) Industrialization threatens the right to convivial work. (3) The overprogramming of man for the new environment deadens his creative imagination. (4) New levels of productivity threaten the right to participatory politics. (5) Enforced obsolescence threatens the right to tradition: the recourse to precedent in language, myth, morals, and judgment. . . . (6) Pervasive frustration by means of compulsory though engineered satisfaction constitutes a sixth though more subtle threat.

The first threat is one identified as ecological decay. This is the logic of exceeding the limits of the biological world by treating it and its patterns as infinitely malleable. The disregard of the world as a structure of interaction between presences has given the fantasy "that somehow human action can be engineered to fit into the requirements of the world conceived as a technological

[65] Grant, *Technology and Justice*, 33.

totality."[66]. The crisis is not solved by more of the same, but by limits placed upon the expansion of technical manipulation.

The threat to convivial work Illich speaks of is in a radical monopoly of devices and processes. With the monopoly of technical process, "people give up their native ability to do what they can do for themselves and for each other, in exchange for something 'better' that can be done for them only by a major tool."[67] This means that what was once locally defined, and the expression of personal relationships and dependencies, becomes the expression of professional expertise, institutional processes, and technical devices.

The radical monopoly, of technical processes and devices, is not easy to determine or resist. In the example of automobiles, the argument can be made that no one is compelled to own an automobile. However, the mental and physical landscape of contemporary life assumes human movement is a function of technical processes. Local and less invasive alternatives to modern transportation, education, and medicine are not just difficult to find but difficult even to imagine. "Monopoly is hard to get rid of when it has frozen not only the shape of the physical world but also the range of behaviour and of imagination."[68]

Illich sees education as a radical monopoly that uses technical processes and devices to over-programme persons to fit technical processes. The danger in education is its capacity to turn even convivial practices and learnings into curricular objects and technically measured outputs. Attempts to "educate" for conviviality would only turn the convivial into an institutional ritual and not give a living practice. Only focal practice in the structure of interactions between presences

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[66] Illich, *Tools*, 50.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 55.

gives convivial lives: "It is impossible to *educate* people for voluntary poverty or to manipulate them into self-control."[69]

Increases in productivity, celebrated as an economic and social good by politicians, economists, and educators, are made at the cost of shrinking participation and diversity. Each Mexican village once had its own musicians and musical style expressed in a complex of integrated interactions and local patterns. With economic development the village is no longer simply poor, but is stripped of its local vibrancy and diversity. The local Cantina now plays the bands in Mexico City, Los Angeles or San Diego on its CD player. The Musician, now employed in the local CD production plant along with his wife, is too exhausted and numbed by his monotonous toil in the plant to play his guitar or sing. The wages they earn are used to purchase products produced in other such plants. The waste produced by the plant makes it unpleasant to live in the old neighbourhood, encouraging them to move and commute by bus.

Their life has changed, but they still are poor. Now, no longer having a sense that their own participation counts, except as producers and consumers, they are not merely poor but have had their lives stripped of the convivial and complex patterns of local participation. No wonder more and more turn "wet-back" and cross the border. There are higher wages and more products northward for their cheap labour to purchase. The raising of productivity, employment, and the creation of growth-oriented markets for cheap labour, has been purchased at the cost of human dignity. Cheap labour has meant cheapened and emptier lives:

> It does not much 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.[70]

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[69] Ibid., 65.

[70] Ibid., 71-2.

The argument Illich is putting forward is that the whole enterprise of contemporary life has been controlled by the expansion of technical processes and devices in education, economics, and politics. This has meant that the modes of production and participation have been narrowed to technical exchanges and device orientation. The loss of complexity in human encounters has not brought greater equity or increased participation, but, rather, flattened the ways in which people may participate in the creation of political structures and culture. Women and men, rich and poor, young and old, are certainly all regarded equally as consumers and users of products, devices, and processes. They are educated to accept an existence as producers, consumers or users.

The priority is fitting the human face and presence into the devices or processes of education, economics, and technology. If the human face were recognized as an irreducible presence, a social revolution would take place. The ontology of systems would be shaken if these faces began to recover or re-create local communities that consciously limited consumption, use of devices, and technical processes, in favour of compassionate exchanges and encounters. Learning as focal practice, is locally defined, austere, and rich with human entanglements. Any sustainable and healthy society requires a learning of the appropriate limits to and veneration of the wisdom of particular human hands, hearts, and minds, before any technical innovation.

However, this transformation does not mean the abolition of all technologies or industrial production. Illich writes:

> It does imply the adoption of labor-intensive tools, but not the regression to inefficient tools. It requires a considerable reduction of all kinds of now compulsory therapy, but not the elimination of teaching, guidance, or healing for which individuals take personal responsibility. Neither must a convivial society be stagnant. . . . In the present scheme of large scale obsolescence a few corporate centres of decision-making impose compulsory innovation on the entire society. Continued convivial reconstruction depends on the degree to which society protects the power of individuals and of communities to choose their own styles of life through effective, small scale renewal.[71]

[71] Ibid., 73.

What Illich is counting on is the resilience of traditions, individuals, and communities in touch with real human presence to resist the seductive and destructive power of technical devices and processes. The patient attendance to human presence, the somatic connections and traditions of compassion and friendship, cannot support the pace of technical change. Loyalties to family, friends, and place are secondary to, and must be sacrificed to the efficiencies of new technologies, economic redundancy, fashion, and progress in expanding technical mastery.

The clear interconnections between the elements above show how they are not independent variables. Ecological decay is caused by work defined by non-convivial processes using non-convivial devices. The work, alienated from both place and community, requires educated persons socialized to imagine human life and knowing only as defined by instruction, consumption of products, and technical processes. The politics of such an educated consumption requires the abandonment of belief in locally found and practiced arts. Politics must be narrowed to management of economic and technological devices and processes.

The precedents of compassionate practice, the well-formed thing or wisdom of tradition and culture, are commodified by a culture that creates the desire for change and the claim of obsolescence. The gradual wearing out and evolution of things and practices must be replaced by a quick rejection and replacement of obsolete processes and devices by the new and technically superior. Conservation or preservation, tradition or the wisdom of the past, must be either confined to the ineffective realm of aesthetic taste, embalmed in reactionary attitudes and politics, or transformed by technical process into a novel product or sensation for consumption.

Illich understands the elements of the non-convivial to conspire in the inter-related character of contemporary frustrations. Educated in one technical process, we soon discover we must be re-educated or made redundant by the latest technical developments. Having purchased this years' Pentium Three we find it is replaced by a Pentium Four or Five, and so on. Human beings must

now spend most of their energies fitting themselves to the pace of technological change at great cost to their physical and moral well-being. Only the voluntary austerity of *eutrapelia*, the graceful play of the *ratio* with the *intellectus*, can bring a recovery of the limits and joy of friendship with others in the sanctuary of place.

Illich is against the privileging of technical management and devices over the common operations of human community. Learning that is shaped to see knowledge and expertise as products of professional and technical mastery forgets that human beings are not statistical variables to be managed. The mistake is believing that "knowledge and information are realities independent" of human lives.[72] The recovery of conviviality depends on the capability to use language that reclaims human practice from devices, processes, and products.

Illich recognizes that the crisis faced by human societies is not easy to clarify. Inter-locking technical problems, environmental degradation, poverty, moral confusion, and deepening human despair, are seen as calling for ever greater intervention of technical devices and processes. The idea that these devices are part of the problem is difficult to see. It is increasingly difficult to believe there are alternatives as more and more human activities are defined by technological processes and devices. Illich writes, "The only response to this crisis is a full recognition of its depth and an acceptance of inevitable self-limitation."[73]

The image of a sanctuary for learning in convivial community responds to the problem Illich outlines. Persons who are practiced in the traditions and experiences of convivial communities understand the full implications of social and environmental manipulation. They, having "insight into old needs and new possibilities," see that only further social chaos and managerial fascism will come from increased attempts at technical manipulation.[74] We may have already reached that

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 107.

[74] Ibid., 101.

point. Political choice is now viewed as a matter of selecting between various strategies for providing the most publicly palatable escalation in consumption and production.

Carl Mitcham has argued that in *Tools* one can find the Rosetta Stone to read all of Illich's writings.[75] Five signs of human imbalance emerge: ecological destruction, non-convivial work, confusion of learning with educated expectation, the politics of managerial choices rather than participation, and the rule of obsolescence in tradition, culture, wisdom, and presence.[76] Illich understands these imbalances as reflecting the undermining of conviviality in technical means. "Over and over again in all his books, Illich attempts to disclose how the modern commitment to such technologies . . . can undermine or obscure that most basic of human relations, friend-to-friend."[77]

In *Shadow Work* (1980) and *Gender* (1982) Illich begins to explore how any past tradition of convivial relations between dissymetrical practices and identities is undermined in a society dominated by technical processes. The differences of culture, gender, focal things and practices, are leveled by the assumption that technical devices and processes can encompass all. Work that was about convivial construction, the nurturing of children, care and maintenance of the home, or the preparation of meals, becomes "toil which is not rewarded by wages and yet contributes nothing to the household's independence from the market."[78] Yet these domestic acts are the necessary shadow work for the wage earner or student to function in the world of technical processes and devices.

In *Gender* the troubling relations between sex, work, and identity are explored in an attempt to reveal how difference has been reduced to technically defined biological distinctions.[79] Like

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[75] Mitcham, 250.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Illich, *Shadow Work* (Boston: Marion Boyars, 1981), 1-2.

[79] Illich, *Gender* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1982), 10-11.

French feminist Luce Irigaray, Illich intends to unearth how enigmatic, complex, and particular differences have been denied in the competition, always favouring men, for technical mastery.[80] The world of gender, where differences in work, practice, and social reality, varied from one place to another, has been replaced by the world of educated sex, where difference is merely in the technical function of genitalia. Illich is, once again, trying to demythologize contemporary systems of thought in hopes of a convivial practice of valuing difference as a gift.

In all of Iliich's books real presence is found as a gift of the interplay of difference and complementarity in convivial practices. Contemporary processes have reduced this gift to the expectation of technical consequences. In the shadows of technological dominance, and in the remnant communities of complementary and dissymetrical identities, the recovery of the surprising "caress of presence," as Irigaray has it, is a gift of a human intercourse using convivial tools.[81]

Dissymetrical Identities: Learning as a Gift of the Vernacular

> Rather than life in a shadow economy . . . I propose unpaid activities which provide and improve livelihood, but which are totally refractory to any analysis utilizing concepts developed in formal economics. I apply the term 'vernacular' to these activities.[82]

Illich in *Deschooling* attempted to find language to suggest learning as an activity undefined by the formal function of education. The language of web and network was used to suggest something lighter institutionally, and primarily dependent upon human presence. In *Shadow Work* Illich introduces the word vernacular. This is meant to "designate any value that was homebred, homemade, derived from the commons, and that a person could protect and defend though he

[80] Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Pbl., 1997), passim.

[81] Ibid., 179-180.

[82] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 24.

neither bought nor sold it on the market."[83] The vernacular spheres of family, friend, and neighbourhood are shaped by the meanings and obligations of gifts.

Marcel Mauss undertook a study of the gift in pre-industrial societies.[84] In his work the gift is shown to be the primary way in which these peoples understood their relationship to each other and the world. The gift cannot be measured by rational devices or technical efficiency. It expresses a relational intimacy that transcends technical measurement. Mauss examines Kwakiutl potlatch societies and other tribal and pre-industrial societies. He concludes that the development of monetary systems is the introduction of a technical disinterest in relational encumbrances.[85]

Any simple explanation of gifts as strictly monetary, utilitarian exchanges, or hidden ways of purchasing the good behaviour or services of an other, seem instinctively to ring false. We seem to know that, when a gift is given as mere cover for an exchange of goods and services, it is not quite a gift. We also know, that even gifts given in this way, do not necessarily cause the hoped for behaviour or response. Therefore, the gift tells of an interaction that is more complex than a technique for the extraction of expected results and resources.

Learning for Illich, and in this thesis, is not primarily a technical process. It is best understood as a play between the *ratio* and the *intellectus*, found alive in the convivial practices and things of human community. In the construction of a world of assumed technical mastery, learning is the expected product of education. It is, as was stated earlier, the serious business of pedagogical technique and application, hardly a gift. Illich insists on learning as primarily a gift of the surprise of the other, as opposed to a technical expectation.

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison, with intro. by E. E. Evans (London: Cohen and West Ltd., 1954).

[85] Ibid., 74.

The gift is not easily explained by the rules of an economic system. The retired businessman who works in the food bank and says, "I receive more than I give," is surely not referring to an another of his business deals. The volunteer at the Folk Festival, who stays long after the event cleaning the grounds, seems to be engaged in giving something more than fair exchange for free admission. Caillé and Godbout write:

> It is not simply a complement to the market or the state for it is even more fundamental and primary than these other systems, as we can see in countries that are in chaos. In the East or in the Third World, where the market and the state are in shambles, there still remains, as the last resort, that network of interpersonal relations consolidated by the gift and mutual aid, which alone enables one to survive in a mad world. The gift? It is perhaps what is there when all has been forgotten and before anything has been learned.[86]

The question that Godbout and Caillé then ask is, "why is such a widespread and important phenomena not more visible and better recognized?"[87] The striking resonance with Illich and the main arguments of this thesis become quite evident. The paradigmatic hold of technical sufficiency and mastery makes discussion of the gift almost impossible:

> "You can't be serious, you want to write about the gift? You want to study charity, good deeds? Or generosity? Now that's a topic! Unfortunately, it just about ceased to exist." Or perhaps fortunately, in the opinion of most. One may deplore the fact that the gift has given way to cold calculation and mercantile exchange . . . But no one complains that law has taken the place of charity . . . Where these [laws] are concerned, if the gift no longer exists, so much the better.[88]

The denial or strong doubt that genuine gifts can exist, or properly should exist, in a world governed by technical process and mercantile exchange argues against it as a subject of proper inquiry. This is either because gifts are seen simply as incomprehensible or as hidden devices of commodity exchange. The attempt in the Reformation to remove experiences of grace from human

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[86] Jacques T. Godbout, in collaboration with Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, trans. Donald Winkler (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 15.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid., 4.

society and nature, and relegate them "to the outer limits of transcendence," begins an intellectual deprival.[89] This, coupled with the utilitarian reading of every human encounter as expressible in some contractual behaviour, has exiled the gift "to some other world or its reduction to profane, *too profane*, [emphasis mine] self interest."[90]

Utilitarianism—understood as methodological individualism or rational choice theory—and various versions of nihilism that see humans as natural egoists or as interested only in power have preoccupied attempts to understand human behaviour.[91] This is not to suggest that these do not explain certain features of human behaviour. However, even when self-interest is involved in the gift there are always more complex entanglements of relationship. The whole of the social relationship involved, while not necessarily dictating individual behaviour, appears to be far more complex than the dominant intellectual modes can maintain.

Tradition is assumed by modern thinkers to privilege various social relations and closed societies. The language of the gift represents the traditional bonds of communities, unregulated by the rationality of market place or state. The exploitation, lack of social mobility, domination of various classes and families, and lack of openness to new ideas are judged to be the ruling qualities of all traditional social arrangements. Gift, as language associated with tradition, is rejected as containing all of the negative features associated with tradition. As modern thinkers defined themselves "first and foremost by [their] absolute refusal of tradition, it is not surprising that . . . [they think they] can assert [their] freedom by ridding [themselves] of a language that seems coextensive with tradition, the language of the gift."[92]

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[89] Ibid., 16.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 17.

Godbout and Caillé argue that gift language can be abstracted from the negative aspects of tradition. Further, they point out that the gift still functions in nontraditional societies as the primary basis of relationship. Secondary to this primary basis of self-understanding are the technical processes of market and institution. A society without the meaning and narrative structure of gift exchanges would be intolerable for human life. There are more basic connections and inter-dependencies in human society than market exchanges, political competitions, exploitation or technical mastery.

Godbout and Caillé attempt to recover a dimension of Western cultural tradition many contemporary thinkers ignore. However, they go on to say that the destruction of the particularity of tradition by the market economy and modern bureaucratic state is because of "the growing modern horror of closed communities bound together by obligatory gifts that confirm traditional hierarchies."[93] The horror of tradition, thus defined, is quite naturally expected. Its destruction is certainly a liberative activity.

What Godbout and Caillé are attempting to do is to distance themselves from a romantic or totalitarian attempt to re-assert "traditional hierarchies." They rescue the idea of gift, in an attempt to assert that there is a region of vernacular activity undefined by strictly utilitarian exchanges that is primary to human learning and relationship. These cultural practices of giving, receiving, and reciprocating, create the human conditions for any social order. Without the gift, and its complex narrative of meanings, the social reality is nothing more than a calculus of power and monetary exchange. Their analysis is not intended to discount power, sex, or wealth, as forces in social formation. Rather, they suggest that a deeper cultural health depends on the giving and receiving of gifts beyond the measure of consumption.

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[93] Ibid.

They cite the example of a grandmother taking care of her grandchild. They suggest that even if the parents give to the grandmother a gift for such activity, it is significantly different than the salary given a professional day care worker.[94] It is possible to reduce the exchange to a market or contractual one, but this is understood as a reduction of a more intimate structure of gifts. The gifts of love, trust, and care, when guaranteed by the state or as the sign of a monetary exchange, seem somehow cheapened and less than the gift of human relationship. A strictly utilitarian interpretation, Traditionalist, Marxist, Feminist or Free-Market, appears not to be able to account for a deeper narrative of meaning that belongs to these primary gifts of human life.

The gift is understood best in a narrative structure. Caillé and Godbout join Illich in being critical of narrow calculative interpretations of human experience.[95] The narrative of human relationships and culture are not systematically foundational or determinative facts, but a "structure of interactions."[96] Its "truth" involves the interpretative acts of many in the living narrative of a culture. The gift points to this narrative of intimate exchanges as the finding of meaning in the surprise of interactions. The originating gift is our birth, involving a narrative given beyond our control. The closing gift is of our death, involving yet again a narrative given beyond our control. The gift is the given of a relational narrative, of "what is there when all has been forgotten and before anything has been learned."[97]

Unlike Caillé and Godbout, Illich uses tradition to mean this organic pattern of gift giving and cultural relationship between dissymetrical yet culturally entwined human identities. It is a pattern sustaining meaning and livelihood in a subsistence culture keyed to maturity of relationship with regard to human and non-human others. Its primary structure is a narrative one and not a measure

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Jerome Bruner, *In Search of Mind* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 131-156.

[96] Bianchi, 24.

[97] Jacques T. Godbout, in collaboration with Alain Caillé, 15.

of the *ratio*. It is not that the *ratio* has no role to play in this tradition of meaning and subsistence. Rather, it serves the deeper inclination of the *intellectus*, receptivity to the encumbrances of human life as a deep pattern of meaning. However, like Caillé and Godbout, Illich is not calling for a return to "traditional hierarchies:"

> I do not oppose growth-oriented societies to others in which traditional subsistence is structured by immemorial cultural transmission of patterns. Such a choice does not exist. Aspirations of this kind would be sentimental and destructive. I oppose to the societies in the service of economic growth . . . those which put high value on the replacement of both reproduction and consumption by the subsistence-oriented utilization of common environments. I thus oppose societies organized in view of *homo economicus* to societies which have recovered the traditional assumptions about *homo artifix, subsistens*.[98]

Illich's analysis of contemporary life is rooted in a tradition, but this rooting causes him to doubt any systematic attempt to reduce human presence. The sentimental reconstruction of "traditional subsistence as structured by immemorial cultural transmission of patterns," is as damaging to human presence as commodification. It is his aim, in constructing a critique of education and contemporary life, to recover a complex and multifaceted presence from its narrowed expression in contemporary society. He does so with an awareness of the ecological damage, the serfdom of women in domestic "shadow work", the deepening gap between rich and poor, the technological and economic power of industrialization, and other contemporary political and social problems:

> These new vanguards conceive technical progress as one possible instrument to support a new type of value, neither traditional nor industrial . . . express a critical sense of beauty, a particular experience of pleasure, a unique view of life cherished by one group, understood but not necessarily shared by the next. They have found that modern tools make it possible to subsist on activities which permit a variety of evolving life styles, and relieve much of the drudgery of old-time subsistence. They struggle for the freedom to expand the vernacular domain of their lives.[99]

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[98] Illich, *Shadow Work*, 12.

[99] Ibid., 25.

This vanguard lives out a tradition that looks to the particularity of the "vernacular" as a place of somatic complexity. Limits, subsistence, and austerity, are qualities of the art of real presence attuned and vital with sensitivity to a world of locally known presences. The gift, Illich, Caillé, and Godbout agree, is always complex and multi-layered. The attempt to take away its complex entanglements brings a "stupefying and paralyzing enrichment," in technical devices and processes.[100] It creates an alienation of human beings from their creative possibilities by reducing the gift to a "having" in rational exchanges. The unlimited expansion of technical devices and processes, of non-convivial tools, threatens the physical reality and cultural diversity of human and non-human life.

For Illich recovering "traditional assumptions about *homo artifix, subsistens*" is recovering cultural narratives that give modes of life unique, creative, and yet, self-limited by sensitivity to the complex entanglements of presence. Learning is in the limits of a vital sanctuary of complex cultural connections. It is "unpredictable to the bureaucrat" in its diversity of gifts and "unmanageable by technical hierarchies" in its use of convivial tools.[101] Technical devices and processes are limited on behalf of rich human interaction.

This "commodity-independent life style must be shaped anew by each small community, and not be imposed."[102] As living narratives, and not historical theme parks, new patterns evolve in continuity with accumulated wisdom in the subsistence of cultural creativity. Learning in this kind of sanctuary is informed by past traditional practices while attending to emerging creative patterns. Limits to technical and economic growth are made on behalf of a rich cultural narrative of presence in a particular place.

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., 24.

[102] Ibid., 25.

Jerome Bruner, the psychologist and philosopher of education, suggest that without being literate in the patterns of a specific cultural narrative there is no humanly accessible truth.[103] Counter to the narrow measure of behaviourists and the current cybernetically-oriented cognitive theorists, Bruner feels cultural narrative is necessary for any human understanding. The gift of learning is given as a relational truth, not merely subjective or relative.. The gift is the "truth [that] exists between people and is always a datum to be activated."[104] This truth is the structure of interactions between presences.

Illich is, with Bruner and others, concerned that this relational truth is lost in an age captivated by the gloss and show of technical measurement and process. He encourages the recovery of tradition as a narrative structure that exists between people through time in a particular cultural landscape. Hope is in the recovered tradition of the *ratio* and the *intellectus* as necessary elements of a human life of creative and meaningful participation in diverse communities.

Illich has been criticized for his defence of cultural diversity by those who seek liberation from traditional patriarchal hierarchies.[105] In *Gender*, he laments the loss of the power of women to define, create, and work within a distinct cultural sphere known in gendered societies, while opposing the entrapment of women in the shadow work of the domestic. His is not a reactionary attempt to return to the hierarchical distinctions of class and gender. He offers an analysis in hope of recovering a complex world of dissymetrical but complementary identities:

> I shall explain how all economic growth entails the destruction of *vernacular* gender (chapters 3-5) and thrives on the exploitation of *economic* sex (chapter 2). I want to examine the economic apartheid and subordination of

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[103]. Jerome S. Bruner, *The Culture of Education* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press. 1996), passim; and Jerome S. Bruner, *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1962), 17 ff.

[104] Ibid., 24.

[105] "Seven Essays on Illich's *Gender*," *Feminist Issues* 3 (Spring 1983), passim.

> women and yet avoid the socio-biological and structuralist traps that explain this discrimination as "naturally" and "culturally" inevitable.[106]

The task he takes on is exposing the origins and meaning of sexual identity in contemporary technological society. This identity is not shaped by a tradition of encounter between human presences, place, and diversity of vernacular cultural practices. Rather, it is an identity dependent upon the definitions of technical process and devices, professional technicians and technical language:

> The set of key words in all modern industrialized languages is homologous. The reality they interpret is everywhere fundamentally the same. The same highway leading to the same school and office buildings over shadowed by the same TV antennas transform dissimilar landscapes and societies into monotonous uniformity. In much the same way, texts dominated by key words translate easily from English into Japanese or Malay.[107]

Using Raymond William's work on key words, Illich becomes aware of the tyranny of technical processes and devices in contemporary societies as they erase or level all difference to consumer or trivial choices.[108] The rich connections of meaning and power, found in societies of different but complementary gifts, are contrasted with the flat and hierarchically configured world of technical sexual identities. Women may gain entry as producers with reproductive biological equipment, but the difference is either a handicap, a pleasant but frivolous addition, or transformed into a commodity for manipulation. Illich is arguing, not so much for a return to a particular gendered society, but the recovery of the value of non-technically defined and founded human difference.

Feminist historian Barbara Duden, for example, describes women's loss of their own bodily identity through technical invasion.[109] She is one of the sources Illich recognizes in his work. They

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[106] Illich, *Gender* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1982), 5.

[107] Ibid., 6.

[108] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1985), passim.

[109] Barbara Duden, *Disembodying Women; Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*, trans. Lee Hoinacki (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

later co-author a working paper that argues the need for a disciplining of the eye in an age dominated by technical shows of dominance.[110] Duden argues, as Illich, that contemporary life has particularly constrained women. Through medical technology it has technically defined and exploited women's bodies as objects of medical definition and receptacles for the new generation of consumer/producers. Women's bodily identity is shaped by the technical devices and processes to which they seek equal access.

The subtlety and complexity of the shaping of women's bodily experience by the male dominated world of medical and market technology is profound. In Duden's study of women's pre-modern, early modern, and modern experience of pregnancy and birth she notes a set of transitions that have placed the definition of women's bodies more and more in the power of technical devices and processes.[111] Women once defined the moments when life quickened in their own bodies. In contrast, she describes how a well-educated pregnant friend understood the developments in her womb as a reality defined by ultra-sounds and other technical measurements.[112]

Illich and Duden see the loss of the particularity and autonomy of gendered experience as a reduction of rich cultural narratives to technical descriptions and the "shows" of technical devices. Both seek a technical modesty and austerity in hope of recovering the centrality of the somatic presence and gift of the other and the self. They encourage a tactile recovery of complex embodied existence in resistance to the singular unisex consumer/producer. In their co-authored work they speak of protecting the eye from the temptation to technically rape or reduce the other by

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[110] Babara Duden, Ivan Illich, and Mother Jerome, O.S.B. *The Scopic Past and the Ethics of the Gaze,* Science , Technology, and Society Working Paper, no. 6, ed. Lee Hoinacki (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Program, 1995), passim.

[111] Duden, 10 ff.

[112] Ibid.

recovering a modest hesitancy before "the tactile gaze of your face where I discover myself as a gift from you."[113]

Duden and Illich re-enforce the argument of learning as an art of real presence. Real presence is not easily understood in a culture that has reduced itself to technical measure, as either biological, sexual, or monetary currency. Gendered cultures, for all their entrapment of women in culturally determined space, at least had meanings and practices shaped and controlled by grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and female friends, independently from, but complementary to, men. The dominance of men in particular gendered societies, or the violence of men against women, cannot be denied. On the other hand, there is evidence that some gendered societies neither featured male dominance nor accepted male violence against women.[114]

However, Illich is not recommending a return to past traditional practices, which is, he declares, impossible. Rather he is suggesting that richer patterns are discoverable beyond the technical dominance of unisex commodification. He is claiming that the meaning of biological experience is found in communities where birth, orgasm, work, and family life are living narratives (traditions) of women and men, and active as relational structures between dissymetrical identities and not as unisex technical definitions.

A feminist like Luce Irigaray speaks of a similar recovery and new shape for a culture of difference. Her critical work, like Barbara Duden's, cites the loss of awareness of the meaning and power of women's cultural embodiment:

> One of the distinctive features of the female body is its toleration of the other's growth within itself without incurring illness or death for either one of the living organisms. Unfortunately, culture has practically inverted the meaning of this economy of respect for the other....Whereas the female body engenders with

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[113] Babara Duden, Ivan Illich, and Mother Jerome, 24.

[114] Helen Diner, *Mothers and Amazons: The First Feminine History of Culture*, trans. John Phillip Lundin (New York: Julian Press, 1965), passim; and Margaret Blackman, *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), passim.

> respect for difference, the patriarchal social body constructs itself hierarchically, excluding difference.[115]

Irigaray is commenting on the rule of the male, defined in contemporary technical culture as the master of nature and the "free" consumer and producer of devices and processes. Irigaray identifies the culturally received notion of "male identity" as an abstract technical operator that dominates the other, even if this technical dominance is said to be in service to others.[116] What Irigaray names as patriarchy Illich sees in the pattern of non-convivial tools.[117] She is asking, with Illich and Duden, for the recovery or founding of a culture of difference. The gift as the caress of the other, is the embodied hospitality to difference. This is an "economy of respect for the other," that does not conform to the efficiencies of nonconvivial tools.[118]

Conclusion: Sanctuary and Difference

Sanctuary is meant to be a place of focal practice and things giving awareness of entanglements with the other in an "economy of respect." Sanctuary is a place of learning, as Irigaray has characterized the female body, in somatic touch with the other. Focal practice in sanctuary seeks the reconciliation between different and non-uniform human presences. The convivial tool seeks not to create a monoculture, but a culture of difference on a common ground.

In such sanctuaries the mental clichés of the technically competent are disrupted by the presence of the other. Any technical competence is in service to competence in the reception of real presence. The focal practices and things of sanctuary are modest and austere in awareness of the

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[115] Luce Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 45.

[116] Ibid., passim.

[117] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 11-15. Rosenzweig develops a metaethical theory where the human cannot be totalized in any systematic whole.

[118] Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous*, 45.

irreducible difference of living others. The denial of truths found in the "structures of an interaction" is a mistake philosophically and ethically that puts at risk all that dwell in a place.[119]

Illich joins with those who identify the gift of others and the gift of self as something not encompassible in a philosophy that values only the technical measure and the life of an industrious *ratio*. Illich suggests that education is too often understood as an attempt to deny the learning of difference, gendered, cultural, or traditional, by totalizing or universalizing it in an institutional and curricular technique. The measured graduation of identity, according to the subject's grasp of technical measure and use of inanimate devices and processes, is the technical functioning of what Illich calls the non-convivial unisex society. Education is the process that teaches the acceptance of such measurements and processes as defining human being. Thus emerges the idea, along with *homo economicus*, of *homo educandus*, humanity as a product of education.

Irigaray speaks of this society as a space where "Reality appears as an always already [made] cultural reality, linked to the individual and collective history of the masculine subject."[120] The living contact with, and the evolution from and into corporeal meetings with others, is viewed as an exchange of pre-made commodities. Irigaray shows that the female, the somatic experience of a hospitable matrix for difference, is but an object to be studied. The dissection, defining, and control of women's bodies in the medicalization of conception and birth, as Duden has documented, is but one example of the meaning of technical education as a device disembodying and subduing the other.[121]

What if learning, as Luce Irigaray has characterized the female body, is a somatic embrace of the *other* that seeks not the exclusion of difference but friendship in an ongoing structure of

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[119] Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 13.

[120] Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous*, 35.

[121] Barbara Duden, 34-43.

interactions?[122] This would be to begin learning and philosophy itself from, what Franz Rosenzweig called, the "new thinking" of the "manifold and particular" realities of the other as opposed to the repeatable, generalizable and universalizable ideals of technical process and device.[123] This is to learn in an art of non-interchangeable real presence. The call for a sanctuary encouraging such post-patriarchal, post-technological focal practices, and the call to identify where such sanctuaries exist, affirms Illich's analysis.

The other or *autrui*, as Levinas has called him/her, is a vibrancy that exceeds any encompassment in comprehension by the human gravity of his/her presence. The inquiry after human presence is a call for focal practice. In this practice Illich uses language carefully as a tool for attending to the actual inquiries of living beings. He will not use technical language as in any way a substitution for the living and vernacular conversation and activity of human presence. The embodiment of meaning in human lives and practices, the modest way of friendship with others and the earth, necessarily means the use of tools. However, the recognized need for limits on technical process and devices is a call to root the tool in the receptive modesty of the *intellectus*.

It is modesty before real human presence, found in Illich and Irigaray, that disrupts claims to be technically comprehensive. Technique without such modesty manipulates need and human images. It is, after all, you as the *autrui*, in all your existential specificity, that calls upon me. This demands a modesty of response. I must take account of you not as a calculable fact, but as something exceeding any calculation, no matter how sophisticated its systematic deductions. You are a living intelligence that inquires of my being.

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[122] Luce Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous*, 45.

[123] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 11-15. Rosenzweig develops a metaethical theory where the human cannot be totalized in any systematic whole.

The work of Illich and the various philosophers and dialogue partners engaged in these pages gives an invitation, as Rosenzweig once stated it, to return through "the gate into life."[124] This, Illich insists, can only ever be an invitation and not an institutional command or guarantee. The manipulation of the gift of presence, its display in institutional system or on video monitors as a measured quantity, is a deception that cripples the human imagination. To recover and receive the gift of the other, in an intelligent response to a non-interchangeable presence, is to ground the *ratio* in the *intellectus*. It is articulated here as a call to recover a sanctuary for learning in an art of real presence, limited by a freely chosen austerity of technical devices and processes, but rich with relational contact and meaning.

Sanctuary encourages learning as focal practice. These are practices that rub up against real presence, perhaps as registered by the *ratio*, but requiring its discipline to be receptive to its own limit through the *intellectus*. The complex narrative structure that gives meaning to the entanglements of focal structure must be participated in, not merely observed. The participant adds to the narrative by disciplined attention to "truth [that] exists between people and is always a datum to be activated."[125] A show of technical mastery is often demonstration of ignorance of the entanglements of real presence. The interactions of real presence precede and exceed any technical advance.

The attempt in the discussion above was to offer the idea of sanctuary as a mediating social construction of convivial associations. The exploration of the world of the gift illustrates the continuing existence of a sphere of cultural activity outside the definition of market, institution, and political management. Mauss, Caillé, and Godbout have successfully demonstrated the existence

[124] Ibid.

[125] Bianchi, 24.

and power of the gift. Sanctuary is a place that functions primarily in a world of the gift. There is no guarantee of response, but there is no reduction of the *autrui* to technical process.

The world as defined by technology, by technical devices, processes and their marketable products, is a world educated by calculated expectation. It seductively gives the reality and sensation of ease, mastery, and dominance, without counting the cost to relationship and human presence. To conform to the patterns of technical identity, and the endless growth of technical devices and processes, is to lose touch with the learning that comes by the uncalculable pleasure of the touch of real human presence. Technical identities know "nothing of communion in pleasure [with an ineffable other]. . . Of pleasure neither mine nor thine, pleasure transcendent and immanent to one and to the other."[126] Irigaray speaks as Pieper and Illich do, of the surprising disturbance of love and friendship with the other.[127] Illich, when faced with the deprival of presence in much of contemporary social intercourse, speaks of the redemptive surprise of the other:

> I have no strategy to offer. I refuse to speculate on the probabilities of any cure. . . . I strongly suspect that a contemporary art of living can be recovered, so long as our austere and clear-sighted acceptance of the double ghetto of economic neuters then moves us to renounce the comforts of economic sex. The hope for such a life rests upon the rejection of sentimentality and on openness to surprise.[128]

Irigaray articulates something which Illich does not ever directly speak. Perhaps it is contained in the silence of the surprise he speaks of as the only hope of redemption in a "fight against sexism [that] converges with efforts to reduce environmental destruction and endeavours to challenge the radical monopoly of goods and services over needs."[129] With due respect to the

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[126] Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publ. Inc., 1991), 180.

[127] Pieper, *Leisure*, 68.

[128] Illich, *Gender*, 179.

[129] Ibid.

complexity and the dangers of speaking in this time of easy technical co-opting, Irigaray does offer a compelling somatic vision:

> Is what I am describing here only my pleasure as a woman? My pleasure with the lover of my flesh? In an act in which neither can be substituted for the other. We cannot be interchangeable, in so far as he is a man and I am a woman, and in so far as he is he and I am I. And because we are not interchangeable, pleasure is no longer proximity nor duality, neither loss nor regression, nor more or less infantile perversity, nor failure of communion or of communication etc. Pleasure is engendering in us and between us, an engendering associated with the world and the universe, with which the work of the flesh is never unconnected . . . pleasure is a unique and definitive creation. In this sense, it is time. It is ineffaceable, unrepeatable . . .[130]

Where Illich is reticent to speak in specific detail about the intimacy of encounter with the other, Irigaray gives it an erotic language that is beyond genderless technology and the unisex market. Perhaps she speaks too openly of these intimate surprises, giving them too definite a configuration. Pleasure, so defined, is a gift of mutual presence beyond interchangeability and not measured in "proximity nor duality, neither loss nor regression, nor more or less infantile perversity, nor failure of communion or of communication etc."[131] The engendering of time through the pleasure of gift-giving is a learning of presence far outside any hold of technical comprehension. Irigaray is offering a phenomenological account of the nature of this opening to surprise outside the territory of educated devices and values. She is giving a somatic origin for the gift, Godbout, Caillé, and Mauss identify in their scholarly work.

Illich is not willing to allow the other to become merely the expected and predicted product of any system, no matter how liberated. Illich is hesitant to speak of Eros in a time of economic sex where "people appear ravaged by a . . . compulsion to consume . . . the other, preferably an attractive other."[132] He looks to a maturing of the self into a friendship with the other, beyond the

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[130] Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, 181.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Lee Hoinacki, "A Statement on Tools," unpublished paper (Bremen, Germany: November 19, 1998), 2.

compulsion to consume the other. This maturity is hospitable to a particular other, through the unpredictable touch of human presence. It is not deceived by abstractable sensations. It patiently seeks companionship with a unique human face, unreachable by any projection of technical process. In a recent summation and continuation of Illich's thought his friend of nearly forty years, interpreter, and collaborator Lee Hoinacki writes:

> Perhaps history can actually teach me something . . . slight, weak insights . . . which are, nevertheless, *true*. . . for example, hands are made to caress, but also to work; the soul dreams, but the body calls for toil; ambition tempts, but modesty is lovely. . . .
>
> I now know that there is, indeed, an absolute in human social history: As I increase the speed and power of my tools, I also further violate the other, every other below me in the natural and constructed hierarchy of speed and power. . . .
>
> To the extent I participate in the conventional patterns of consumption, I *directly* destroy the only livable niche we know; I also write my ineradicable epitaph: "Necrophilia was his ruling passion."[133]

Every advance in technical mastery, "speed and power", is made at a cost to others and to the "only livable niche we know." The ecological realities of a world of presences, of complex interdependencies, implies that any pattern that immodestly claims mastery and behaves without due regard to this complexity diminishes the quality of the whole and destroys the life of some identifiable others. One can proceed to create more sophisticated techniques, but their side affects are impossible to predict.

The destructive reality of our technical advance is often hidden from us in its show and sheen. Its regulating of experience hides collateral damage in the shadows—the growing gap between rich and poor, the continued violence against women, the destruction of wilderness and commons alike, and the trivializing of cultural meaning and diversity. Illich recommends a limiting of technical advance, seeing only in this modesty an opening to the non-interchangeability of the other. To proceed with unlimited technical and economic growth with no restraint, is to value any potential

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[133] Ibid.

over any presence. Illich warns of, in this culture of necrophilia, the death of contact with the presence of the other in the predictable and cold touch of technical calculation.

Sanctuary is intended as a metaphor for a place of actual somatic dimensions in human presence. It is found wherever a cultural narrative is lively and not forced by technical process or device, either traditionalist or technocratic. The health of sanctuary is in its capacity to sustain a history of interactions that encourages difference in friendship and a modesty of technical claims. Sanctuary is outside the power of church, state or industry to order. Sanctuary encourages diversity and particularity in relationship to the physical realities and limits of place and culturally appropriate patterns. Gender, race, and the rich differences between cultures and traditions, are not subverted or reduced in attempts to overcome them by a singular hierarchical system of tradition or technical progress.

The destruction of diversity, of marked and meaningful difference, is the destruction of "the only livable niche we [can] know."[134] Within sanctuary, as in its external relations, respect is given to diversity of human presence. However, limits are recognized. No practice or thing is universally applicable as a device or process. Multiple ways of learning and working can be honored, if they do not attempt to subvert, distract, or disrupt the practice of another or to fence in the commons as a possession or commodity. The dimensions of the sanctuary are bounded by the freely chosen practices of a community learning how to live together in a particular place.

Sanctuary is a place to learn the patience, focal practices, and things necessary to move beyond the pride and despair of a life educated to endless expansion of technical devices and processes. The sanctuary is a place where awareness of the gift of presence leads to a modest hope of reconciliation beyond all technical expectation. This is not a utopia, but a recovery of the gift

[134] Ibid.

and dilemmas of somatic existence. There is no guarantee in the sanctuary, only the promise of disciplined attention to the complexity of real presence.

In the final chapters of this thesis the idea of sanctuary will be explored not as a cure to a disease, but as a place of rehabilitation. In the last years of Illich's writing (he is now ill and has great difficulty in writing) he has explored the art of real presence as the art of accepting the gift of one's mortal limits as the place of access to the richness of others.[135] His thought has become focussed on the vanishing sensitivity to presence. What he maintains is that the age we live in, deeply addicted to shows of technical mastery, can only be countered by acts of modesty and friendship. Sanctuary is a place for modest practice in the vernacular of friendship.

[135] In a letter written to the author and dated January 30, 1999 Lee Hoinacki reports that "Ivan is not very well, and has great difficulty writing."

CHAPTER 5

THE CATASTROPHIC BREAK: DISEMBODIED EDUCATION

Introduction: The Efficiency of Language and the Endangered Tongue of Friendship

> Unlike flora and fauna, discourses do not enjoy the protection of any 'endangered species act.' Discourses are 'fair game' for the forces of repression, which often take very subtle forms. Subtle or not, these forces threaten the sort of diversity that provides a sort of ecological balance to a healthy discursive community by forcing certain transgressive discourses into a state of near extinction.[1]
>
> David Gabbard, *Silencing Ivan Illich*

The discussion of the last chapter, as it examined the subtle repression in technical advances, introduced Illich's use of the word vernacular. The vernacular, a word having its etymological root in Roman law, is used to mean the heterogeneous practices of subsistence relationships not conforming to the marketplace.[2] In pre-modern Europe, these practices were the dominant forms. The "transgressive discourses" of these vernacular practices have been forced, by the expansion of technical processes, "into a state of near extinction."

On August 18, 1492, fifteen days after Columbus had set sail, Nebrija published *Gramática Castellana*, attempting to give order to the vernacular tongue. He wrote in "the six-page introduction to the *Gramática* . . . a concise and powerful argument why the new age, dawning when Columbus departed, called for the replacement of the vernacular speech of the people by a language—an "artifact"—that all people must henceforth be taught."[3]

It must be remembered that the printing press was already actively producing texts that approximated on the page "the unbound and ungoverned speech of the people."[4] What Nebrija

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[1] David Gabbard, *Silencing Ivan Illich: A Foucauldian Analysis of Intellectual Exclusion* (San Francisco: Austin and Winfield, 1993), iii.

[2] Illich, *Gender* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1982), 68.

[3] Illich and Sanders, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 65.

[4] Ibid., 66.

proposed, at first rejected by Queen Isabella, was the replacement of this chaos of the vernacular with a bureaucratically regulated language and text. What Isabella understood was that the vernacular tongue was, in the natural order of the cosmos, beyond the reach of the monarch's authority. What she became convinced of was the efficacy of taming the wild speech and texts of her subjects. Nebrija put into play a force to level differences and control the vernacular through a centrally created and controlled grammar.

Before this time, the living tongues of people were uniquely vocalized structures of interaction. The speaking of people was not governed by uniform linguistic systems, but by shared and convivial practices. There were different tongues for trade and home use, worship and love-making. The monolingual device, the idea of speaking a single regulated language without regard to activity or person, was not yet considered the norm. The commoner and the noble in pre-modern Europe spoke with more than one tongue.

ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind studies the danger technical devices have for the heterogeneity of vernacular practices. Sanders and Illich fear the vernacular of "what can happen between you and me" is threatened by the invasive power of technology.[5] If it is true that "since the middle ages one can always avoid picking up the pen, but one cannot avoid being described, identified, certified, and handled like a text," now one cannot avoid being "described, certified, and handled" like a system of information bites.[6]

ABC begins with the pre-literate storyteller, the *guslar*, and rhapsode. Her word took flight, not captive to the string of words on a page. Her speech was a practice of her presence. Her particular voice gave "a narrative that unfolds, not in accordance with the rules of art and knowledge, but out of divine enthusiasm and deep emotion."[7] Her thinking was done not as an

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., x.

[7] Ibid., 4.

inner cogitation of an indolent mind, but as an active engagement with the world: "Thinking itself takes wing; inseparable from speech, it is never there but always gone, like a bird in flight."[8]

The original text was seen as the attempt to record the flight. It attempted to breakdown into words the flow of narrative, the active engagement of thinking-speech, and to string it out in line and verse upon a page. The original text drew closer than any other textual commentary to that presence that had long since spoken and flown on the wind. To read was to hear a voice of a friend sitting close by, feeling her warm breath and the heat of her body.

Writing was a technique attempting to freeze time. It was an attempt to guarantee the continuance of certain words beyond their speaker. Only the historian as writer attempts to record the relational flight of time as "source material for his descendants."[9] The technical development is not merely an increase in the accuracy of rhythm, rhyme, drum beat, or tally stick, to bring a certain vocalization back to the lips. Writing, as Plato warns, brings a new level of technical fixing that abstracts, from the particularities of voice, bits of sounds, and reifies these bits in the foundation of the system of language. Words come to be, without the audible contours of speech, the master of the tongue. The *logos* becomes the "grammatical building block, before and after which our pen breaks contact with the paper."[10]

Education as a technical process comes only with the written word. Before the technique of literacy there is no possibility of teachers transmitting information from the storage space on the page to the storage space in the student. Before writing there is no content or meaning distinct from the happenings of speech, no words or information that can be a text entrusted to professional teachers and acquired by pupils.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., x.

The phenomenon of speech is itself radically altered by literacy. Speech, for those of us at the end of the long development of social literacy, is the use of language. It is, as such, another expression of texts. We become, in this sense, talking books. Speech is imagined as the speaking out loud of some inner text. Our speech is understood as accurately recorded on the other's inner text or not. The words can be copied with no sense of their meaning in speech.

Speech that has come under the control of language is controlled by a leveling device. Men and women, the French and Chinese, speak more and more alike when words rule their talking. The voice and the rhythm of particular human voices can be valued as they resemble a technically measured norm. If the measure is sufficiently abstracted, sufficiently neutered, it is understood as a fairer measure. However, such measurement carries the cost of eroding the authority of somatic speech and presence in favour of universal and professionally achieved technical communication.

The losses and gains of "the jump from the pure time of speech into the permanent, spatial dimension of script," are not easily weighed.[11] There can be no return to the aboriginal purity of oral culture. Illich and Sanders are not writing to encourage a return to a pre-literate tribal society, rather they are suggesting that the alphabetization of the vernacular gives novel opportunities for learning in friendship. The self and other may have new identities when reading and text dominate the cultural landscape, while the limits of vellum, scroll, page, and book, are easily grasped and palpable.

The creation of the North Semitic alphabet, around 1400 BC, introduces a device that can take the "almost infinite variety of sounds . . . with men and women, children and dotards, singers and ragmen all sounding different—[and reduce them] to a limited number, each of which is then labeled."[12]

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[11] Ibid., 9.

[12] Ibid., 11.

In the Hebrew the "freely voiced qualities of breathing," were not yet indicated.[13] Its root consonants required the voice to give its bones breath and flesh for meaning to come alive. It is when the Greeks took the Semitic alphabet and allowed four of its letters to stand for vowels that the technical device for recording the sounds of speech on the page is perfected. Now the reader can replay the record of sounds and search for the invisible ideas in the replaying of the sounds.

Milman Parry's research work in the 1930's provides Illich and Sanders with a way to understand the full significance of these techniques.[14] The idea that memory and knowledge are deposited and stored is generally accepted as an epistemological given. Debates have largely been over how and where these things are stored or arranged. Parry's work questions the applicability of this metaphor of storage beyond the limits of literate culture. There is a wide gulf, he insists, between oral culture and literate culture that cannot be bridged by descriptions of human experience *tout court*. The page as defined by a complete phonetic alphabet cannot express the sound or feel of oral culture. With literacy a new world, if not a new humanity, is born. The way of knowing in literacy places human beings in a different relationship to each other and their world.

The Parry research was an exploration in the creation of Homeric verse. His dissertation argued that the *Iliad* could not have come into being except through oral recitation. In the 1930's Parry provided living evidence of his thesis. In the Serbian hills he recorded and studied a number of folksingers whose roots went deep into the oral traditions of the Balkans. What he, and after his death Albert Lord, documented was the singing and telling of tales and Odes to the rhythms of the *gusla*. These *guslars*, so named after the instrument with which they told their tales and sang their odes, never repeated the same epic word for word. Every performance was the rendering of something new built upon the tradition of tales.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), passim.

Oral tradition is a continuous relationship of novel performances. It is a place of spoken improvisation, where meaning is not stored and applied, but is found in the act itself. There is no distinction in oral tradition between speaking and thinking. "We are so used to drawing a distinction between speaking (and the language that we speak) and thinking (and the language in which it is clothed) that we are no longer capable of composing aloud by improvisation. This difficulty did not exist for the bard: He was composing and reciting simultaneously."[15]

Parry shows that Homer's art is more like the Jazz of Miles Davis, improvisation with a theme. No performance is strictly repeatable, while repeating certain phrases, certain rhythmic patterns, and certain thematic devices. Oral culture is thinking that occurs in the structure of oral interaction, not behind the scenes in the inner language of thought. Thought, like the particular jazz concert, requires presence. "You had to be there, man!" is as much a statement about the happening of a thought in oral culture as about the last concert Davis ever played. Thought in literate culture is reflection upon or an abstraction from events of speaking. "Homer, in contrast with Virgil, was not only word-less, but also language-less . . . No object remains from his performance. The art of Homer consisted of fluent improvisation within strictly limited means."[16]

The skill of the bard like the Jazz musician needed to be well honed for performance. Each performance was an "original" living thought in a continuing relationship. Simulation or duplication was not possible. The performances of the *Iliad* by Homer were unique occasions that were present to the next, not as an artifact, but as a lived event carried somatically by hearers and performers who attended past performances. Learning came by direct presence, never by duplication in the student of abstractable data.

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[15] Illich and Sanders, 19.

[16] Ibid.

This realization came to Parry as he studied how the guslar's apprentice came to learn the art. He noted, "From our literary point of view this is almost a startling thing: *the singer embodies the tradition, and what is true of one is true of the other.*"[17] The discovery is that tradition is not a device or process internalized by the singer. Rather, it is the presence practiced by succeeding generations of *guslars*. Oral tradition is not a body of information but is the embodiment in various improvisations of a continuing practice.

With the written text the fluid tradition becomes frozen on a page. The recitation of the page and its storage requires no practice. It is now a stored word, dependent on the fluency of a writer and reader to record and repeat. In textual variants and rhythmic prose the past evocations are echoed, but the divide is a profound technical development of understanding. In Greek culture, Illich and Sanders point out, the time of Plato marked the coming of writing as a predominant pedagogical force. This largely oral teaching first came to be shaped by the memorization of repeated text and then to be penned down in taught script, copying an original text.

However, there is no clear line that marks the end of oral culture and the emergence of literate culture. Textual culture did not suddenly destroy orality. Writing slowly came to dominate and to shape human identity even as the two existed side by side. For example, Illich and Sanders speak of the Classical period as holding two forms of knowledge and memory: "Thus in the Classical period memory became divided into two sorts: The natural—that which was born simultaneously with thought—and the artificial—that which could be improved, through precise techniques, or devices, and exercises."[18]

The danger in the "second sort," the artificial, is that it encourages a technical hubris. Plato recognized this threat as one to "the loving meditation that leads to wisdom."[19] In the Theuthian

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[17] Milman Parry, 450.

[18] Illich and Sanders, 26.

[19] Ibid., 25; and Plato, *Symposium*, trans. F. Anderson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), passim.

invention of letters King Thamus sees not just a new means but a new kind of end. The artifice, literature as technique, has the power to trick the user into thinking that all that is present in an event is confinable and manageable by a human technique. The letters "will make souls forget because they will no longer school themselves to meditate. They will rely on letters."[20] Forgetting how to attend to the living speech between friends, they forget how to seek the "immortal stream of truth."[21]

The distinction Plato is making is difficult to grasp in an age educated to regard making and doing as synonymous. Doing is the activity of being. I do my being. Any practice of doing is focussed on clarifying, receiving, and responding to what is, not in order to change it, but to be "with it." Doing is the continuous action of learning how to dwell in the limits and complex intertwinings of living with others who are presences and not resources, information, or biological codes. Doing is not a passive act, but rather a responsive openness, the being of a relational presence is its expression in doing.

The "second sort" of knowledge, the artifice of the applied technique, carries the promise of remaking the world and recreating the self. It does so, however, only when presence is understood as nothing more than making and having. When presence is nothing more than what someone makes with what they have, then presence is described as having what is made. Classical memory had an appreciation of the creative art of doing as being, the activity of a receptivity to a presence that cannot be possessed.

The difficulty in writing of presence is in the presumption of text to isolate from presence an easily defined meaning. Text gives the impression of freezing on the page the knowledge of presence. The equation of text and memory, to view the mind or the soul as a tablet or page

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[20] Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse in *The Great Dialogues of Plato* (New York: The New American Library, 1956), 274.

[21] Ibid.

containing the account of deeds, words, and past thoughts, is to bring to birth a new understanding of the self by internalizing a technical device. Illich and Sanders argue that without alphabetic text, what is meant in contemporary life by the "self" did not exist:

> The self is as much an alphabetic construct as word and memory, thought and history, lie and narration. . . . The idea of a self that continues to glimmer in thought or memory, occasionally retrieved and examined in the light of day, cannot exist without text. Where there is no alphabet, there can neither be a memory conceived as a storehouse nor the "I" as its appointed watchman.[22]

The lack of this self that possesses knowledge, memory, ego, and a body in oral cultures is hard to imagine. It is a category that anchors analysis and understanding of all previous worlds and, seemingly, all possible worlds. This self is the Cartesian final judge of the veracity of a claim. Where oral cultures developed sophisticated word-plays, verbal feigning and puns, the modern "lie" presupposes that thought can detach itself from speech. This possible contradiction between two separate realms is a consequence of modern devices.

The history Illich and Sanders attempt to tell is one where a rich and interior world is born through the operations of literacy. They tell this history not as a romantic plea for the return to a more innocent time. What they see, however, is that such a development can tempt a Nebrija to extend bureaucratic controls or bring the death of living language in the codified and technically applied. The self of the modern world is a splendid creation, a rich way of being in the world. The danger is the expansion of the *artificium*—the market, technology, education, medicine, and so on—so that the inner world is reducible to a function of its technical operations.

For Illich and Sanders the recovery of friendship in a post-literate era is not in a return to an oral culture. Rather, it is in the recovery of language that is rooted in self and in world. The endangering of friendships that take language and use it as a way of being present to another in caring speech, comes because of a desire to rid the world of areas that are not "improved" by

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[22] Illich and Sanders, 71.

technical measures. However, seeking to improve and record everything by exposing all to the light endangers the living tongue and caress of friendship.

The Hope of Recovering Silence from Uniquack

Illich and Sanders while showing the history of the alphabetization of the popular mind are aware that technical advance is replacing the alphabet. As they trace the development of the literate self from Homer to Eliot and beyond, there is an undercurrent of despair at the diminishment of the ambiguous, the diverse, and the "fuzzy, partly incongruous complementarity that can be understood only by means of metaphors . . . as the root of culture."[23]

For Illich, the relational complexity of each instance of presence meeting presence is not the expression of some predictable systematic pattern or reducible to a contracted exchange between two legally constituted partners. Ambiguity in definition denotes that the duality cannot be dissolved in a homogeneous pattern, but ever remains as a relational tension between two dissymetrical polarities:

> Exchange, in contrast, implies a relationship between social actors, and a common bond that is independent of their actual interchange. Exchange drives partners toward an ever clearer fit, (homogeneity and not ambiguity) whose asymmetry therefore tends toward hierarchy and dependence. . . . Where ambiguity constitutes the two entities that it also relates, ambiguity engenders new partial incongruities . . . constantly upsetting any tendency towards hierarchy and dependence.[24]

Sanders and Illich are pointing towards the danger of the independence of language from the actual interchange of speech. It is not so much that human beings must stop building institutions or calculating systems, dictionaries and grammars, but learn to recognize the ambiguity of the task. The rage for systematic certainties brings new hierarchies and further endangers the ecology of dissymetrical interchanges. By stretching words and systems beyond their limited use they become

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[23] Illich, *Gender*, 75.

[24] Ibid., 76.

a plastic environment in which dependence and hierarchy can masquerade behind "amoeba-words and the vocabulary they constitute, Uniquack."[25] Language, no longer grounded in a somatic sense, can take any shape, like an amoeba. Its over-extended plastic reach allows the particularities of human experience to be subsumed by the linguistic manipulations of technicians.

What Illich and Sanders are indicating is that when communication is understood as information exchange, its language has lost all consciousness of roots in the irreducible encounters of presence. When computational consideration is added to a sensitivity towards the ambiguity of actual interchange, the precision of science is made possible. However, when the attempt is made to substitute a computational certainty for the ambiguity of actual human encounters words are "used neither with common sense, nor with the senseless precision of science, but almost like a sublinguistic grunt—a nonsense word."[26] These words are plastic in their capacity to absorb all meanings and in the difficulty to anchor them in precisely limited fields or in common experience.

Uwe Poerksen has devised a set of identifying markers for these "plastic words" that can be found across North American and European languages.[27] Poerksen, one of the conversation partners Illich and Sanders note in their text, gives a clear way of identifying and evaluating the consequence of using plastic words. The word communication, for example, had both the touch and feel of the embodied and common experience of eating and participating in a Holy feast, the Eucharist. Migrating in and out of the sciences to speak of various intra-species and extra-species interactions, it comes back into the vernacular, without the precision or the original contextual focus. However, its scientific migration gave it the aura of being an independent norm. It became no more than a "stereotype", with no necessary connection to focal practices and things.[28]

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[25] Sanders and Illich, 106.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Uwe Poerksen, *Plastic words: the Tyranny of a Modular Language*, trans. David Cayley and Jutta Mason (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

[28] Ibid., 75.

The stereotype or plastic word has metaphorical powers in linking the "hard facts" of science with the ambiguity of everyday life. The deception of the stereotype is in this half truth. The stereotype of a "drunken Indian" hides the face of this suffering other behind an abstraction and a generalization. Plastic words as stereotypes have none of the depths of feeling metaphors contain. They are devices, that unlike focal practices and things, do not evoke the images of relational depth or origins, but rather offer apparent explanations. The more distracted the user is from the origins and implications of the words, the more they dominate commonsense and become background to our thinking. "This makes their capacity to alter and illuminate their objects even more powerful. The less obvious their metaphorical character, the less it is noticed and the more effectively it works. These words become commonsense, background concepts to our thinking."[29]

The scope of plastic words is expanded as it is more and more abstracted from its specific metaphorical connections and reinforced by its quasi-scientific stereotype. The word sexuality, as an example, has squeezed out a wealth of expressions and nuances. It has come to mean everything and nothing while assuming a flexibility to define all human interactions. The delicate differences and shadings of meaning in human touch, which have similarities, are now thought as expressions of a scientifically defined region. The idea of synonyms, with its appreciation for complex and subtle differences in meaning and behaviour, is replaced by measured equivalence or approximation. The vernacular tongues diverse speech and focus on the ambiguity of "complementary dissymetry" is all but lost in the plastic of a textual uniquack. "They [plastic words] squeeze out and replace *verbum proprium*, which precisely fits in a given context, with a nonspecific word."[30]

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[29] Ibid., 99.

[30] Ibid., 100.

The tactless inflation of the plastic words of uniquack fills the silence and delicacy of human touch and encounter with the stereotyped generalities and technical devices of sexuality and communication. Migrating and mutating across heterogeneous communities and cultures, they give a uniform and oddly Orwellian genderless "flexi-sex" and "communications-code" that can be reified as a consumer product and technical accomplishment and sold in the market. Plastic words pollute the diversity of human speech and touch with the same devastating sameness as the toxins of industry dumped into a lake. A dead lake and a dead linguistic culture no longer vibrate with multiple living forms below a living surface. Everything can now be easily calculated but nothing can bring the imagination alive with surprise at an other.

The content of plastic words and the world of uniquack exhibit the law of inverse proportionality. The larger their scope and extension of supposed explanatory power, the thinner their content. Less meaning brings more possible application, but not, as noted above, any less mystification to minds focussed solely on technical devices and processes. "They put forward a universal claim, with a reduced and impoverished content."[31]

For example, to speak of "educational needs" makes human learning as it occurs in particular places and cultures more difficult to grasp. Education, as a plastic word, comes "to resemble the concepts of postclassical physics: purely imaginary, meaningless, self-referential, and functioning only as stackable poker chips."[32] The plastic words attempt to be technically logical but directly hamper the indirect and subtle contacts of learning presences.

The universal application of plastic words such as education, economics, progress, communication, and sexuality, abstracts them from their historically contingent development. It is assumed that these name forces not necessarily embedded in a particular time or place. For

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 101.

example, philosophers of education most often assume that ancient Greece or Peru, tribal societies or post-industrial ones, had something called "education." The plastic word may eliminate deeper questions about the existence and actual benefits of the forces named under its over-extended use.

The "counterfeit enlightenment" of plastic words becomes apparent when it is recognized that they denote no single thing or event but connote an unlimited technical process.[33] The use of the plastic word "progress", for example, gives a kind of automatic mass assent to various technical developments: The television is better than radio, radio better than conversation or storytelling, computers are better than professional teachers, professional teachers better than lay people. In this way the plastic word cuts off dissent by functioning as a factual certitude in discourse as it moves away from any depth of meaning.

The creation of needs by application of plastic words is consequence of their naturalization into the vernacular and their abstraction from context. The need to be "educated" to speak, make love, relate, think, and an infinite list of human interactions, follows from the assumption of education as a universal explanation for a series of complex human practices and behaviours. Plastic words erect technical norms in place of felt and known human particularities and ecological differences, and introduce a definition of needs according to these categories.

By appearing to be "asocial and ahistorical" plastic words are assumed as "many-sided generalities" bringing a consensus that convinces by its apparent value-neutral status. [34] Plastic words educate for a mass acceptance of devices and processes that take no account of the places, things, and practices of human cultures living well in particular places. Plastic words make my lover equivalent to a "sexual partner," a lullaby sung to my child a "parental communication", and the rich feel for the health of soil passed to me by my father substitutable by an "agricultural

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 102.

education." The careless and heartless action can, with plastic words, assume the mask of technical necessity and conceptual efficiency.

The use of plastic words, like the accent of the British upper class, is a way of demonstrating social prestige. To say, "we had communications," is to indicate that one participates in a social reality of technical sophistication a rung above those who might "talk things over." The "use of information" sounds more scientifically sophisticated than reading, thinking, or discussing. Plastic words are pregnant with technological implications and marketing strategies. Here is an endless array of words to be used to encourage consumption or use of some device in hope of gaining sophistication, sex appeal, happiness, or prestige.

The aura of these words is created by their association with scientific "objectivity and universality" despite science's recognized cultural and social limitations. Such an aura makes these plastic words an international force that extends beyond the time and place of dissemination. No localized gesture, tone of voice, or practice can make clearer the plastic word. Their "uniquack" cannot be replaced by the touch or feel of a human hand.[35] It is a vocabulary that feeds on its own circular logic and technical processes. Focal practices and things, the disciplined attention to the ambiguities, complexities, subtleties of human presence in a world of presence, is replaced by the devices and processes of plastic words and the show of technical effects.

The coming of plastic words into vernacular use was perhaps foreshadowed by Nietzsche in his *Untimely Meditations* where he speaks of the "illness of language." The origin of the crisis Nietzsche maintains is in the over-extension of language:

> Language has continually had to climb up to the highest level it could reach, in order to grasp the domain of thought, and has therefore had to move as far as can be from its profound impulse simply to correspond with things as they are. Thus, in the short space of contemporary civilization its strength has been exhausted by this excessive effort. It can no longer accomplish precisely that

[35] Sanders and Illich, 106-107.

> purpose for which alone it exists: to enable suffering people to understand one another's most basic troubles.[36]

The over-extension of language, its scope, comes as the multiple tongues of human speaking are absorbed into a uniform and plastic language, uniquack. Poerksen traces the over-extension of language to the "highest level it could reach" to the last years of the Middle Ages. The end of Latin culture and the extension of vernacular tongues into the scholarly, religious, and political marks the "gradual evolution, violently contested, of a common language of education."[37] Nietzsche views the extension of the common language of education as a uniformity that enchants with its abstraction.[38] Words become a power unto themselves that no longer corresponds with feelings but "grabs people with ghostly arms and forces them into places where they don't even want to go."[39]

Nietzsche, Poerksen, Illich, and Sanders are not calling for a return to the imperial force of Latin. Rather, the origin and use of particular uniform and highly abstracted language, a mark of contemporary life, is shown as a new tyranny of hollow educated language that ignores the vibrance and poignancy of human joy and suffering.[40] This tyranny has its origins in the collapsing of local tongues and cultures into linguistic systems and nation states. The collapsing and ordering of tongues into grammatically controlled language had the side-effect of creating a uniformity of speech and an expectation that all experiences could correspond to particular key words and concepts.

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[36] Fredrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), IV, 5.

[37] Poerksen, 32.

[38] Nietzsche, IV, 5.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

The emergence of plastic words brings not only a fundamental alteration of a classical world-view, in more general and uniform categories, but an increasing degree of abstraction. Democracy, citizenship, freedom, state, progress, development, and need, grew to become universal phrases having greater and greater abstraction as necessary forces controlling peoples and places. They became slogans and propaganda tools rather than expressions of particular peoples and communities. Abstracted from particular communities and people, freedom or democracy could mean the destruction of local communities or the trivial choice between Burger King or McDonald's.

However, as Poerksen points out, the evolution of uniquack and plastic words comes through the unrealistic extension of the idealistic aims of democracy and education. Education has the ambition to name and bring into to a technical processes every human encounter that involves some growth, change, or advance in human competence or understanding. The high aims of such "education" become not merely impractical but onerous demands. If it can be said that some things can not be taught, some people best not incorporated into universal education, or learning better conceived beyond the idea of education, than education may be viewed as a peculiar cultural practice.

If education was no longer held as a universal paradigmatic concept, attention might be given again to particular, local, and heterogeneous practices, and their appropriate limits. This would mean neither a compulsion to escalate the institutional or expand plastic compounds in order to fit reality into a assumed necessary pattern of needs and processes. Learning, recognizing the danger in verbal generalizations, would be recognized to have no necessary uniform institutional shape or packaging.

What Illich and Sanders are pointing out is that the code and signs of science, the formal "language" of their discipline, has value only in a limited application. The plastic word "is not a

part of a conspiracy" but the over-extension of the work of the *ratio*: "A physicist limited to the use of his technical vocabulary would be totally speechless in a bedroom or kitchen, but his gibberish would not be [Orwellian] Newspeak." [41] The unintended fall-out of ever expanding technical management and devices is the tendency to use technical language and categories to speak about all areas of human experience. Plastic words, like the effluent from industry, limit the capacity to see the difference between technical production and human contact:

> There is, however, an important, indirect way by which the proliferation of special codes contributes to our growing tendency to speak at dinner as if we were in the psychology or sociology lab. We increasingly use ordinary words that have been picked up by one or several "codes" and to which technical meanings have been attached. . . . Good strong words used in this technical way in ordinary speech generate a following of amoeba-words, which can be made to mean anything, like a mathematician's "E." And this fallout then fosters the attitude towards language that we have called Newspeak. These waste products from technical word-factories are akin to pollution.[42]

The ambiguity of the somatic reality of presence makes thinking, writing, speaking, and reading more difficult. The attempt to control the vernacular by Nebrija, the Basic language invented by William Empson in the 1930's that reduced English to 800 words, and the attempt to encompass all in a "communication theory", are not the major threats to human conversation. Rather, it is the migration in to common speaking, and the erosion of the imagination, by plastic words that does most violence to the capacity to receive the diverse truths of human incarnation. Illich with Sanders insists that what we have to deal with is the flesh and bone, the particularity of a human other.[43]

Sanders and Illich are not speaking of a plot by technologists or educators to take power over vernacular speech and behaviour. Rather, the problem is the cycle of dependence, and the addictive patterns that plastic words mask. The technical device has become an "ideological

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[41] Sanders and Illich, 117.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (London: Collins Press, 1962), 21.

[concept] that [is] virtually shared by everybody and [has] consequently assumed the role of [an] indubitable commonsensical [axiom]."[44] Thereby, language, and the social imagination, begins to be deficient in the subtlety of complex human encounters. This is difficult to see when all alternatives appear as degrees of technical competence.

Illich and Sanders close their book by refusing to speak of the future. Their profound appreciation for the blessings of literacy, the beauties of the imaginative but fitting word of the text, is muted by concern that the worst tendency of the alphabetical mind, the reduction of words to codes for technical processes, may be the fate of a post-literate age. They have recalled the immediacy before grammar, language, and alphabet, the primal speech of the pre-literate. However, the gates of that Eden are forever barred. They suggest the silence of friendship as a bulwark against the noise of plastic words:

> Just as much as the word, silence is a creature of the alphabet: the pause between word and word, the silent contemplation of the text, the silence of meditative thought, are all forms of alphabetic silence. Even in our silence we are lettered . . . Most of us have, at best, only an inkling of the silence before words . . .
>
> We are not fools enough to propose, even as a joke, to return to ethnic silence, the silent co-presence before words, language, and text came into being. We are children of the book. But in our sadness we are silly enough to long for the one silent space that remains open in our examined lives, and that is the silence of friendship.[45]

The possibility of speaking of the co-presence of "we", of friendships that are not merely utilitarian or technically arranged "interfaces", is in the gift of friendship. This is in contrast to the plastic "we" that is used to trample down heterogeneous differences in a compulsion to simplify the ambiguities of human meaning. "We all agree that education is a universal human need," is greeted as a statement of such an abstract "we" filled with the hubris of technical simplicity. Giving a single and uniform answer involves an extension of words, likely more plastic

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Illich and Sanders, 119 and 127.

compounds, that endangers the possibility of any critical examination or hospitality to the others encompassed by "we." However, no word alone can take in all there is in the presence of the friend. Hugh writes, "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."[46]

The word *charitas*, translated as charity, is often rendered as Love. Hugh is of course referring to that portion of Paul's letter to the Corinthians that speaks of the practice of love. Love is the regard for the other that patiently and humbly attends their presence, studies its complexity, not in order to master it, but in order to better receive with hospitality. This is the learning of friendship in words, a study that draws close in order to be open to the surprise. The sanctuary where friendships may be found with such focal practice needs to limit the use of plastic words, aware of their sadly comic hubris to universal explanation.

Beyond alphabetization Illich traces the dangers to friendship in the plastic "interface" with the technically managed shows. It is to the surprise, the hope, and the promise of literate friendship that Illich turns for an art of real presence in a time of hyperreal artifice. In trying to define the place of sanctuary, this literate friendship can be drawn on the ground as a boundary for convivial communities. The limit is a focal practice that restrains expectations by the reality of human existence living in friendship in a particular place. There is no guarantee of results, only a learning by charity's patient attention to the ambiguity of words and textual presences, "accepting what we can" in humility.

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[46] Hugh of St. Victor, "Epistola prima ad Ranulphum de Mauriaco," *Patres Latini* vol. 176, col. 1011A; translated in footnote 53, Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 26-27.

In seeking awareness of presence in "book culture", Illich concentrates his attention on the transition in the Medieval world when "the page was suddenly transformed from a score for pious mumblers into an optically organized text for logical thinkers."[47] If certain qualities of Semitic, Greek, and Roman culture, vernacular tongues, monastic discipline, and technical practices, had come together with different emphasis or force, book-culture would not have taken its particular shape:[48]

> It was more than a means by which those who became expert at it could claim middle-class privileges for themselves. As long as bookish reading was the goal of initiation for Catholics, Protestants, and assimilated Jews, of clerics and enlightened anticlericals, of humanists and scientists alike, the formalities involved in this one kind of reading defined, and did not just reflect, the dimensions of social topology.[49]

Just as the coming of words, language, and text, came to define and create the self, so this new kind of reading came to define a new social and cultural identity. This new kind of reading, which Steiner calls bookishness and Illich calls scholastic, grew from the alphabetization and the logic of letter, word, and other structural divisions of text. The phenomenon of scholastic reading comes as one mode among many of interacting with the page. Illich in describing and interpreting the technical breakthroughs of 1150, three hundred years before movable type came into use, is attempting to bring into view other modes of reading and writing: "In order that a new asceticism of reading may come to flower, we must first recognize that the bookish "classical" reading of the last 450 years is only one among several ways of using alphabetic techniques."[50]

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[47] Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 2.

[48] George Steiner, "The End of Bookishness?," *Times Literary Supplement*, (July 8-16, 1988), 754.

[49] Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 3.

[50] Ibid., 3.

Illich is not interested in different modes within the dominant paradigm. Rather, he is speaking of something quite other, and found only in sanctuaries that have maintained these other disciplines:

> With George Steiner I dream that outside the educational system which has assumed entirely different functions there might be something like houses of reading, not unlike the Jewish shul, the Islamic medersa, or the monastery, where the few who discover their passion for a life centred on reading would find the necessary guidance, silence, and complicity of disciplined companionship needed for the long initiation into one or the other of several "spiritualities" or styles of celebrating the book.[51]

Illich dreams of a sanctuary for the disciplined companionship of learning. It is a place of initiation into a particular focal practice of "celebrating the book." Perhaps, it is modeled in Rosenzweig's *Freies Juedisches Lehrhaus*, and its practice of speech-thinking, or in Jean Vanier's L'Arche communities, where reading is in compassionate companionship with others who are regarded as deficient by the norms of consumer society.[52] This way of reading attends to the gift of presence in words beyond any utilitarian or technical function.

Illich sees fundamental human learning as initiation into an art of living. This art may have necessary technical skills, the disciplined use of the *ratio*, but its locus is in the Aquinian *intellectus*, the receptive and celebrative "coming together with every living being" by a particular practice, in a particular place, and as a particular human body.[53] Illich studies the *Didascalicon*, the first book written on the art of reading, as: "Hugh's *ars legendi* as an ascetic discipline focussed by a technical object. Our meditation on the survival of this mode of reading under the

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, ed. Nahum Norbet Glatzer (NY: Schocken Books, 1965); and Jean Vanier, *An Ark for the Poor: The Story of L'Arche* (Toronto: Novalis, 1995).

[53] Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, in Thomas Aquinas, *Thomas Aquinas, Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerny (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), question 5 article 10; and Joseph Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine Press, Inc., 1998), 93-5.

aegis of the *bookish text* led us to enter upon a historical study of an asceticism that faces the threat of computer 'literacy.' "[54]

The *ars legendi* is the art of real presence, an attending to the depths and complexity of living associations. Illich is here describing the focal practice of Hugh of St. Victor:

> Of all things to be sought, the first is that Wisdom in which the Form of the Perfect Good stands fixed. Wisdom illuminates man so that he may recognize himself; for man was like all the other animals when he did not understand that he had been created of a higher order than they. But his immortal mind, illuminated by Wisdom, beholds its own principle and recognizes how unfitting it is for it to seek anything outside itself when what it is in itself can be enough for it.[55]

The words in Hugh's *incipit*, echoing Boethius, express the intent not to master the object of its focus, but to grow to understand the fitting and just relationship between reader and *focus*. Illich identifies this as a long tradition of reading giving a humble acceptance of presence "[where] what it is in itself can be enough for it."[56] The ultimate goal of learning is wisdom in the fitting form of human presence.

Illich is attempting to recover Hugh's art of reading as a remedial practice that liberates the self from dependence on devices that distract from a humble study of the human situation.[57] These devices are temptations to the gnostic fantasy that salvation is guaranteed by a dis-incarnate knowledge, outside a fleshly presence. Learning must be disciplined by humility:

> Now the beginning of discipline is humility. Although the lessons of humility are many, the three which follow are of especial importance for the student: first, that he hold no knowledge and no writing in contempt; second, that he blush to learn from no man; and third, and that when he has attained learning himself, he not look down upon everyone else.[58]

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[54] Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 5.

[55] Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 46.

[56] Ibid., 46.

[57] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 14.

[58] Hugh of St. Victor, 94-5.

Humility guards against accumulation of knowledge for the purpose of controlling and appearing to have power over others. This is to recognize the "dignity of our nature which all naturally possess in equal measure, but which all do not equally understand."[59] The problem is humanity has "forgotten what it was, and, because it does not remember . . . believes that it is nothing except what is seen."[60] Humility is not a tortured attempt to escape the human condition but rather to recover its unseen dignity. This is a dignity known with the acceptance of frailty and death in an art of reading as the art of real presence to all of human experience.

Hugh views each of the virtues necessary for reading as practice intent upon clarifying the three realms involved in the human art of real presence. First is the act of creation as a Divine act, the final cause of existence. This is the "doing" that is before and after any artifice, the existential ground of Being itself. Second is nature, the particular forms and practices that fittingly express the final cause. Third, is the work of human hands—books, cathedrals, computers, and so on. These may distort or clarify the relationship between nature and creation. Focal things and practices bring understanding of the fitting place of human life. Distorting devices manufacture environments that are "fitly called "mechanical," that is to say adulterate."[61] When such devices dominate they encourage belief in nothing but their own efficient causation as final.

Hugh is not dismissing the "corruptible work" of human hands as something unworthy of consideration.[62] Rather, when human artifice too tightly constrains the imagination in the habits of civil or institutional structure it is "purely mechanical and adulterate." However, artifice as focal practice can bring "the decipherment of reality by which the reader, like the midwife, brings forth

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[59] Ibid., 47.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 55.

[62] Ibid., 51-2.

. . . . the sense with which all things are impregnated."[63] Learning a certain kind of reading brings an appreciation of things as they stand in the truth of a structure of interaction.

Humility, patience, stillness from busy distraction, and a sense of detachment from habitual classifications are the qualities necessary for this kind of reading. The practical counsel of knowledge (*scientia*) presses on in this kind of reading to a deeper understanding (*intelligentia*). Hugh speaks of reading that strives "after restoration of our nature," a fitting place in the structure of interactions that is the cosmos.[64] Those acts which "minister to the necessity of this life," must correspond to this practice of fitting relationship or they further distort understanding.[65]

"The light, which in Hugh's metaphoric usage illuminates, is the counterfoil of the eighteenth-century light of reason."[66] Hugh is speaking of "an activity by which the reader's own "self" will be kindled and brought to sparkle."[67] It is the art of recovering the inner stillness of receptivity to the real that "shines out and not on."[68] The analogy is not the dissecting scalpel exposing organs to the light. Rather, it is a modest cleaning of the lens to allow the light of existence to shine out and in. It is hope in a serene reception and not an aggressive interrogation:[69]

> In leisure, there is, furthermore, something of the serenity of "not-being-able-to-grasp," of the recognition of the mysterious character of the world . . . there is in it something of the "trust in the fragmentary, that forms the very life and essence of history." The same journal entry of the poet Konrad Weiss, from which that last quotation was taken, speaks of Ernst Jünger's precise style of thinking and writing, which, with its "fanaticism for the True and the Official," pursues things as an act of aggression, to steal their secret from them and then to place them under inspection . . .is like an idleness pushed to a sublime level of exactitude . . . letting everything go by indifference. [70]

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[63] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 124.

[64] Hugh of St. Victor, 55.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 17.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Pieper, 31.

[70] Ibid., 31-2.

The idleness of mind that is busy categorizing, consuming, reducing to resources and knowledge, needs the discipline of stillness to attend to the lights of presence, "a blossoming rose, a sleeping child, or divine mystery."[71] This heightened attention is not mere passivity. Rather, it requires a disciplined attention that seeks to be "active and cooperative in the business of the world."[72] This activity, however, is not an aggressive stealing, manipulation, controlling of secrets, but a participation in creation that "sparkles" with an inner light as it attends to the shining out of the lights or presence in the world.

Again it is difficult to recover this mode of attention in a time where interrogation is understood as the normative device for gaining insight. Illich contrasts Renaissance art to the twelfth-century "illumination" Hugh of St. Victor would have been familiar with:

> These [Renaissance] painters give the impression that they have created a dark world of things which would still be there even if the light they add were to be extinguished.
>
> Early twelfth-century miniatures, however, continue in the tradition of the icon used in the eastern Christian Church. Following this tradition, the painter neither paints nor suggests any light that strikes the object and then is reflected by it. The world is represented as if its beings all contained their own source of light. Light is immanent in this world of medieval things, and they reach the eye of the beholder as sources of their own luminosity. You feel that if this, their luminosity, were extinguished, what is in the picture would not just cease to be visible, but would cease to exist all together.[73]

The world was created as a place of divine luminescence, by nature humanity has the light of the *intellectus* to receive the lights of creation. Human eyes lose their transparency and their luminescence through pride in devices. However, reading may be a remedial art. Reading, rooted in the *intellectus*, receives the light from the page.[74] In the light of the page the self could recover its own created nature from obscurity: "In the page the reader will acknowledge himself not in the

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[71] Ibid., 32.

[72] Heraclitus, *Fragment* 75.

[73] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 19.

[74] Ibid., 21.

way others see him or by the titles or nicknames by which they call him, but by knowing himself by sight."[75]

What Illich sees Hugh teaching is a new technique of silent reading as continuation of a tradition of real presence. He gives "the idea of a self estranged from all conventions of worldly definition, on a pilgrimage to recover an obscured nature"[76] Reading is a way to recover the sight of creation from the illusions of worldly conventions. It is a pilgrimage, where the reader could remain in a local community, and yet take a journey to a foreign land from which each locality could be more clearly understood. This journey is into the light not only of outer understanding, but of the inner light of the self.

Hugh speaks of the pursuit of wisdom called forth in reading as an enlightenment that grows from the "friendship with that Divinity that first befriends the soul" bringing it back to its proper place and clarity of nature.[77] Friendship is attraction to the light of the other as it shines out from the page motivating *studium*:

> When Hugh in the *Didascalicon* explains the appeal of wisdom, he cannot but use the metaphor of friendship which ultimately motivates studium.
>
> . . . He himself could not avoid interpreting the ultimate aim of studium in terms of this experience. The light of wisdom which envelops the mind of the student calls and draws him back to himself in such a way that he affects the other always as friend.[78]

Illich finds in the work of Hugh a learning that draws the self back to its true nature. This true nature is found in greeting the other as a friend. Friendship's journey is not a quick ascension to the Holy, it is a step by step maturation of an inner self. One moves, step by step, "grounded in things small, you may safely strive for all."[79] This learning attends to the details on a step by step

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[75] Ibid., 23.

[76] Hugh, 101.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 27-8.

[79] Hugh, 136.

journey. There is no technical short-cut to friendship. It depends on attention to things great and small.[80]

Thus, the inner life is not an efficient mechanism or an ordered system. Hugh uses the metaphor of an inner dwelling or treasure chest with many compartments containing many treasured objects. He encourages students to acquire a rich imaginary inner space and to move in that space: "The child's mind was trained to build the memory mazes, and to establish the habit to dart and retrieve in them. Remembrance was not conceived as an act of mapping but of psychomotor, morally charged activity."[81]

This inner world was not mapped out or in a catalogue index. It was a place of mazes and symbolically charged focal things and practices. To move in it was to come in contact with these many focal things as they brought focus on the particular connecting passages. This three dimensional place of memory was filled with living associations and connections. Images of fish and birds, unicorns and gryphons, Mary and Peter, emanated a light that spoke of complex presence leading down other hallways.

This technique recalls the flowing connective memory of oral antiquity. In the long development of letters, words, language, and texts, this living contact, Plato warned, could become the lifeless repetition of details. The living house of memory could by technical plan become the "script-bound skill" of the sophist.[82] The technique Hugh adopts is one that roots itself in living contact. The radical new element is the silent technique of the eye. Hugh moves from oral roots to the construction of an inner self in a structure of interaction he calls *historia*.[83]

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[80] Ibid.

[81] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 37.

[82] Ibid., 41.

[83] Hugh, 136-9.

The *historia* is not arbitrarily invented. It is the structure of time and place as given in the encounters between presences.[84] The recreation of this structure, this community of associations, is what gives a pattern to the inner house of memory. The inner self is then to be ordered through the "activity which Hugh calls reading" as a mediation between the macrocosmic and the "microcosmic of the reader's personal intimacy," an inner sanctuary.[85] The inner life is an incarnating of a pattern of associations.

The "reading" Hugh teaches is a way of building and enriching an inner community.[86] It is intended to bring a meditation that is not bound by any of the rules or precepts of reading.[87] Rather, this reading brings the meditative art that "delights to range along open ground, where it fixes its free gaze upon the contemplation of truth . . ."[88] Reading begins the learning but meditation is its consummation. The inner life has consummation in its *historia* when it has left the business of utility for the free hospitality of friendship.[89] However, this is not an activity of dispassionate observation but of delight and pleasure: "Wisdom is of great beauty, like the maiden in the "Song of Songs." To be as close to the Sunamite woman as was King David is a delight. And wisdom will not relinquish her lover."[90]

For Hugh reading will "furnish the soul with knowledge, drench it in joy."[91]. It is "a plucking and eating of fruit from the vineyard of the text."[92] The reader is free from "earthly business" to

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 47.

[86] Ibid., 51.

[87] Hugh, 92.

[88] Ibid., 92.

[89] Wanda Cizewski, "The Doctrine of Creation in the First Half of the Twelfth Century: Selected Authors" (Ph. D. diss., University of Toronto, 1983), 361-2.

[90] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 53.

[91] Ibid., 93.

[92] Ibid., 55-6.

taste of the "sweetness" of eternal presence.[93] This eternal presence is not only on the page but is known in the "book of creation", the book of the self, and the book of the other.[94] To have the leisure of this reading is to be brought to a physical and spiritual feast.

The reading that dominates from nearly the beginning of the thirteenth century to the present claims that knowledge acquisition by the expert is the best of reading. Hugh is concerned with reading for a greater reason, the recovery of human presence. The particularly gifted must use their innate capacity not to isolate themselves, but to bring them to an exemplary life of humility and patience. The "form of living" encouraged by monastic reading should give birth to a light that attracts the light in all others.[95] This is in contrast to the specialized activity of the scholarly monks of the thirteenth century who "by their definition as clerical professionals, are not an edifying example for the man in the street."[96]

Hugh's order was founded on the rule of St. Augustine, and not Bernard's reform of Benedictine orders along feudal lines. The rule of St. Augustine encourages the cloister as "a metaphor for the recollection of the reader in his own interiority."[97] Hugh develops an understanding of reading as an activity where the interior life is developed as a moral shaping of selves that attend in friendship to the light within the other. The monastic reader does eminently what all are called to: "By contemplating what God has made we realize what we ourselves ought to do. Every nature tells of God; every nature teaches man; every nature reproduces its essential form, and nothing in the universe is infecund."[98]

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[93] Hugh, 93.

[94] Ibid., 55-6.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 81.

[97] Ibid., 82.

[98] Hugh, 145.

Reading is for Hugh eminently a social activity developing an inner world. It is social, Illich notes, for it is a liturgical act. The words on the page were not codes for technical deciphering, but notes for the human body to sing or somatically sound before others. The interior development of the reader was in a "*Lectio divina . . .coram*, in the face of, someone—God, angels, or anyone within earshot."[99] For Hugh reading, as it leads to an exemplary life and as a social activity, contains a duty to attain a clarity of sight and a hospitality to presence.[100]

Hugh lived in the vineyard of the text. Later generations would live in the catalogued storage room of ideas. The cataloguing, the ordering, and divisions of the book came so that information could be extracted with ease. The scholastic reader does not wander the rows of a textual vineyard plucking fruit, but looks for the reference marks. This change in technique fostered "new ways of conceiving reality."[101]

Illich is once again seeking to understand how a particular tool or set of tools shapes the "axioms by which social reality emerges."[102] The page was a living skin flowing with a design that a voice was called to bring to life. As the page was thinned out, no longer skin, it became a surface smoothed for the geometric projections of a mind. With the techniques of superscript and subscript, clear divisions of text, commentary, and illustration, the ambiguities of organic accretion were subdued by a mechanical order: "The visible page is no longer the record of speech but the visual representation of a thought-through argument."[103]

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[99] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 82.

[100] Hugh, 129.

[101] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 96.

[102] Ibid., 97.

[103] Ibid., 99.

Hugh's *historia* is transmuted to Lombard's quick indexing of an argument.[104] The patient quickening of meditation, where the wisdom of the other is sought in a friendship that matures with contact, is replaced by the speed of accessing the correct argument and detail on the correct page. Hugh's intention to bring the reader to "sparkle with an inner light" in the company of friends whose light is equally divine is an art for which the scholar has little time.

Illich points out that the printing press only took what by the middle of the thirteenth century it found and standardized in shape. This symbolic object provides "a powerful mold for a new literary and scientific worldview."[105] The changes brought about mirror a change in the mind-set of European culture.[106] The mechanical reproduction of these scribal devices took the emphasis on "the materialization of abstraction" in the hand copied book and cast it on an easily distributed page.[107] As the book became the place of recording thought it began to lose its symbolic power to point to nature and the real presence of wisdom "written" in creation's book:

> This ontological status of the book yields the key to an understanding of Christian monasticism as a life of reading. The reason why . . .[disciplined reading] is an effective and infallible search for wisdom is founded in the fact that all things are impregnated with sense, and this sense only waits to be brought to light by the reader. Nature is not just like a book; nature itself is a book, and the man made book is its analogue. Reading the man-made book is an act of midwifery. Reading, far from being an act of abstraction, is an act of incarnation. Reading is a somatic, bodily act of birth attendance witnessing the sense brought forth by all things encountered by the pilgrim through the pages.[108]

Illich reads the development of silent reading , just as the emergence of the alphabetic mind, as a set of technical developments. These register in social configurations that shape our understanding of the self, the other, and the world. The technical devices of silent reading abstract

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[104] Giles Constable ed., *The Letters of Peter the Venerable* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), passim.

[105] Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 115.

[106] Ibid., 116.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 123.

attention from presence as the "sense [with] which all things are impregnated."[109] Illich is suggesting that the time might be right for a recovery, in a new form, of the organic relationship between speaking, writing, and reading, as acts of the patient midwifery of friendship.

Most experience learning in the sanctuary of friendship as a refuge from the chatter of "information bites." Hugh's instruction, resting as it does on a Medieval Christology, may not appeal. However, his intuitions of the fecundity of the word as an analogue of diverse presences is a way of reading the meaning of human communities in various ecological landscapes. The sanctuary for such a reading is home for the development of the disciplines of hospitality, critical appraisal, and modesty required to learn a convivial awareness in a time of swift technical advance.

Generative Axioms and The Face of the Other

> . . .I wanted to suggest that only in the mirror of the past does it become possible to recognize the radical otherness of our twentieth century mental topology and to become aware of its generative axioms that usually remain below the horizon of contemporary attention.[110]

The current "mental topology" moves with certain "generative axioms" hidden from its own attention. Illich has sought to bring into view these axioms. Illich understands one of its "generative axioms" to be the necessity of technical advance. The argument he has is with attempts to guarantee the satisfaction of universally defined needs and dislodge human beings from the loyalties and obligations of local practices. Needs measured as technically and universally arranged are self-generative and highly manipulative. Michael Ignatieff writes:

> The problem is not to defend universality, but to give these abstract individuals the chance to become real, historical individuals again, with the social relations and the power to protect themselves. . . . The people who have no homeland must be given one: they cannot depend on the uncertain and fitful protection of a world conscience defending them as examples of the universal abstraction Man. . . . Woe betide any man who depends on the abstract humanity of another for his food and protection. Woe betide any person who has no state, no family, no

[109] Ibid., 124.

[110] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past* (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1992), 10.

> neighbourhood, no community that can stand behind to enforce his claim of need.[111]

Ignatieff is recognizing that the abstraction of needs are another way of stripping human beings of cultural, social, personal, obligations and gifts. Stripped of these blessings and encumbrances "there is nothing at all."[112] We recognize mutual humanity, the pain of the other, only by acknowledging the significance of our differences. Once these have been swept aside, it is already too late for compassion. Hatred of difference may cause genocide or war, but no implied universal need can stop the fist or the bombs. Ignatieff and Illich are suggesting that only when there is a rich and complex world of social gifts and obligations, of shared joy and pain, are the evils of hatred, greed, and jealousy ameliorated by friendship, family, and obligation.

Illich is consistent in his attempt to articulate the limits of any technical device. If he critiques education or economics it is not because he has hold of a perfect pedagogy or economic order. Rather, he is attempting to demonstrate their limited uses and applications. Illich's hope is in complex relationships with identifiable human beings whose faces have meaning as friends, partners, neighbours, and not as abstractions. He wishes not to forget that the blessings of human presence are complex, fragile and subject to acts of cruelty. However, no technique, device or social arrangement, can replace the obligations of friendship with a guaranteed education or satisfaction of basic needs.

Illich, in his examination of Nebrija's Grammar or Comenius' universal schooling, is offering a critical mirror in which to see contemporary pre-suppositions. To avoid the unruly and "variegated changes" of the Castilian, Nebrija planned to "turn the Castilian language into an artifact."[113] His aim, as Comenius, was to find a device that would guarantee certain results:

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[111] Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 52-53.

[112] Ibid., 52.

[113] Don Antonio Nebrija, *Gramatica Castellana* as quoted in, Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past,* 138.

> Please note how Nebrija proposes to substitute for the vernacular a 'device,' an 'artificio.' Unruly speech shall henceforth be substituted by standard coinage. Only 200 years earlier, Dante had still assumed that any language that had been learned and that is spoken according to a grammar could never come alive. . . . Nebrija wants to teach people the language of clerics, to tighten their speech and to subject their utterances to his rule.[114]

The 'uniquack' of plastic words identified by Poerksen, Illich, and Sanders expands the rule of educated language by transplanting words from the vernacular into professional use and then back into popular speech. The technological devices that now dominate the social world promote a uniformity and universal control Nebrija and Comenius could not imagine. That Chiapas villagers and New York fashion models are said to "need information", "have communications," and live in a "global economy," is to presume the domination of an *artificio* beyond any past aspirations.

Illich no longer sees that classrooms are the main danger to the integrity of human cultures. The devices for education in a culture of limitless economic growth, exploitation, and social control, are spread throughout the social order. Illich tells the story of two young college teachers and their children:

> Their children had to grow up without parents—because these two adults, in every word which they addressed to their two sons and one daughter, were 'educating' them. And since they considered themselves very radical, off and on they made attempts at 'raising the consciousness' of their children. Conversation has turned for them into a form of marketing—of acquisition, production and sale. They have words, ideas, sentences; but they do not speak any more.[115]

The expansion of that peculiar form of speech and behaviour called "education" displaces vernacular behaviours such as speaking and caring. What Illich argues is that not only is education a "concept *sui generis*" to modern western cultures but that it orders human life towards consumption, conformity, and information exchange.[116]

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 142.

[116] Ibid., 115.

Illich insists that this is not a universal reality. It is not the case that wherever there is human culture there is also "a knowledge stock that must be transmitted from generation to generation."[117] The idea of a "knowledge stock" is common only in cultures shaped by certain technical devices and advances. There is no artifact outside of Western tradition that can be called "education" without reducing those other phenomena to subspecies of education. Illich recognizes that education is a social construction of the last four or five hundred years and not a fact of human nature.

Illich's point, irrespective of any evaluation one might make of education, is one of categorical clarification. The disciplines of history and philosophy of education need to come, as economics and religious studies have, to recognize the limitations of their own categories. Louis Dumont, for example, awakened economic theorists to the heterogeneity between traditional cultures and economic cultures.[118] Illich is asking that educational theorists do a similar study of the emergence of educated culture.

Illich does not suggest Dumont's recognition has had a major impact on constraining the thought of economists or imagining alternatives to economic society. It does provide room, however, for both such developments. Educational theory, once it accepts "educational needs, learning, scarce resources, etc." as corresponding to a peculiar cultural phenomena, might have deeper theoretical insight.[119] This theoretical insight is important, Illich argues for two distinct reasons:

> First, this would allow comparatists to limit their research to phenomena that do have common phenomenological features. This self limitation would make the discipline into a more legitimate undertaking. Second, the recognition that the discipline deals with an odd, modern social phenomena would make it possible to

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), passim.

[119] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 117.

> engage in disciplined comparison between education and other social features that are heteronomous to education and, therefore, cannot be reduced to it.[120]

The first reason is one that anyone concerned with the study of education might embrace. It is a simple plea for clarity of definition and limitation. The second point appears equally benign, but in fact holds the key to Illich's radical attack upon education as a necessary technical process. If education is an "odd, modern social phenomena," it is not a necessary element in all human societies.

Illich uses the analogy of Kepler's revolution in astronomy for the needed change in educational theory. Up until Kepler astronomy was guided by the assumption of heavenly spheres. Ptolemy, Copernicus, and Brahe continued to assume the existence of heavenly spheres which they adjusted to their detailed observations. Their observations, correct in measurement, were used "to fit a redundant paradigm."[121] Educational theorists move or redefine, or "add new epicycles" like Brahe within the heavenly spheres of education. Few, like Kepler, risk abandoning talk of spheres of education, formal or informal, for an appreciation of a complex and heterogeneous reality of irreducible phenomena and presences:

> And when such educational policy alternatives pretend to be fundamental, the relationship of the educational to the other spheres takes prominence as an issue. . . . Shall the school system remain at the centre? Or shall school be one adjunct to the education that goes on, for example, [before a computer monitor]? . . . How shall we rank the different tools of education? Or how shall we relate the spheres of education, health, welfare, research, finance, economics, politics? I think that research on the model of Copernicus is not what we need in education.[122]

Tragically, Illich is ignored, or silenced as David Gabbard has called it, where he wishes to encourage a heterodox conversation in educational theory.[123] Gabbard points out that Illich calls

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[120] Ibid., 117-118.

[121] Ibid., 110.

[122] Ibid., 111.

[123] David Gabbard, passim.

into doubt not simply an idea within a discourse but the interpretive power of the discourse itself. Illich is excluded when he transgresses the intellectual discourse by questioning its reasoning power.[124] He has been considered as a radical educational theorist, a deschooler, a learner-centred theorist, or a defender of autonomy in educational choice, but seldom as a Kepler-like advocate for a radically altered understanding of learning uncontained in the "spheres" of education.

In the last years of his career, it becomes more apparent that Illich advocates a Kepler-like shift. The recovery of the *intellectus* requires a Keplerian revolution, where human reality is not seen as a code containing resources and information but as a place of presences that move in complex orbits determined by the various attractions and repulsions of other presences. The model of Copernicus, the lust for a singular general theory, the seeking for universal rights or characteristics, miss the beauty of the chaotic patterns, the local dissymetrical complementarity, of presence, in culture and place, befriending presence. Even more, as Michael Ignatieff points out, when we come to depend on such general and spherical abstractions, it is already too late for compassion.

Illich has spoken of his position as blasphemy in the face of the fundamental belief in the inexhaustible capacity of intellectual system and technical measure to explain and provide life for humanity. "To hell with [it]!", he writes in 1994.[125] Excusing his dramatic style, the point he makes at the head of this essay "of radical critique of technological culture," is profoundly disturbing.[126] The discourse of contemporary life, he judges, has become so narrowed as to be unable to admit questions about its own meaning:

> What I did not understand at the time is that beyond pain, disease, impairment and death having been expropriated, something even more ominous

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Illich, *Blasphemy: A Radical Critique of Technological Culture,* Science, Technology, and Society Working Paper, no. 2 (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Program, 1994), 1.

[126] Ibid.

> has happened: People in highly capitalized countries have acquired iatrogenic bodies. They perceive their bodies as doctors describe them. . . .
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> . . .One hears this expressed by people who say, "My system can't take it," or, "I'm not getting the right inputs," or "I have to watch the baby inside me with ultrasound to see how that system is working." More and more people, ever more deeply, interpret what they take to be their bodies according to the model of the computer.[127]

The catastrophic break which comes in the tradition of western understanding of the self, comes not so much with an individualism that emerges from the silent reading of the text, but with the definition of the body encouraged by technical devices and processes. The quickening of life in the womb, the sense of well-being after a good meal, the exhaustion felt after physical exertion, are more and more interpreted by the technical device and process. Somatic presence, the learning that comes with embodied encounters, are replaced by technically managed processes and technically measured advancement. Illich's curse is of an age that defines learning, self, body, and human presence as technical processes and no longer as the touch and ambiguous depth of somatic experience.

The attention Illich gives to the past is in order to bring into awareness both the origins and consequence of this catastrophic divide. The study of alphabetization and monastic reading have brought Illich to see the trajectory of changes brought to self understand and the body from the twelfth century to the present. The stabilization of the text and "a new certainty about the body" as a dissectable and divisible objects are inter-related technical events.[128] Together they open the possibility of the disincarnation of information, the reduction of the body to mere biological function, and the interpretation of human experience as a measurable technical process prevalent in contemporary educated life. Illich uses his study of particular historical developments to more clearly see the odd character of modern experience:

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[127] Ibid., 6-7

[128] Ibid., 4.

> I wrote to highlight the institutional, social and cultural effects of the medical system. At the centre of my analysis stood the iatrogenic reshaping of pain, disease, disability and dying, as these phenomena are experienced by the subject. I was interested in cultural constraints, and the symbolic impact of medicine on these experiences. I found that medicalization destroyed or undermined the patient's art of suffering, and subverted people's ability to bear their uniqueness by telling them that they were abnormal and required correction or improvement . . .[129]

The shift to a technically defined body, a "system," occurs beyond the expropriation of health. The education to medical process brings the self-understanding of the body as a system to be technically managed. Education as a technical process can shape human identity to view all things as information-bearing systems. The educated device and process is used not to focus on the complex and ambiguous reality of presences beyond any information, but to extract information and then to see presence as nothing more than a manageable information system. The device and process may now constitute human reality. Technical devices and processes, on achieving a certain density and universality of use, form a structure that shapes self-identity and ways of viewing others:

> And it came to birth in only one place and time: in Christian Europe. In this historical experience, a radically other kind of human condition evolved, coming to be through the Church's midwifery. This new type of being human has come to full fruition only in the technological system. So, technological society, in which health is to be defined today, is explicable only as a perversion of Christian ideals. Conscious engineering—consciousness about means which have the ability to become efficient elements—is a common root of both technology and our understanding of sacramental theology. Sacraments, according to Christian thinking before Catholics and Protestants separated, are efficacious signs—they inevitably effect what they symbolize.[130]

The power of technological society to name reality and manipulate experience is a perversion of the compassion Illich believes to be at the heart of Christian revelation. The managers and producers of technology act as a new priesthood by attempting to engineer futures, social orders,

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[129] Ibid., 6.

[130] Ibid., 9.

culture, and the natural order. The full impact of dependence on technical devices, now as in the past, is the loss of sensitivity to the human presence of the other. Illich claims that the human other is not a convert, a life-system or a resource but a particular face, a presence beyond measure.

Illich suggests that the iconography of the West, the representation of presence in images, has moved from a "hesitant gaze" before the sight of visceral things and practices to "distracted staring" before the show of abstract and intellectualized devices and techniques.[131] When the word on the page was no longer understood as a place of contact with irreducible presence, but of religious instruction and information storage, "hesitancy vanished among most western believers."[132] When the image of the other could be viewed without hesitancy as a measurable substance, presence began to lose its somatic gravity.

At the close of a jointly written working paper, Duden, Illich, and Mother Jerome write of the human face in the post-existential philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. They recognize in him not a student of Husserl or Heidegger but of the Talmud and Torah. What they see and celebrate is his disciplined hesitancy, in the Talmudic tradition, before the face of the other. Levinas' philosophy rooted in a hesitancy of the gaze resists "the dominant trends of visualization: the disembedding of vision from synaesthesis, the disembodying of the eye by interpreting it as a built-in camcorder or an abstract sex organ; and, thirdly, the dissociation of the gaze from love."[133] Wrestling with Heidegger's attempt to recover ontology, Levinas returns to the tradition of the ethical demand of seeing the face as the perception of being:

> The face is not the mere assemblage of a nose, a forehead, eyes, etc.; it is all that, of course, but takes on the meaning of a face through the new dimensions it opens up in the perception of a being. . . . This temptation to murder and this

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[131] Barbara Duden, Ivan Illich, and Mother Jerome, O.S.B., *The Scopic Past and the Ethics of the Gaze,* Science, Technology, and Society Working Paper, no. 6, ed. Lee Hoinacki (University Park, PA: Science, Technology, and Society Program, 1995), 2-5 and 23.

[132] Ibid., 23.

[133] Ibid., 22.

> impossibility of murder constitute the very vision of the face. To see a face is already to hear 'You shall not kill' . . .[134]

To gaze on another's face is already to have heard a summons of presence. The relation with the other who has a face is never a matter of merely letting be. The comprehension of the other who has a face is "inseparable from his invocation."[135] Levinas insists that this invocation, the reception of *your* presence as a summons, is never a matter of mere *ratio*, calculated comprehension. The being of you as I see your face before me is not just an abstract being I record as another example of universal Being. By seeing your face "I do not only think that [you are]" but I have relationship with a particular presence that summons me.[136]

This face is not a mere spatial designation. Levinas, not unlike Illich, concludes that it "is as a neighbor that a human being is accessible—as a face."[137] It is not just that the categories of a static, inert, and determined ontology should be replaced by the categories of a processive, durational, and relational one. Rather, "it is above all a matter of finding a place where the human no longer concerns us from the perspective of the horizon of being, that is to say, no longer offers itself to our powers."[138] The violence of assimilating the other in an intellectual system is not reason's end but its failure. The *ratio* that dominates the human imagination fails the *intellectus*. Your face should come to me as a summons that cannot be reduced to, educated, or subjugated by any abstraction or system. "When I have grasped the other in the opening of being in general, as

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[134] Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* , trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 8.

[135] Levinas, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* , eds. A. T. Peperzak, S. Critchley, and R. Bernasconi (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 6.

[136] Ibid., 7.

[137] Ibid., 8.

[138] Ibid.

an element of the world where I stand, where I have seen him *on the horizon*, I have not looked at him in the face, I have not encountered his face."[139]

Levinas argues that reason understood as the trick or trap of the hunter ensnaring "all that [particular faces] contain of strength and irreducibility" in a universal order is inadequate to "constitute a human order."[140] The "resistance of beings qua beings" in the particularity of the face is not understood by a reason intent on breaking the particularity of the other into standard and measured universals.[141] The other is understood by reason only "in a situation where *one chats*."[142] Friendship is that condition where you and I come together learning in a sociality not reducible "to some property revealed in the given."[143]

The disciplined hesitancy of the gaze is in service to the *intellectus* as reception of the face of the other. This face of yours addresses me "in its exquisite delicacy and impenetrability . . . forever in an ethical way."[144] The address gives identity to me, it calls me, to use the tradition Illich and Levinas share, into being-with-you, friendship. The denial of friendship in an immodest and rapacious vision and show of technically managed, educated and manipulated images is not the abnormality of the perverse voyeur in contemporary society. It is the norm of an eye educated to consume all it can in order to be "well informed."

Levinas and Illich suggest there is great danger in the attempt to bring human being into a singular rationality. So intent with computing the "many variables in a system" contemporary technical reason has forgotten the significance of the one who is a human face:

> The "face of the other" in the writings of Levinas is not something that could be made the subject of a phenomenological description, and by this route given

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[139] Ibid., 9.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Duden, Illich, and Mother Jerome, 24.

> sense and meaning. Levinas admires Heidegger. But in explicit opposition to him Levinas says that my face comes to life from the face of the other. What the face of the other does in its exquisite delicacy and impenetrability is to address me forever in an ethical way. As he puts it: "I cannot but hear the face of the other in spite of the profound asymmetry between our faces." Again and again, Levinas repeats, "You see and hear as you touch."[145]

After all of the attempts to enlighten the mind by exposing the dark corners of reality to the light of a calculated reason, the impenetrable face of the other persists. After all the attempts to educate and train the self to see the world as a calculable system, problems needing solution, there remains the irreducible distance between friends. To critically care for presence is not to feel compelled to educate or draw the other into view as a universal human being. To critically care is to practice hospitality and provide a sanctuary where the other can be met in the somatic and ethical touch of a hesitant gaze "where I discover myself as a gift from you."[146]

The Proportionate Learner and the Limits of Words

Illich in an address given to the Schumacher Society in 1994, and later revised as a Science, Technology, and Society Working Paper in 1996, addresses the question of the proportions of the human face as raised by his friend Leopold Kohr:

> His vision of a decent common life was predicated on modesty, not on plenty. A native of the village of Oberndorf near Salzburg, he began with the propensity of Salzburg folk to trust and enjoy the local ways distinctive of each valley. He saw truth in their suspicion of universal values. He perceived how a good life could be corrupted. Kohr remains a prophet today because even those social theorists for whom small is beautiful have not yet discovered that the truth of beauty and goodness is not a matter of size, nor even of dimensions or intensity, but of proportion.[147]

When a particular word fits a particular nuance of meaning the word is in proportion to the peculiarities and uniqueness of persons and occasions. The word communication, for example, fits

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[145] Ibid., 23-24.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ivan Illich, *The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr* (Great Barrignton, MA: E. F. Schumacher Society, 1996), 1-2.

the particular action of receiving the cup and bread in Holy Communion. When "communication" is extracted from this particular focal practice to become a word meaning a vast range of human experiences it is no longer proportionate but, in its plastic function, ignorant of any truth of particularity. When human thought, language, and deeds fit into a complex of relationships found in the particularity of a place, then they are proportionate and modest. When universal values, global technologies, and uniform language are said to be good for all, the immodesty of the claim is distrusted by those who still value human proportions.

Illich is consistent in his resistance to either the altruistic aims of universal educators or the less morally appealing greed of global capitalists. The human face in all its diverse and culturally bounded uniqueness must be defended against any attempt to inflate, guarantee, or destroy it in uniform technical processes. The proportions of the face if stretched too far by technical or institutional devices masks the particularity of human presence. The educational experts, social engineers, and global free marketers, share the cosmology of disproportionate growth based upon expanding expectations. What Illich admires in Kohr is the insistence upon the limits of proportion:

> I was impressed by this in the 1950's when I found Puerto Rico a Mecca for planning, attracting Young Turks from Princeton to Tel Aviv. These brash technical advisors looked upon "Operation Bootstrap," an economic development scheme for the island, as a grand opportunity for social engineering. Kohr, living and teaching in Puerto Rico at that time, was a familiar figure in a hillside slum at the edge of the Rio Piedras campus. A sugar-cane cutter expressed what I felt: "Unlike the professors, party workers, and priests, this Austrian makes us think about what our neighborhood is, not about how to carry out the experts' plans."[148]

Illich is encouraging a re-examination of the modern social construction of needs and scarcity on behalf of Kohr's *gewiss*, the certain limit and particular beauty of a human face. "Certain, as used here, is as distant from "certainty" as "appropriate" is from "efficient."[149] To learn the

[148] Ibid., 2-3.

[149] Ibid., 5.

"certain" is to be involved in focal practices that bring one into face to face encounters without the distraction of technical devices. The human social condition is, when proportionate, "that ever unique and boundary-making limit with which each community can engage in discussion about what *ought* to be allowed and what *ought* to be excluded."[150]

Coming to know another human being, coming to know the certainty of a human place in a world, is an art of presence that fits a "specific human person within a given human condition."[151] There is an ethical character formed, a proportionate learner, that seeks to find identity in the abundance of a world of impenetrable presences, by openness to the sociality of being, while limiting the temptation to consume and technically manage these others. This is the learning of friendship that requires a rejection of all economic or technical masters for the real presence of the other.

Illich uses the language of economics to speak of the technical education that dominates contemporary society. When ethics became solely concerned with technical measurement, economic distribution, contractual arrangements, and so on, it marked an historical fracture with a tradition through Plato, Aristotle, the Hebrew Prophets, the early Christian Church, that sought the moral path of seeking the beauty and goodness of a life of a certain and proportional beauty. Proportion means the right relationship between various contributing elements. The relative proportions were not attained by comparison to a standard text or measure, but by bringing or regaining an appropriate relationship and achieving a just measure.

The break with proportion came as the mechanical and technical measure of things grew to be trusted and relied upon. The technical measure is a fixed standard, like the text or geometric object, against which things are measured. The proportionate, is the appropriate relationship

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.

"between macro- and microcosms."[152] This is an ethical state of living, the *tsedekha* of Hebrew scriptures or the Greek *tonos*, with the just measure of difference and complementarity. What Illich is aiming at is the recovery of the deeper intuitions of friendship or right relationship in a world of presence:

> Such an attempt is not romanticism nor a turning back of the clock and certainly not a renunciation of social justice. On the contrary! We want to recall that 'tonos' which was silenced in the course of Enlightenment progress as a victim of the growing mathematization of science and the desire to quantify justice. Therefore, we face a delicate task: to retrieve something like a lost ear, an abandoned sensibility.[153]

The distinction between measurement and proportionality, is one between those who know the statistics of affluence and those who recognize the smile of a friend's contentment. The sensibility to be regained is one that can recognize that what is appropriate in one particular ethos or dwelling place is inappropriate in another. It is not that one abandons all measure, technical advance, or scientific insight. Rather one recognizes the limits of all utilitarian, efficient, and standard measurement by attending to what is certain and appropriate for a community, ethos, and friend. The attempt to construct standards, measured centres, texts, words, and laws to govern every case and contingency equally, is to break with the sensibility of *tsedekha* and *tonos*:

> To speak of a tonal centre or a tonic in this context would be false. "Tone" in Plato's time was not a measure. Proportion was implicit in the two segments of one string. An individual tone was unthinkable, as would also have been one nation-wide measurement for length and weight. In place of tone—implying a tonal center—it would be better to speak of modes[154].

The various modes of being, the variety of tensions between local and cosmic harmonies, were held together by a sense of proportion as an constitutive principle or *logos*. The constitutive principle of *logos*, just as the *tsedekha* of Hebrew Prophets, is a living concord between modes of

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[152] Ibid., 11.

[153] Ibid., 12.

[154] Ibid., 14.

being. "This inherent dissymetry, resulting from the ordered vibration of two strings sounding against each other is proportion."[155] The certain sound of a community or a self was finding an appropriate expression in a larger concord. To be out of pitch did not mean not holding a measured note, rather it meant not "sounding against each other in certain and appropriate relationship." This did not require tuning to the standard pitch of a cosmic piano but finding the appropriate vibration for and in the ethos and place of being.

To learn in friendship is to gain "awareness and feeling, a certain sensitivity to the appropriate."[156] The proportionate learner suspects any standard measure, any technical process or device, that explains or attempts to guarantee care for the particularity of human conditions. Nothing can replace the wisdom of local and immanent proportion. No "communication" or "system of care" can substitute for the appropriate touch of the friend. Ethically, once value becomes solely measured as a standard of use or resource, the search for the good of appropriate relationship is extinguished in the demand for solution to problems. Illich is anxious that the disappearance of a sensibility that appreciates the specific timbre fitting for a particular human being in a specific community is lost in a discussion of values:

> In ethics, values are as opposed to an immanent, concrete proportion as are the sounds of Helmholtz. Like them, values run counter to 'tonos', the specific tension of a mutuality or reciprocity. As timbre separated from tone, so that one could play a violin's part on the piano, so an ethics of value—with its misplaced concreteness—allowed one to speak of human problems. If people had problems, it no longer made sense to speak of human choice. People could demand solutions. To find them values could be shifted and prioritized, manipulated and maximized. Not only the language but the very modes of thinking found in mathematics could norm the realm of human relationships. Algorithms "purified" value by filtering out appropriateness, thereby taking the good out of ethics.[157]

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[155] Ibid., 15.

[156] Ibid., 24.

[157] Ibid., 23.

The good is not a standard measure but is the living of a life with the appropriate timbre, tone and mode, a reciprocity in difference locally felt. 'Value' and 'problem' are the language of transposition and exchange and should be limited in use. The common sense of proportionate and appropriate learning is suspect before "the demand for protection through operationally verified claims."[158]

The proportionate learner is one who has come to understand the necessary limits of words, practices, and things. The sanctuary for this kind of learner is a place where a modest and hesitant gaze is cultivated in appreciation of the fitting place of difference and complementarity. The social mutations of plastic words, of over-extended markets, institutional forms, technical devices and processes, can be viewed in contrast to the focal practices and things of sanctuary. In sanctuary the exploration of appropriate and proportionate relationship in touch with the certain faces of the place is the primary discipline.

Sanctuary encourages focal practices that understand the distinction between the speed of technical devices and the quickening of patient relationship. The patient and gradual focal practice, acquainted with the limits and frailty of human life, brings a wisdom of modest assumptions in a world of ambiguity and complementarity. The eye, shaped by focal practice, does not believe it can or will ever be able to see everything. Rather it carefully gazes, knowing its own limits as a discipline of deep appreciation for the dignity and impenetrability of the gift of a living other.

In sanctuary it is recognized that not everything will or can be known, and what is known brings a sense of dependence on the friendship of others. The proportionate learner recognizes the catastrophic break of a disembodied lens that assumes technical calculation can and should peer into and at all things. The sanctuary recognizes limits to the *ratio* by recalling the human

[158] Ibid.

dependence upon receptivity—the *intellectus*—to others in a world beyond the making of human reason.

The utopian urges of contemporary society based on the accomplishments of technical calculation are, in sanctuary, understood as precisely u-topia, a no-place. Place always involves limit, relationship, shared meaning, and language. This does not bring the satisfaction of every imagined desire. However, without limit, relationship, shared meaning, and language, there may be no human place, only the calculations of our devices and processes or the brutality of a limitless competitive consumption.

Illich sees the need to be specific rather than abstract when speaking of proportionate learning. The universal is understood, and only ever partially, through incarnate practice. Practice is always in a particular place held in common, even if the commonness is denied, fenced in, or trampled upon by technical mastery and calculation. Sanctuary is an attempt to recover the shared commons by giving specific dimensions and place to Illich's concern for proportionate learning.

Illich sees that words that have become uprooted from place and human flesh speak of the immaturity of certain social conditions. This condition gives choice of "the piety and violence" of technical mastery or the "territory where we remain free of adulthood and community obligation."[159] Wendell Berry speaks of Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* as a metaphor for the contemporary condition, "We want to be free; we want to have rights; we want to have power; we do not yet want much to do with responsibility."[160]

The individual unconditioned by a common society is not free in nature but an immature, badly distorted and disproportionate creature. Berry gives an example:

> Some time ago I was with Wes Jackson, wandering among the experimental plots at his home and workplace, the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas. . . . Wes pointed to a Maximilian sunflower growing alone, apart from the others, and

[159] Wendell Berry, *What are People For?* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 76.

[160] Ibid.

> said, "There is a plant that has 'realized its full potential as an individual.' " And clearly it had: It had grown very tall; it had put out many branches heavily laden with blossoms—and the branches had broken off, for they had grown too long and too heavy. The plant had reached its full potential as a Maximilian sunflower. We could say that its full potential as an individual was this failure. It has failed because it had lived outside an important part of its definition, which consists of both its individuality and its community. A part of its properly realizable potential lay in its community, not in itself.[161]

What Illich is speaking of in his language of appropriateness and certainty is precisely what Berry offers in his example of the sunflower. The achievements of technical mastery have allowed for the dislocating of individual development from the meaning of community. What Berry is speaking of is the achievement, in the mature human being, of a certain *tonos* that carries both the limit and the uniqueness of life in the community of reality.

What Illich and Berry offer is a recovery of the Western tradition that saw freedom and solidarity as necessary elements of any truly mature humanity and civilization. This is found in Plato, Aristotle, the Hebrew Prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, Augustine, and Aquinas. Berry takes this tradition and offers the concrete metaphor of the Great Economy:

> The Great Economy, like the Tao or the Kingdom of God, is both known and unknown, visible and invisible, comprehensible and mysterious. It is, thus, the ultimate condition of our experience and of the practical questions rising from our experience, and it imposes on our consideration of those questions an extremity of seriousness and an extremity of humility.[162]

Much like Illich's insistence on the impenetrability yet knowability of the other, the word "economy" refers to something "comprehensible and mysterious." Berry uses it to speak of both the region of the *ratio*, "the closed circle of what can be managed by the use of our wits," the little economy, and those regions of experience too complex and subtle to be registered by the *ratio*.[163] Practically, the small economy must rely on local wits, things, and processes, more than experts and devices from outside. However, all local achievements depend on immeasurable contacts.

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[161] Wendell Berry, *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 115.

[162] Ibid., 56-57.

[163] Ibid.

This is not to utterly refuse, as Illich might be viewed as advising, to construct any institutional process for learning or social practice. Rather it is to construct, aware of the unknowable in the "Great Economy" of presences. The scale of the construction is made modest by its awareness of the larger meanings, personal, cultural, historical, and ecological, on which any practical practice relies. The size of this small economy must truly be manageable by "the use of our wits," but this brings awareness of greater entanglements. "If you want to be universal, sing your village."[164]

The proportionate learner understands that mystery is a necessary word to speak of the ignorance of the learned. Learning that lives aware of an immeasurable pattern, of its own ignorance, as a necessary definition, seeks to found and live in a sanctuary that admits to patterns beyond its own making. Sanctuary is attuned to the small economy, in all its practical and individual necessity, in focal practices that bring awareness of the patterns of a Great Economy.

The discourse Illich has encouraged and participated in the last part of his career transgresses the assumptions of an expansive education, perhaps even that of sanctuary. His is a plea for the vernacular learning of words and acts of an appropriate and certain size that fit the friendship between human others on a common ground. The subtle and not so subtle forms of repression in contemporary life "assume(s) that each one is born as an individual into a contractual society that must be understood before it is lived."[165] For Illich, the best learning is found in the friendship and use of convivial tools. He wrote in 1996:

> I do not plead for some new form of institutionalized haven; rather, I think of niches, free spaces, squatter arrangements, spiritual tents which some of us might be able to offer. This is not for the "dropout in general" but for a small

[164] Leo Tolstoy quoted in Bill McKibben, *Hope, Human and Wild* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 115.

[165] Illich, "Education in the Perspective of the Dropout," *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society* 16 (1996): 261.

> "list" of others, who through the experience of mutual obedience, have become able to renounce integration into the system.[166]

The idea of sanctuary is implicit in Illich's comment. However, his fear of an "institutional haven" is rejected in this thesis by offering something more than his "squatter arrangements" or "spiritual tent." Perhaps this is attempting to build a too substantial home for the "Ark of the covenant" of friendship and proportion. However, Berry's comment about Twain seems to warn of a blindness in Illich:

> There is, then, something stunted in *Huckleberry Finn*. I have hated to think so—for a long time I tried consciously *not* to think so—but it is so. What is stunted is the growth of Huck's character. When Mark Twain replaces Huck as author, he does so apparently to make sure that Huck remains a boy. Huck's growing up, which through the crisis of his fidelity to Jim ("All right, then, I'll go to hell") has been central to the drama of the book, is suddenly thwarted first by the Tom-foolery of Jim's "evasion" and then by Huck's planned escape to the "Territory." The real "evasion" of the last chapters is Huck's, or Mark Twain's evasion of the community responsibility that would have been a natural and expectable next step after his declaration of loyalty to his friend.[167]

Illich has brilliantly outlined the narrowing of the modern imagination. His use of the past as mirror of the deficiencies, and the catastrophic break in language and practice, has brought attention to the grounding of learning in the body of a place of friendship. However, the analysis is stunted because, like Twain, he evades the necessary structures of responsibility required for social life.

It is not that Illich is unaware of the need for discipline and structure. He appeals, for example, to those who shape the University to teach students an *ascesis* and a renunciation of modern certainties on behalf of the other, a presence irreducible to the display and show of technical devices.[168] He looks to Hugh for a guide to training in the discipline of reading with such an *ascesis* of the heart. However, he is reticent to speak more fully of the design of a place for this

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[166] Ibid.

[167] Berry, *What are People For?*, 76-77.

[168] Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past*, 182-185.

learning of convivial disciplines. Reading Illich one could feel that like Twain he goes "deeper and deeper into grief and horror" in bitter outrage at the cruelties and injustices of history.[169] Like Twain, Illich can attack attempts to found new forms with a sarcasm that leads only to despair.

The idea of sanctuary is intended to suggest that friendship and the learning of presence does not occur by accident. Berry's attempt to speak of a "small economy" is precisely the limit required for a structure for learning a proportionate language and life. The attuning to friendship in place, that the small economy takes as the aim of its focal practices, is like Lewis Mumford's regional survey:

> Regional survey must begin with the infant's first exploration of his dooryard and his neighborhood; it must continue to expand and deepen, at every successive stage of growth until the student is capable of seeing and experiencing above all, of relating and integrating and directing the separate parts of his environment, hitherto unnoticed or dispersed.[170]

Mumford is speaking of a curricular design that he sees as overcoming the "abstract intelligence," *ratio* without *intellectus*, with the "cooperative and generative functions of life."[171] The hubris of "the fragment of the full human personality," as it dominates contemporary life, is determined to "make the world over in its own oversimplified terms."[172] While Illich hesitates to suggest any shape for a convivial dwelling, Mumford, Orr, and Berry, to name only three, offer some guidance for the augur's wand.

In the concluding chapter Illich's critical work will be summed up as "learning of presence without education." As a critical move beyond Illich's curse and renunciation, the idea of sanctuary will be reviewed as a development of his analysis. What will be presented is not a

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[169] Berry, *What are People For?*, 78.

[170] Lewis Mumford, *Values for Survival* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), 151-2.

[171] Lewis Mumford, "Utopia, the City, and the Machine," quoted in David Orr, *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 127.

[172] Ibid.

blueprint or a curricular design. Rather, it is a suggestion of what taking Illich seriously might mean for those who are concerned for focal structure, things, and practices.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: LEARNING WITHOUT EDUCATION

Disintegration and Education

> At the present rate of progression since 1600, it will not need another century or half century to tip thought upside down. Law, in that case, would disappear as theory or a priori principle and give place to force. Morality would become police. Explosives would reach cosmic violence. Disintegration would overcome integration.
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> Henry Adams, *A Letter to Henry Osborne Taylor*, 1905

The attempt to educate in a system of schools that are an embryonic form of the surrounding society is a common practice of contemporary public education. Dewey proposed a curriculum that gave to the student an experience of all the "types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society."[1] He did so for the same reason Mumford was critical of an abstracted intelligence, in order to encourage a cooperative, generative, and "liberating source of unpredictable and uncontrollable creativity."[2] This language expresses the hope Illich holds for learning in the presence of others.

However, the school structured to be an embryonic form of present society will continue the progress of disintegration. Illich agrees fully with Adams, contemporary life has introduced the disintegrative force of formalized technical measures. In so doing, Illich stands solidly in "the western tradition that begins, roughly, with the Greeks, finds a certain perfection in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, and an intellectual flowering in the high Middle Ages."[3] He is a defender of the tradition of tension between the *intellectus* and the *ratio*, pointing to the disintegrative impact of the over-extension of the artifacts of the *ratio*.

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[1] John Dewey, "The School and Social Progress," quoted in David Orr, *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 127.

[2] David Orr, *Ecological Literacy*, 127; Orr, *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1994), passim.

[3] Lee Hoinacki, "Ivan Illich - A View of His Work," photocopy, Bremen, Germany: November 28, 1995, 1.

As Eric Fromm commented, Illich is a radical humanist who resists the "progression of disintegration" on behalf of human "growth and full unfolding."[4] This involves for Illich a proportionate learning appropriate to a certain human place in the cosmos. Technical devices and processes are dangers because, when exceeding limits, they desensitize awareness to the proportions of human presence. Without the discipline of friendship, the self can pretend to technical mastery and lose somatic vitality. The fantasy of technical mastery consumes others and creation, forgetful that human knowledge can never completely measure the truth of the structures of interaction.

Illich speaks in defence of the vernacular, particular, and locally known. This defence is made with full recognition of the tragedy of poverty, conflict, and lack of guaranteed comforts. The choice for Illich is not between a utopian world of planned satisfaction of every imagined desire, or the backward ways of the rustic. Rather, the choice is between lives of learning in self chosen proportions, limited by friendship's obligations, or ones of manufactured desires, limitless greed, and unsustainable consumption.

Illich defends, and seeks to recover, the Western tradition of the cosmic and the unknowable mystery of presence. He is Socratic in his affirmation that wisdom is the claim of the knowledgeable that they are ultimately ignorant about the full workings and measure of virtue and presence. Science may be able to more finely measure certain aspects of reality than ever before, but each measurement only underlines the fragility of human life, and its dependence on patterns beyond the grasp of the human *ratio*. I may know my child's heart rate, blood pressure, and grade point average, but I can never know her mind.

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[4] Eric Fromm, introduction to Illich, *Celebration of Awareness* (London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd., 1971), 9.

If one has no ear for proportionate learning, for lives that seek to find ways of living that respect presence as beyond value, then no argument can convince, or manufacture a law of human dignity. For Illich, Adams is prophetic when he notes that inner moral sensibility "will disappear as theory or a priori principle and give place to force" when law is not founded on an awareness of appropriate and certain proportions. This is the drift of those who support an unlimited technological expansion as the solution to human problems, and of those who argue that only institutional force can guarantee compassionate treatment of the weakest among us. Human law and human power, when they exceed certain limits, exhibit the hubris that brings, as in Greek tragedy or Old Testament Prophecy, the chaos of destruction.

The problem, then, of the endless expansion of educational curriculum or of production and consumption, is in the continuation of a tragic and ancient hubris. If scholastic reading reduced reality to a text to be scanned for correct information, the icons of Bill Gates's Windows has the force to seduce the eye, from a hesitant gaze at the face of the other, to a staring at and consuming of a show of "technogenic mirages."[5]

> Then I began to get the point of Illich's essay[s]. His struggle to articulate an ethics of the gaze directly confronted the disembodied distortions of Wired. Without ever having seen the magazine, Illich understood the character of its militant promotion of a senseless world. Like MTV, Wired is simply one more advertisement for the latest technological gimmicks in algorithmic visualization.
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> . . . . Illich stands in the position which says that the senses are involved in the act of knowing, are indeed integral to one's being. The important questions in the territory of Wired do not revolve around some new kind of pop pornography, for example, . . . sex in virtual reality. Rather, these technologies challenge traditional understandings about the metaphysics of reality. Do persons still exist today?[6]

When Illich speaks of *homo educandus*, or this *Wired* humanity, he is asking, in both cases, if human persons of real presence can exist in a world dominated by manufactured devices and

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[5] Quoted in Lee Hoinacki, "Friendship in the Writings of Ivan Illich," photocopy, Ocotepec, Mexico: July 22, 1995, 14.

[6] Lee Hoinacki, "Ivan Illich - A View of His Work," 5.

processes. Human sensibility and ambition are educated to expect technical efficiency. The design and manufacture of a virtual reality of institutional devices and processes is substituted for the unpredictability of somatic encounter. The contemporary personality is educated to be restless before any discomfort of nature or slow quickening of presence. Illich holds fast to hope in the surprise of a somatically felt other.

David Gabbard in a recent essay has called Illich's position "an environmental postmodernism."[7] In doing so he correctly identifies Illich as one who "proffered serious challenges to the legitimacy of the Modern Project."[8] He, using Wyschogrod's "impulses of postmodernity," identifies Illich as a postmodern thinker.[9] However, while Illich features these impulses in his work, it does not mean he is best read alongside other postmodern critics. What Gabbard seems to forget is Illich's rooting in a spiritual tradition that is discontinuous with the modern project.

Illich is "postmodern" only if postmodernity can mean the continuation of a spiritual tradition that is pre-modern in origin. Illich attends to the dilemmas posed by modernity because he wishes to remain loyal to an image of humanity as a somatic presence that is not defined by either modern atomistic individualism or systematic collectivism. He practices a spiritual austerity that seeks to conserve traditions of dependence and fundamental communion in communities of locally and somatically felt conviviality. These local communities of friendship may take new forms, but they remain continuous with tradition and honour the wisdom of past practices over the novelty of any "postmodern" devices.

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[7] David A. Gabbard, "Ivan Illich, Postmodernism, and the Eco-crisis: Reintroducing a "Wild" Discourse," *Educational Theory* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 174.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), xvi-xxii.

The "postmodern impulses" Illich demonstrates are rooted in the spiritual practice of attending to the human condition, respecting its limited and fitting position in particular ecologies. The cosmic order is only known for Illich in the particular ethos of a somatically bounded community. It is best received, not in an over-extension of the *ratio*, but in the receptive humility of the *intellectus* hospitably focusing on the gift of the other. The order of things is not the truth as discerned by a universally applicable rational method. The *ratio* is a force properly limited to an ancillary position in providing tools for fitting human beings in a particular place and ethos. It has no power to reveal a grand system or theory that explains all the details of a generic humanity. Rather, its use is in reminding humanity of its fundamental relationality and dependence.

The differentiality in reason from community to community that Wyschogrod associates with postmodernity is for Illich the premodern wisdom of humility before the mystery of relationality. For Illich this is to honour the Western tradition of Incarnation as a freely chosen austerity of technical devices in respect for the alterity of others. The other "postmodern impulses" of Illich, his focus on the somatic, the radical alterity of others (past and present), the empowerment of local communities, the use of modern tools to subvert modern purposes, his decentralized democratic instincts, come from his attention to the force of Incarnation. This is an understanding of the human as a being of relational depth and complex interdependence that in conviviality transcends any technical or institutional accomplishment.

As Gabbard does indicate, and in contrast to many postmodern thinkers, Illich does not make absolute the discontinuous aspects of self, other or world.[10] The "others", whether they are other selves in a particular cultural location, ancestors, the "other" within ourselves or the "other" as a face of nature, are in Illich's ethical view to be convivially engaged. This brings Illich to critically evaluate any attempt to merely place the devices of technology and consumption into different

[10] Gabbard, 181.

hands. The difficulty with such proposals is that they do not challenge a deep moral confusion about the nature of selfhood. For Illich the self is best understood as a presence that is relationally complex in its entanglements with a past, a world, a culture, and the natural order. To reckon with these entanglements would bring a learning of epistemological limitations and technical modesty.

Gabbard wishes to equate this technical modesty with Cherryholmes' description of a critical pragmatism.[11] This is a communal process of decision making about what constitutes the good, the beautiful, and the true. It has no reference to rationally derived "universal norms that produce 'definitive' and 'objective' decisions."[12] Epistemological, aesthetic, and ethical decisions are made in the pragmatic attempt to further the convivial life of a community grounded in a place. However, for Illich "the radically distorted view of what human beings can have and want," requires a cultural revolution that awakens the self to the ineffable and mysteriously complex, but nevertheless always present alterity of Being.[13] While Illich respects the initiative of local communities and individuals, there are real spiritual and physical limitations that if exceeded by communities and individuals destroy conviviality and the physical conditions for human life.

Illich cannot be easily clustered with other postmodernists, ecologically minded critics, or critical pragmatists. His work and thought is sensitive to the differentiality and alterity of the postmodern, but does not follow its positive evaluation of nearly all that is radically discontinuous. He is concerned that the pragmatic considerations of community not be lost in the application of global technological solutions. However, he hints that each local pragmatic consideration is enmeshed in larger, and not ever fully measurable, cosmic patterns. His critical view refuses both simple pragmatic solutions and universally applicable techniques. He is passionately concerned

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[11] Cleo Cherryholmes, *Power and Criticism: Poststructural Investigations in Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), 179.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness a Call for Institutional Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 181.

that human learning not be reduced to training in consumer and corporate techniques or to a fragmented individualism.

The constructive difficulty is that Illich appears to be unconcerned that, while the best legislation, school, or community cannot make a self compassionate and austere in the use of technical devices and processes, some places have to be identified or founded that provide protection and a commons where this sensibility is fostered and encouraged. While people cannot be educated to deeper appreciation of presence, mystery, and surprise, they can learn and recover this depth in places where boundaries reflect particular somatic limitations and complexity.

In *Tools for Conviviality* Illich makes clear, that past certain limits, devices and processes create more difficulties and illnesses than they relieve. As prosthetic tools, the artifacts of human making should have precise objectives. They should be as unencumbered by distracting technical complexity as possible. They must be made accountable in use to the user, and not a professional elite. Convivial tools encourage local somatic community relations, and consume as little of creation as possible. Technical complexity has discouraged local, somatic, and community relations. Those so educated are fit, not for learning of limits in convivial relations, and acceptance of realities beyond human manufacture, but for further consumption of educational products, and expanded professional hubris.

Illich cites evidence that this is the impact of understanding learning as a consequence of "education." However, even if one is unconvinced of the totally negative impact of education in contemporary life, at least his warnings about the theoretical over-extension of the word "education" should help clarify a discipline. Illich, in counseling a study of the history of the idea and use of the word "education," is awakening the field of philosophy of education to a study of presuppositions at least as revolutionary as Kepler's move from the paradigm of heavenly spheres to that of orbital paths.

Education properly names a technical and institutional process, historically unique to the Western world of the last 400-500 years. It grew from the techniques and practices of writing, reading, and instruction developed from Greek and Semitic alphabetical tools through the scholastic reading developed by late Medieval monastics. The technical and institutional formalization of these various techniques provides the structure for the unique institutional process called "education." Education should be studied as an historically unique phenomena whose orbit brings certain presuppositions that can be examined critically.

Illich suggests that education as an historically peculiar device has damaged and distorted the proportionate learning of human presence in local communities dependent on patterns beyond technical measure. He takes for granted that his readers have sensed a disintegration in ecological and human communities. If the reader has no sense of the disintegration of convivial paths, Illich has little hope of convincing him of the meaning of the deprival. To "go under" by no longer trusting in the somatic gravity and surprise of real human presence is only prevented by friendship as trust in a living other.[14]

In Borgmann's language, focal practice and things clarify the simple patience of those who seek the joy of a certain appropriate place in the complex entanglements of locality, community, and within human limitations.[15] He adds descriptive clarity to Illich's convivial tools. He contrasts focal practice with the use of complex devices and the over-growth of technical processes that give the illusion of simplicity and ease. Borgmann finds practices that are focal—the path of the distance runner, the Eucharistic meal, the game of pick-up ball at the neighbourhood ballpark—can

[14] David Cayley and Ivan Illich, *Ivan Illich In Conversation* (Concord, ON: House of Anansi Press, 1992), 243.

[15] Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 190-5.

free the self, awakening awareness of the place a particular being holds in a community or cosmos.[16]

Learning that comes of focal practice is not bound to education, or confined to technically managed outcomes. The runner may be disciplined to a measured path, but each run brings her to the edge of herself and into a new insight about the rhythms and flows of her body as it is present to the complex world in which she runs. The liturgy of the Eucharist is a certain and well worn text, but it intends to bring the communicant in touch with a community and presence physically and locally tasted, but cosmically affective. The game of pick-up ball is a playing by familiar rules and with familiar faces, but, freely chosen, it draws one into a game of seeing the complex relationships between persons, skills, and innate somatic limits. Borgmann does not simply renounce all attempts at ordered practice. He patiently attends to existing signs of presence, and places of focal practice, even in a world dominated by the force of inflated educational expectation and technical hype.

The construction of the place, an inner or outer sanctuary, where such focal practices and convivial things can be engendered and founded, is broadly spoken of in Illich and Borgmann. Borgmann is more confident in giving voice to constructive observations than Illich. There is a need, with Borgmann, to go beyond the theoretical and critical to suggest, no matter how tentatively, how sanctuaries might be drawn on the ground of an educationally defined society. If large institutional structures and devices, with global capacities to define and standardize learners, are not accepted as the defining theoretical pattern, alternatives must be imagined that incarnate the convivial and engender focal practices.

Illich has cleared the ground, but has not marked a new outline upon it. It was never his intention to do so, for fear of assuming the power to guarantee salvation in yet another round of

[16] Ibid., 201-204.

formalized techniques and institutional devices. Sanctuary is intended, as chapters four and five suggested, as a place where institutional and technical hubris are discouraged by a range of focal practices and friendships on a common ground. Sanctuary is intended as a place ordered less by government, market, institutional form, and technical process and device, and more by the relationships between presences in a common place.

Illich's critics suggest his rhetorical displays exceed his grasp of the complexity of social mechanisms. Education defined as the social device and institutional force promoting progress in skills of the *ratio* has provided access and benefits to its students and to society. However, Illich draws attention to the need to see education as a unique form of learning under the assumption of the scarcity of means and the necessity of technical devices for its promotion. It should not be imputed upon past social practices or other cultural patterns. Illich wishes an examination of education as a unique social construction, that is neither necessary nor inevitable in any cultural configuration.

Rather than concluding this thesis with this assessment of Illich, a safe and conventional ending, the challenge is taken up to suggest alternatives to education as conventionally understood. One existing model, the L'Arche communities, that imperfectly exhibits some of the proportions of sanctuary will be cited. Some specific suggestions about schools and curriculum, that are in ways consonant with Illich's views, will be offered, as culled from the work of David Orr and Wendell Berry. The intent is not an exhaustive survey but to place a few markers in the relatively unexplored territory of philosophy of learning for real presence. In critique of Illich it is suggested that there is no place in a world of presences that escapes the limit and demand of some institutional form for conviviality.

L'Arche and the Dangers and Possibilities of Learning

The Western tradition that Illich is deeply rooted in inspired Jean Vanier to imagine the creation of a community called L'Arche. The very name connotes sanctuary, a place guarded from the corrosive powers of chaotic political and mercantile hubris. The original L'Arche was intended as a place, Vanier writes, "that rises above prejudice and fear of difference, a family witnessing that the only way to build peace and unity is to recognize our own poverty and our need for others."[17] Vanier unashamedly says that this was done naïvely, he did so not realizing the difficulties. However, as a professor of Catholic moral philosophy he is not without credible intellectual insight.

L'Arche was intended as a hospitable place where ordinary gestures of care, unmediated by professional or institutional functions, could define a sanctuary. People with various mental and physical handicaps lived with those who recognized "their own poverty and need for others." The legal demands for a society were met to satisfy the civil authorities, but the inner practices were dictated by the need for the self to be in community with others in order that a meaningful identity might be found. The homes are not ideologically structured, while religious ritual is a focal practice in all of the homes. Rather, L'Arche is structured around the human need for convivial tools, practices, and relations:

> Through all these questions and difficulties (and there were many!) I began to see more clearly the role of people with handicaps, and thus the specific vocation of L'Arche. Visitors were struck, as I myself had been, by these men who, although they were so poor and rejected, were such bearers of life and love. They are so different from intellectuals or people who have power, who often live behind masks or think they are superior and hide their hearts. . . . Their thirst for friendship, love and communion leaves no one indifferent: either you harden your heart to their cry and reject them, or you open your heart and enter into a relationship built on trust . . . Hidden in those who are powerless is a mysterious power: they attract and awaken the heart.[18]

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[17] Jean Vanier, *An Ark for the Poor: The Story of L'Arche* (Toronto: Novalis, 1995), 11.

[18] Ibid., 26.

Vanier is not speaking of some unambiguous guarantee of professional help or some universal demand to solve the problems of human-kind. Rather he is speaking of the certain and appropriate response to an other in need. This "awakening of the heart" is the receptivity of the *intellectus* to attend to the other, not as projection of our ego, but to a particular other. This may take the expression of offering bread, but its profoundest expression is in friendship and in the domestic tasks of creating a dwelling place where friendship can be sustained. L'Arche, in contrast to professionally run institutions, is informed by the *ratio*, the measure of our abilities and disabilities, but has a focal practice of attending, within that measure, to the other with the depth, receptivity, and obligation of a friend. The tools used are to the measure of the human other. They are viewed only as prosthetics to aid human expression and not as solutions or substitutes for a human touch.

Vanier is unashamedly Christian but says of L'Arche "that it wants to walk humbly with different traditions, not create its own church with its own rules, worship and liturgy."[19] The communities of L'Arche are found in a variety of cultures, from Asha Niketan in India to the largely Roman Catholic homes in France. There is no universal L'Arche, only the relationships between each particular home as each attempts to attend to the particular challenges of friendship and community life in their specific location. The universal principles of hospitality and humility are experienced in local communities: "If you want to be universal, sing your village."[20]

What L'Arche is an example of is a society defined by convivial practices and things. It is clearly limited and each home has certain and appropriate dimensions. It impresses on its stronger members their need to learn from the weaker. The weaker are given the confidence and tools fitting their needs. There is an austerity and simplicity of forms and yet a richness and joy of presence.

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Leo Tolstoy quoted in Bill McKibben, *Hope, Human and Wild* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 115.

Compulsion is minimally felt and has to do with the direct functioning of the dwelling that all share and not the demands of market consumption or educational accreditation. While there are tragedies and recognized errors, the community does not run away from facing these by grasping at an institutional process or an improved technical device. Rather it faces human frailty by accepting "our need and poverty" and seeking the only relief possible, forgiveness that "restores us to a community and its ancient cycle of loss and grief, hope and joy."[21] This is a learning of the limit and gift of human presence.

If one has experienced a L'Arche community one has known a pattern that, as Borgmann suggests of focal practices alongside technical devices, "shines by its example." The homes are not without human pain and conflict, but they are places where there is a resonating compassion, a real speaking, a vernacular tongue that is untrained by institutional demand but alive with friendship. They are not a panacea and they do not pretend to be. They are sanctuaries of real presence, where shared poverty finds joy in learning how to find friendship with a particular other in a particular place. They allow the tyranny of endless technical improvements, economic expansion, and educational advance, to be revealed viscerally. Illich's important intellectual work may draw the mind to see the crisis in contemporary life, but L'Arche practices a modest alternative.

The moral theory and philosophical vision of L'Arche is one that understands human presence to require belonging and difference. Belonging is not a smooth mechanism or found in a place free of all ambiguities, a Disneyland for the soul. Belonging "is a terrible place. It is the place where our limitations and our egoism are revealed to us."[22] This is in a sanctuary where reconciliation with human frailty is sought. The real presence of human pain comes as a recognition that there is no escape from belonging in the force or violence of technical mastery or institutional management.

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[21] Wendell Berry, *What are People For?* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 79.

[22] Vanier, *Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together* (Toronto: Griffin Press Ltd., 1973), 1.

Belonging means living with our own and other's specific limitations and gifts. In L'Arche's sanctuary the human capacity to forgive and find meaning in a shared life hopes in the surprise of encounter with the difference of the other, we learn by appreciating difference.

Realistically, it is recognized, this difference comes as both gift and uncomfortable challenge. The point Vanier, and Illich, make is that you cannot have an art of joy in belonging without an art of suffering difference. The attempt to avoid the particular by living in generalities or in a virtually real system only makes meaningless the unavoidable suffering of difference that living in the real world brings. The attempt to deny the challenge of difference and to be rid of all ambiguities through attaining a "perfect knowledge," is an encumbrance to learning the necessary art of belonging day by day in a world of difference. Socrates' wise confession of ignorance is concretely practised by learning about one's self through the challenges of the other's difference.

L'Arche is a concrete example of a community that attempts to limit technique and institutional process, as Illich would have hoped, on behalf of friendship with the other. Imperfectly, but concretely, it embodies hope in an austerity that is receptive to the difficulties and gifts of human presence. Not a place of solution, it is a living community of learning through difference the appropriate and unique contours of life together on a common ground. Surprise, hope, proportion, language with roots in particular experience, limit, and celebration are lived out in these unique and never duplicated places of sanctuary.

The mission of L'Arche admirably and simply states what so much of Illich's writing and historical analysis aims human life towards:

> 1. To create homes where faithful relationships based on forgiveness and celebration are nurtured;
> 2. To reveal the unique value and vocation of each person;
> 3. To change society by choosing to live relationships in community as a sign of hope and love.[23]

[23] The mission statement of L'Arche, 1999.

The first statement is clear and non-utopian. Homes, not merely storage spaces, are places where pain is felt and acknowledged, conflict known, forgiveness necessary, and celebration at the reunion of difference. The focal practices of such places are ones that bring a recognition of human limitation as receptivity to the other and the complex particularity of human life. Faithful relationships are ones of focal practice that, through pain and conflict, seek forgiveness and celebration of difference as the only meaningful home for human belonging. The art of real presence is, in these sanctuaries, not perfectly practised, but always returned to in trust as the only hope for human learning.

The language of the second statement recovers the word "value" by placing it with the word "vocation." Value is not meant as a measure of economic exchange, its contemporary definition. Rather, value is linked to the dignity of each as found in the person's vocation. It is not what each one produces or knows, but rather the character and particular human face shaped by practice in response to others. The vocation of human being is to find the fitting place that is peculiarly ones own. L'Arche is a place of proportionate learners who seek to find their inner character in focal practices appropriate to their certain vocation in a world of inter-related others.

This does not mean technical accomplishment, although it often involves learning certain competencies. However, these competencies are not reflective of a managed institutional or technical standard. Rather, they are standards that have to do with acceptance, forgiveness, and appropriate practices. They are vocational values that are rooted in a shared life together. For some this means learning to hold a fork or spoon and being at the table. For others this means interpreting Aquinas. The difference in vocation is appreciated as the place each holds, unique in dignity and limitation, in a living community. Each one's value and vocation has in this way both inner meaning and outer significance. These values and vocations are revealed by the practices of the community, the life shared together.

The third point of L'Arche's mission is remarkably similar to Illich's call for a cultural revolution. It does not presuppose that L'Arche has a political agenda that others must adopt. It does not imply that L'Arche will in any way engage in political activism, or attempt to socially engineer a revolution. Rather it hopes for social change, as Illich has written, by "living these changes."[24] L'Arche communities, by facing the facts of human frailty with patience and love, have created a sanctuary of celebration where human beings are provided not just with shelter and food but have the dignity and joy of friendship. By living this community life L'Arche is engaged in a "cultural revolution," not one dictated by ideological or institutional force, but by the practices of particular human beings.

The various L'Arche communities recognize, as Illich does, the need for cultural transformation. However, the mission statement makes it clear that the territory a particular culture or community can attempt to encompass is limited. Over-extension creates plastic words, slogans, and institutions that are shallow in meaning and often intolerable menaces to local creativity. The work of social activists unrooted in the limits of community practice, are at best slogans and moralistic examples. At worst these persons and movements seek to control local creativity, to engineer the behaviour of others, to "educate" the masses, and often encourage the production and consumption of disembodied distortions. In contrast, L'Arche embodies a community that lives out the changes it seeks, aware of the limits, errors, and ambiguities of life together.

There are dangers in L'Arche. Community life always lives in the tension between the appropriate and the unique. Certain behaviours can tear apart the social solidarity of community. Some acts are obvious abuses of power. More difficult are the attempts within to expand or transform community life to include behaviours once thought taboo or unnatural. What are the

[24] Illich, *Celebration of Awareness* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1970), 15.

limits to change before one must leave a certain community and found another? L'Arche does not pretend to have an answer, but rather seeks to encourage a continuing compassionate journey to live with difference and to also live in common. Novel forms will emerge as human communities find ways of having meaningful life together as real presences.

The modesty of learning that comes in such a sanctuary is in stark contrast to the hubris of the educated. The educated claim to have achieved a certain institutional standard of knowledge that allows them to exercise controlling powers. The L'Arche members recognize that learning is precisely that action of coming to face the limits of one's powers in the uniqueness of another's gifts. A completed education is not required to participate, but endless learning is integral to participation. If one has particular technical knowledge or skill it has its meaning and power only as it is made accessible to others. Technical competence if isolated from the common life, the particular limits and gifts of human life together, is a dangerous illusion of self-sufficient control.

L'Arche offers an alternative cultural pattern that neither attempts a pre-modern anti-technological purity nor a utopian technical perfection. Rather, it begins with the practical and limited realities of life together, and next asks what tools for learning are proportionate and maximize participation and awareness of difference. L'Arche communities do not blueprint an alternative, but suggest that endless expansion of educational institutions and economic production are not the only alternatives to human ignorance and poverty. Living within the limits of a shared life in friendship may give the freedom of proportionate learning.

Illich's response to present institutions has moved from reform to a renouncing curse. However, the facts are that institutional life is inescapable. Illich has lived in institutions of education as a professor, making space within for communities of gifted students for reading and conversation that is subversive of the institutional ends. L'Arche suggests a model for reshaping human institutions beyond this intellectual elite.

L'Arche is perhaps of limited use in changing educational institutions. However, L'Arche practices a form of speaking, reading, and writing that is highly disciplined in receptivity to presence and the ambiguity of life in community with irreducible differences. These practices are guided by a hesitation to think only systemically. L'Arche homes encourage a modest desire to learn, recognizing the somatic and linguistic limitations of human life and the impossibility of viewing and measuring all the patterns of the cosmos as known in a place. Wendell Berry opens the discussion of such modest dwelling to the meaning of words and place.

Sanctuary: Learning to Stand by Words and in Place

Wendell Berry has written in essay, short story, and poem of a way of living and speaking that has its roots in place and community life. He writes of the "epidemic illnesses of our times" as being expressions of the disintegration of a common language rooted in particular voices and lives lived in particular communities and places. Berry, as he teaches literature at the University of Kentucky and farms in his local community, has been concerned for both the accountability of language and the accountability of the users of language. This accounting is necessarily internal, concerned with how fitting the words are to a subject, and external, how fitting they are to a "larger community."[25]

If words only have esoteric and subjective content then they do not participate in a larger community and are hermeneutically crippled. However, "that kind of language rarely exists alone, but it is accompanied, in a complex relationship of both cause and effect, by a language diminished by objectivity, or so-called objectivity (inordinate or irresponsible ambition), which ends in confusion."[26]

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[25] Wendell Berry, *Standing by Words* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), 25.

[26] Ibid.

What Berry points to are the two sides of what Poerksen and Illich have called modular language or plastic-words. This is language which has all the appearance and weight of scientific precision, but has only the vague emotional power to configure and shape desires for an endless array of processes and products. For example the sentence, "education teaches communication for a better life." The slogan operates by having no real subject, direct object or indirect object that exists as a particular somatic form. Yet it invites belief in this faceless process because it teaches an equally faceless process claimed to be the betterment of something called "life." Such sentences are commonly spoken and often passionately defended as profound or moral truths. However, they are referentially closed systems, naming nothing specific under a confused appeal to everything in general.

The sentence, "We in this culture teach our children how to write and speak with clarity so that they may better be able to understand each other," is less compact but says something open to discussion. What is it about writing and speaking clearly that requires it to be taught? Is teaching writing and speaking any longer necessary? Are children taught these skills just in order that they can better understand each other? The first sentence closed discussion by allowing the real ambiguity of a cultural situation to go unnoticed behind the assumption of the beneficial work of vague and abstract processes. The second sentence invites consideration of particular circumstances and persons. It is certainly narrower in scope. Therefore, it can be brought into account because it is both more precise and clearly states its goals:

> 1. It must designate its object precisely.
> 2. Its speaker must stand by it: must believe it, be accountable for it, be willing to act on it.
> 3. This relation of speaker, word, and object must be conventional; the community must know what it is.[27]

[27] Ibid.

These three points encourage a modesty about the power of generalization. Berry insists that there is necessarily a relation of writing and speech to specific communities and places if it is to be affective for human well-being. While there is a profound modesty about the universal application of any academic statement or writing, the writer or speaker "must believe it, be accountable for it, be willing to act on it." This, Berry reminds us, is the "common assumption of private conversations."[28] Without these assumptions friendship and meaning are eroded. It is precisely this lack of "standing by words" that undermines social solidarity and trust. What Berry sees is that educational institutions and academic disciplines have increasingly, through specialization and abstraction, made "these common assumptions" uncommon. The attempt to eliminate from study all extra-disciplinary values and "the issue of quality," has impoverished academic disciplines and made their language separate from any larger habitat. Berry speaks of linguistic science as an example:

> Mr. Winterowd's linguistic "science" thus views language as an organism that has evolved without reference to habitat. Its growth has been "arbitrary," without any principle of selectivity.
>
> Against Mr. Winterowd's definition of literature, it will be instructive to place a definition of Gary Snyder, who says of poetry that it is "a tool, a net or trap to catch and present; a sharp edge; a medicine, or the little awl that unties knots." It will be quickly observed that this sentence enormously complicates Mr. Winterowd's simplistic statement-message dichotomy.[29]

What Berry and Snyder are encouraging is a view of language that has evolved and should be recovered as a convivial tool uniquely fitting and meaningful in a habitat. Beyond any dichotomization of statement and message, of abstraction of substantive meaning from practice, words should recover their complex place in human communities. Like "the awl that unties knots" words do so not because they have universal application, but because they have specific meaning in

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 28; W. Ross Winterowd, *The Contemporary Writer* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 291-303; and Gary Snyder, "Poetry, Community, and Climax," *Field* 20 (Spring 1979): 29.

a community of use. This is to suggest that words must be rooted in the complex world of somatic encumbrances, even if they attempt to speak of mystery or patterns that are not strictly contained in the somatic. Even when speaking of ultimate things, words must not pretend to be able to leave the incarnate behind. When words hesitate and are modest before any impulse to command universal meaning they admit a difficulty unresolved by any impulsive fluency of technical manipulation.

Berry is encouraging a standard of words in educational practices that refuses to pretend to be "objective" if that means isolated from common practice. This is to encourage an ethical concern that research and academic writing should be required to be honest, which means an "indispensable connection between language and deeds."[30] What Berry is saying is that educational institutions should teach research that recognizes the ethical limit of abstraction and disconnection from social consequence and habitat. The internal accounting of disciplines must not be severed from the external accounting of common practices and place. Language should be accountable for "possibilities opening both inward and outward."[31] If the study of economics, for example, proceeds without awareness of the real human faces and places that are "subject" to its research it is dishonest. Berry writes of how such hubris forgets the incarnate at the peril of meaning, practice, and human community:

> This community speech, unconsciously taught and learned, in which words live in the presence of their objects, is the very root and foundation of language. It is the source, the unconscious inheritance that is carried, both with and without schooling, into consciousness—but never *all* the way, and so it remains rich, mysterious, and enlivening. Cut off from this source, language becomes a paltry work of conscious purpose, at the service and the mercy of expedient aims.[32]

Berry is pointing out that academic or poetic language, when it loses its root in the ongoing and complex lives of a human community living in a particular place, can pretend to either

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[30] Berry, *Standing By Words*, 31.

[31] Gary Snyder, 21.

[32] Berry, *Standing By Words*, 33.

transcend the limit or to "impose [a] desired response."[33] The manipulative compliance or technical simplification, that is unquickened by friendship and companionship, and has some speedy simplistic "expedient aim", is empty of any regard to the ambiguities and real limitations of somatic existence. These easy moralisms or technical manipulations seek efficient predictable outcomes in place of real presence that requires constancy, loyalty, and patience in friendship. Ignoring the real presence of others as of inherent worth, it either idealizes the passions, the extremes of romance, or reduces human community to researchable phenomena.

The language forms Berry wishes to limit and draw back from are "the sickly beauty of generalized emotionalism," the gibberish of the "press release" and the immorality of "technical abstraction."[34] Beyond the sickly, the purposefully reductive and specialist babble is a disciplined language "many times more trying, difficult," and realistically modest.[35] It does not hope in a precision of technical devices to vanquish all ambiguities but rather in the precision of practices rooted and limited in use by human communities and places. On the other hand, it does not give up all human meaning to generalized emotionalism. This is precision that is not of the ego-obsessed subject, academic specialist, or of technical manipulation. This is the tension between the real complexity of human experience, where nothing is absolutely bad or good, ordered or chaotic, and the attempt to speak and act with some consistent and moral solidarity.

Educational institutions governed by Berry's three conditions would necessarily require all students and faculty to be disciplined by writing and speaking that reflected a community life of practice in "the complexity, the cross-graining, of real experience."[36] The inward accounting of a poem, a piece of literature, an academic monograph or piece of research must be made accountable

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[33] Ibid., 32.

[34] Ibid., 34.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 35.

to external virtues and behaviours. The speaking and writing of the academic would not pretend to "precise control over objective reality."[37] The research or writing would not pretend that academic freedom or research can escape from the ambiguity and difficulties of moral consideration, friendship, and human community.[38]

This would provide resistance to the tendency of academics to think of the human crises and realities involved in studying Homer, Computer Technology, Ecology, Economics or Cloning, as technical problems or studies for specialists. If these things require a complex language it should be a language strong and fine enough to inspire moral actions and engage a human community beyond any purity of technical discipline. Language in educational institutes, if it were guided by Berry's three conditions, might have a greater capacity as a living discourse encouraging actions of friendship guided by modesty and concern for the well-being of specific human communities.

Berry suggests that this standard of language, rooted in human community and place, does not give "grand and perfect dreams" or pure technical efficiency.[39] Rather its measure does not forget what Illich so profoundly affirms, the particular human other. Not forgetting but having the faces of the others in their particular places always in mind, the academic, the poet, the social activist, or the educator cannot easily commit the evil of over-extending and abstracting care. The modesty and the admission of being unable to manage or measure a global technology, culture, or economy refuses "the technological and a totalitarian ideal" of a global village on behalf of place particularity:[40]

> People and other creatures would be known by their names and histories, not by their numbers or percentages. History would be handed down in songs and stories, and not reduced to evolutionary or technological trends. Generalizations

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[37] Ibid., 37.

[38] Ibid., 38.

[39] Ibid., 60.

[40] Ibid., 61.

> would exist, of course, but they would be distilled from experience, not projected from statistics.[41]

David Orr has taken this concern for the honest relationship between language and deeds and specifically applied it to the curriculum of the University. To stand by words means, for Orr, specific changes in the academy that allow for a focus upon place. Place is not easily defined. It does not make for neat intellectual divisions. Yet, place can easily be brought to mind for it is the physical and social habitat that is most immediate and at hand. It requires no heavy technical device to scan, in most cases it can be walked through or cycled in a day. Place is complex and requires a high degree of emotional and intellectual responsibility, sensitivity, and sophistication.

This is to take Illich's crucial observations about the over-extension of education, and to suggest that human somatic realities must always begin and end with life on a particular ground. Attempts in philosophy or economics, computer technology or biology, theology or sociology, to operate outside the boundaries of place bring the errors of over-generalization and have had devastating impact on ecological and human communities. If place, as the only healthy ground for human presence, was at the centre of pedagogical practice, educational institutions would harbour sanctuaries for human presence in community.

Orr's suggestion will be used here, not as a detailed solution, but as a way of more concretely envisioning what some of the implications of Illich's work might be if one attempted to transform what he regards as beyond saving. This may be a betrayal of Illich's work, but it is intended as a friendly criticism.

Orr points out that consideration of place always involves a natural integration of thinking and doing that necessarily respects inherent worth. Place is a complex of cultural, political, ecological, historical forces that somatically are known in the very things eaten and touched, the persons in

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[41] Ibid., 62.

close proximity, the immediate institutional and natural patterns as they limit and give richness in somatic experience: "The study of place involves complementary dimensions of intellect: direct observation, investigation, experimentation, and skill in the application of knowledge."[42] Orr is not discounting in any way intellectual rigour. Rather, he is suggesting that a study of place brings excellence of insight:

> There is a coordination of senses and thought, and also a reciprocal influence between brain activity and material creative activity. In this reaction the hands are peculiarly important. It is a moot point whether the human hand created the human brain, or the brain created the hand. Certainly, the connection is intimate and reciprocal.[43]

The specific things, people, and landscape of place are critical to mind for its own well-being. Whitehead, one of the greatest metaphysicians of the twentieth century, insists that the local and particular are fundamental and reciprocal elements in the work of the mind. The abstraction that never touches earth, the mechanical act that never reflects on the presences it touches, are signs of the lack of awareness of the intimate connection between any fineness of thought and action. In place the discipline is recovered and discovered where knowledge loses much of its abstractness and acts must account for the ambiguities and difficulties of real presence. The easy compartmentalization of technical specialization, theory from practice, ethics from technical process, are challenged in the intimate to and fro of place. Life in place may not be easy, but it disciplines thought and action to attend to all the subtlety and interplay of human presence. Well-being in place requires acts of friendship and care that have reflected on the deep connections between culture, nature, tradition, power, and meaning.

Place, if it were at the centre of curricular study, would not allow for the over-specialization that still affects most contemporary processes. Thinking in place requires that the study of

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[42] David Orr, *Ecological Literacy*, 128.

[43] A. N. Whitehead, *Aims of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 50.

religion, society, history, agriculture, economics, or literature, be seen as interrelated aspects of a human community attempting to live well in a place. Thinking in place, as it involves all of these elements in "intimate and reciprocal" relationship, encourages modesty of specialization. After all, place "can be understood only on its terms as a complex mosaic of phenomena and problems."[44] The educational institution shaped by concern for place would not encourage the development of specialists who regard their discipline as free from all moral constraint or attention to the human faces affected by research. The technical devices and processes studied and developed would have as their larger measure the well-being of a human community living within the moral demands of place.

The need for broadly informed human judgment is inescapable in any learning concerned with living well in place. The view of learning as proportionate, introduced by Illich, is a reference to the traditional understanding of knowing as organic, unified, comprehensive, connective, and moral. The narrower view of most educational institutions—technical specialization and division, institutional standards and abstraction from local concerns, and preparation of specialists—ignores the wisdom of this long held view. Place requires both a fineness of appreciation and a broadness of judgment informed and morally shaped by concern for the well-being of a particular locality.

The educational institution informed by place would be concerned not just for the creation of specialists but for providing a place for the developing moral character of its faculty, staff, and students. The broadly informed human judgment required in place, would draw all specialization and all language back to roots in a human community attempting to live well in a specific landscape: "The necessity for words and facts to return to their objects in the world describes one

[44] David Orr, *Ecological Literacy*, 129.

of the boundaries of a university, one of the boundaries of book learning anywhere, and it describes the need for humility, restraint, exacting discipline, and high standards within that boundary."[45]

In order to understand a poem or a star, a tree or a person, we must hold together all our experiences, inherited wisdom, observation, reading, and contact. To treat a human, no less than a star, as only a detail for the exegesis of some specialist study is to cut short meaning and informed judgment. When we call a person by name or indicate a star, we are "at once in the company" of this person or thing and surrounded by "ancestral voices calling out to us all that [these things] have been and mean."[46] Knowledge abstracted from this visceral chain of being and imagination is a paltry thing ignorant of the "condition of being human in this world."[47] The study of place would necessarily bring richness and moral subtlety back into the study of the arts and sciences.

Within the present public schooling system both this concern for the study of place and L'Arche's emphasis upon respecting the gifts and limits of presence was recently illustrated to me. I was invited to speak to my daughters "gifted" class. On arriving I noticed the raport, care, and easy way the teacher greeted and allowed each person in the class to both be grounded in the place and open to learn from the comments of others. It was refreshing to experience a place, a sanctuary, in the large institutional setting where the ritual practices opened up the teacher and student into an encounter, both limited and complex, that honoured with exacting discipline each human presence. The teacher modeled a "disciplined dissidence" that allowed for the freedom of each person to explore and learn in a shared place.

Place would certainly bring, as Illich and Berry have suggested, "humility, restraint, exacting discipline, and high standards," but it would also bring an appreciation of the fecundity in the complex occasions of common meaning and existence. Human meaning is necessarily

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[45] Wendell Berry, *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 80.

[46] Ibid., 80.

[47] Ibid.

heterogeneous and cross-fertilized. While generalizations from specializations are inevitable, the generalizations are most profound when made, as Whitehead suggested, in recognition of the real solidarity in the occasions that make up human reality.[48] Generalization begins and ends in the complex solidarity of the occasions of place.

Ian MacLaren, a Professor of Canadian Studies and English at the University of Alberta, has his students join him in a canoe journey on the North Sakatchewan. He sees that this experience has slowed his students down from information gathering to attending to place. They begin to read "the world beyond both the anthropocentric and technological."[49] The cross-fertilization and heterogeneity of place, convivial tools (canoe and paddle), and community allowed for a richer and subtler learning.

Orr, like Dewey and Whitehead, reminds the educational purist that learning should not stop "at the point of mere intellectual comprehension."[50] Learning is practice in a world. He has worked to modify curriculum by considering the physical realities of a campus, its use of energy, food, waste production, and relationship to surrounding communities. The student who is challenged to think about the meaning of Lear's tragic hubris as it illustrates the practical politics of a place, or how certain chemicals produced by the electrical generating plant near campus are present in the air and soil, would be motivated to act. Projects that involve the student in the wider community, in all the ambiguities of ascertaining a moral act, responsible use, and richness of community life are the core of a curriculum guided by attention to place.

Illich identifies much of the pathology of contemporary education and life as the disintegration of identity rooted in the diverse and sustaining ground of friendship. In speaking of place, Berry

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[48] A. N. Whitehead,. *Process and Reality: an Essay in Cosmology*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 18ff.

[49] Ian MacLaren, "I Heard the Aspen Tremble," *Museums Review* (Fall, 1995): 38.

[50] David Orr, *Ecological Literacy*, 129.

and Orr recall the need for appropriately sized communities living convivially in a locality. Orr writes of the development and use of convivial tools and skills that have clear purposes in an identifiable and ecologically viable community. He presents a curriculum of practice in human community as a place for convivially learning the art of living well by using as little as possible.

Conclusion: Learning Without Educated Answers

This thesis has argued that contemporary education and life are too narrowly defined by technical devices and processes. Illich was introduced as a thinker who made a plea for the incarnation of human presence as an obligation to limit all techniques and institutional forms in care for the unique but fragile gifts of human being. Education, as long as it re-enforces the dominance of institutional values, consumption, and production, cannot act as a place encouraging the virtues and art of real human presence.

Illich maintains, as Hugh of St. Victor did in the twelfth century, that learning in friendship is the only antidote to technical hubris. In or outside educational institutions, sanctuaries must be found or founded that encourage learning built upon the virtues of friendship and in resistance to the values implicit in institutionalized and technically defined education. Sanctuary, however, requires a constructive vision that needs more than the curse or the jeremiads with which Illich concludes much of his analysis of contemporary life. Human hope is never without some expectation of building a dwelling in the world.

This is why this thesis has attempted in its concluding sections to both affirm Illich's deepest insights and to be critical of his lack of constructive proposals. His most important critics have not been enemies who wish to defend the values of a contemporary tech-gnosticism, but friends and fellow travelers who seek a constructive response. Borgmann, Berry, Vanier, and Orr have been featured in various ways as extending, clarifying, and offering strategies to counter the evils Illich has named. Sanctuary has been suggested as a metaphor for a constructive alternative. Bianchi,

Berry, Vanier, and Orr have been extensively used to attempt a tentative outline of places that engender real human presence.

If we are convinced by Illich to curse and resist the technical disintegration of the art of real presence, it is not enough to simply respond by echoing his, "To Hell with it!" Constructive work must follow, no matter how modest and cautious. The hope of friendship is not merely in the ethereal but in joint projects to build dwellings in which convivial patterns can flourish. Some technical skills, appropriate and modestly attuned to friendship and place, are needed. To learn of real human presence without education, a meeting house must be found to shelter human conversation.

Signs of a sanctuary for human presence can be found even in the "strategic plan" of such innovative school boards as the Calgary Public School Board, where we read:

> The Calgary Board of Education will foster a climate where individuals, groups and our community continually strive toward enhancing quality relationships. Our learning organization will encourage a collaborative environment characterized by active listening, respect and caring in understanding our purpose.[51]

While Illich may distrust this "planned community" and expansion of the school system, such statements may provide opportunity within institutional structures for sanctuaries for learning of human presence. The act of listening, respecting and caring foundational to such marginal communities as L'Arche can be expressed by the teacher who takes seriously the rhetoric of the school board. The learning place may become a diverse community where we learn to live with "responsibility and accountability" in the mutual discourse of friendship on a common ground.[52] This may provide the opportunity for a paradigmatic shift from institutional definition to convivial practice.

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[51] Calgary Board of Education, *Strategic Plan 1998-99,* (Calgary Board of Education, 1998).

[52] Ibid.

The discourse of friendship may originate out in the open air, as Socrates walked with Phaedras along the banks of the Illissus. However, the climate of our historical position is such that strolls by the Illissus are not enough, if they ever were. The hard work of founding and sustaining dwellings that are appropriate to the place and particular traditions of friendship may not be Illich's prophetic calling. However, an augur must engrave the ground or no sanctuary will be built to sustain friendships and give hope to real human presence. Learning without education requires the handicraft of human hands and minds shaping a dwelling in the modest practice of friendship.

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