The *Ellul Studies* Forum

A Forum for Theology in a Technological Civilization

January 1992 Issue #8 ©1992 Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620

In This Issue: Ivan Illich's Theology of Technology

From the Editor

In the last issue I announced that the January issue of ***The Ellul Studies Fourm*** would be devoted to an analysis of the mass media. Various factors have lead me to postpone that issue until next July. In the meantime Carl Mitcham agreed to be our guest editor for this issue. He has gathered an intriguing collection of essays on Ivan Illich's critique of technology and its theological implications. Because of the number of essays there will be no book reviews or bibliograpy in this issue. My thanks to Carl for his hard work in bringing this issue to press.

Darrell J. Fasching, Editor

About This Issue

Carl Mitcham, Guest Editor

This issue of the *Forum* is devoted to recent reflection by Ivan Illich and some of his associates. The work of Illich has been praised by Jacques Ellul. See, e.g., *The Technological Bluff* (1990 trans.), p. 108: "Ivan Illich was the best if not the first of those to emphasize thresholds...." And Illich likewise has made favorable reference to Ellul. See, for example, *Medical Nemesis* (1976, p. 102, note), as well as the remark in "Health as One's Own Responsibility." But more than favorable cross references justify this special issue.

The truth is that for Illich the fundamental challenge of technological civilization is a theological one. This is not, however, generally appreciated.

Born in Vienna in 1926, Illich grew up in Europe. He studied theology, philosophy, history, and natural science. During the 1950s he worked as a parish priest among Puerto Ricans in Hell's Kitchen in New York City and served as rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico. During the 1960s he founded centers for cross-cultural communication first in Puerto Rico then in Cuernavaca. Since the late 1970s he has divided his time between Mexico, the United States, and Germany. He currently holds an appointment as Professor of Philosophy and of Science, Technology, and Society at Penn State University.

Although his first two books *The Church, Change and Development* (1970) and *Celebration of Awareness* (1970) are both theological tracts, after that point his work veers off into social criticism that makes little if any explicit reference to the spiritual life. *Deschooling Society* (1971), *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), *Energy and Equity* (1974), and *Medical Nemesis* (1976) are all ostensibly monographs in social criticism.

The second of two subsequent collections of occasional pieces *Toward a History of Needs* (1978) and *Shadow Work* (1981) hints again at theological issues, especially in the long article entitled "Research by People," which is in fact a commentary on the work of the 12th century theologian, Hugh of St. Victor. The following year the new monograph on *Gender* (1982) reasserts Illich's demand for attention to unexplored aspects of economics, while *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (1985) alludes once again to theological dimensions.

Then following *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (1988), which once more makes reference to the intellectual tradition of the Victorenes, Illich undertakes an extended

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study of the *Didascalicon* of Hugh of St. Victor. This book has already appeared in German and French, and will do so shortly in English as *In the Vineyard of the Text* (University of Chicago Press, 1992). With this work theological concerns are explicitly if elliptically engaged.

Although not as explicitly as Ellul, there has nevertheless been a tension and an alternation between theological and sociological reflection in Illich's work. One difference is that with Illich the theological has been much less well attended to and recognized, even among his careful readers. No doubt this may be in part because of the more illusive and allusive character of his theology. In the Catholic, unlike the Protestant tradition, what is more important than the explicit witnessing to faith is hidden friendship and liturgical practice.

The seven pieces included here are all the result of reflection among a close circle of friends. The lead piece is actually translated (by Jutta Mason of Toronto, Canada) from the transcript of a talk in Hannover, Germany, September 1990, and retains something of its occasional flavor. The interview (granted to a German newspaper after the talk in Hannover, and translated by Stephen Lehman, an Illich associate from the Van Peltz Library at the University of Pennsylvania) with commentary by Lee Hoinacki, are attempts to clarify Illich's provocative critique of what has been called "health fascism."

Hoinacki (born 1928), has worked with Illich since 1960, and recently finished editing a book-length interview between Illich and CBC radio producer David Caley (Jutta Mason's husband), which will appear in spring 1992. "The Teddy Bearracks" by David Schwartz, executive director of the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council of Pennsylvania and another friend of Illich, illuminates from a different angle aspects of Illich's critique of the health establishment. Illich's letter on "Posthumous Longevity" again offers a critical-theological perspective on advanced medical technology and its impact in our technological civilization.

The final two pieces -- a letter by Illich and a commentary on the letter by Hoinacki -- both deal directly with the issue of institutionalized (technologized?) priesthood. Together they constitute a critical revisiting of the issues first broached in "The Vanishing Clergyman" (included in *Celebration of Awareness* over twenty years ago). Illich's letter was written in response to a surprise visit during the summer of 1990. Hoinacki's commentary is in the form of a memo response to Joseph Cunneen, editor of *Cross Currents* magazine, as a result of his decision not to publish Illich's letter. (It is perhaps worth noting that Schwartz's "Teddy Bearracks" has also been rejected for publication numerous times, although it has become an oft- referred to story.) That two pieces by Illich take the form of letters to friends is itself not insignificant.

It is hoped that these pieces will help intensify awareness of the special spiritual challenges of "life" in technological civilization, and may serve to foreshadow a more substantive work on these topics by Illich in the near future. The texts have been brought together with the assistance of Hoinacki and the toleration of Illich. Special editorial work to finish things off has been done by Mary Paliotta.

The Ellul Studies Forum is published twice a year: January and July.

Editor: Darrell J. Fasching
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About the Ellul Studies Forum

The Ellul Studies Forum was first published in August of 1988. Two issues are produced each year (in January and July). The goal of the ***Forum*** is to honor the work of Jacques Ellul both by analyzing and applying his thought to apsects of our technological civilization and by carrying forward his concerns in new directions.

What the ***Forum*** is not intended to be is a vehicle for *true disciples* or *Ellul groupies.* The whole thrust of Ellul's work has been to encourage others to think for themselves and invent their own responses to the challenges of a technological civilization. Although we do review and discuss Ellul's work, it is not our intention to turn his writings into a body of sacred literature to be endlessly dissected. The appropriate tribute to his work will be to carry forward its spirit and its agenda for the critical analysis of our technical civilization .

Ellul invites us to think new thoughts and enact new deeds. To that end we invite you to submit essays on appropriate topics. If you have suggestions for themes that you would like to see addressed in future issues, they are also welcome.

Subscriptions

To Subscribe to the ***Forum*** for one year (two issues), send your name and address and a check made out to ***The Ellul Studies Forum*** in the amount of $6.00 ($8.00 outside the U.S. The check must be drawn from the foreign branch of a U.S. Bank or be a U.S. Postal Money Order). Back issues are $4.00 each.

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Department of Religious Studies
University of South Florida,
Tampa, FL 33620

Bibliographic Reviews

Readers are invited to contribute to the ongoing annotated bibliographic column on theology and technology. Please send books or articles to be noted, or notes themselves, to:

Carl Mitcham
Science, Technology & Society Program
Pennsylvania State University
133 Willard Building
University Park, PA 16802

Book Reviews

If you woud be willing to be a reviewer of books for the ***Forum***, send your *vita* and a list of the areas/issues you would be interested in reviewing to our new Book Review Editor:

Nicole Hoggard Creegan
North Carolina Wesleyan College
Rocky Mount, NC 27804.

Forum

Ivan Illich: Toward a Theology of Technology

Health As One's Own Responsibility: No, Thank You!

Ivan Illich

I am convinced that health and responsibility belong to a lost past and -- being neither a romantic, a visionary, nor a drop-out -- that I must renounce both of them. But only if I succeed in unequivocally articulating this renunciation of health and responsibility can I escape the reproach that I appear here as a mere rhetorical critic.

This presentation forms part of a larger joint project for the "recovery of *askesis* in higher education." My preparation included a close collaboration with Dirk von Boetticher. We discussed every sentence with a group of young friends. When, in what follows, I say "we," I mean only this group.

We are occupied with a reflection on contemporary certainties and their history -- that is, on assumptions which seem so commonplace that they escape critical testing. Over and over we find that the renunciation of these very certainties offers the only possibility remaining for us to take up a critical position regarding that which Jacques Ellul calls *la technique*. And we want to free ourselves from it, not just run away. For that reason, my reaction to "taking responsibility for one's own health" is an emphatic "No!"

But there is a risk here. Our "No, thank you!" in response to a suggestion for a new hygienic anatomy can be interpreted and used in five different ways to do exactly the opposite of what we intend:

1. First of all, the "No" can be understood as a call for the necessity of tutelage. Health, so it might be claimed, is too valuable, too sacred to leave to the discretion of lay people. I apodictically reject this arrogant disempowerment. For thirty years I have publicly defended the total decriminalization of self-abuse. And I continue to insist on the complete elimination of all legal statutes which regulate the consumption of drugs, and unconventional and/or irregular healing. Following Paul Goodman, I build my argument on the respect we owe to the dignity of the weakest.

2. Secondly, my fundamental "No" has nothing to do with the presumed scarcity of healing agents. Today, people are dying of hunger, not from a lack of medicine or surgical interventions. And the poorer people are, the more helplessly they become the victims of ever cheaper medicine. For two decades, I have defended the position that the consumption of medicine, just as of liquor, tobacco and lotteries, ought to be subject to taxation as luxuries. Through taxation of dialysis, coronary bypasses, and AZT simple medical procedures such as appendectomies could be financed for everyone.

3. I do *not* say "No" as a global thinker seeking an unobstructed channel for ecological dictatorship. I can imagine no complex of controls capable of saving us from the flood of poisons, radiations, goods and services which sicken humans and animals more than ever before. There is no way out of this world. I live in a manufactured reality ever further removed from creation. And I know today its significance, what horror threatens each of us.

A few decades ago, I did not yet know this. At that time, it seemed possible that I could share responsibility for the re-making of this manufactured world. Today, I finally know what powerlessness is. "Responsibility" is now an illusion. In such a world, "being healthy" is reduced to a combination of the enjoyment of techniques, protection from the environment, and adaptation to the consequences of techniques -- all three of which are, inevitably, privileges. In the Mexican valley that I know, the blue corn, under whose planting calendar the village still names its cyclical feasts, was wiped out fifteen years ago. And there is no money for the destructive techniques needed to grow hybrids. There is also no protection against the poisonous clouds blowing over from the agribusiness plantation. But new places of employment are opened up for the pedagogy of health, with sops thrown to barefoot green enthusiasts in the process. Therefore, my "No!" is certainly not a "yes" for a pedagogy of health which entails the management of poisonous systems.

4. And I particularly do not say my "No!" to a new ethics of responsibility for health because I see in modern sickness and dying occasions for finding oneself. The suggestion that we ought to accept the unavoidable epidemics of the post-industrial age as a higher kind of health is an impudence currently fashionable among pedagogues. But such instruction in suffering and dying is shameful. Care through bereavement counselling, education for dying, and the making of health plans aims directly at the destruction of the traditional art of suffering and dying, practices developed over hundreds of years.

What sickens us today is something altogether new. What determines the epoch since *Kristallnacht* is the growing matter-of-fact acceptance of a bottomless evil which Hitler and Stalin did not reach, but which today is the theme for elevated discussions on the atom, the gene, poison, health and growth. These are evils and crimes which render us speechless. Unlike death, pestilence and devils, *these* evils are without meaning. They belong to a non-human order. They force us into impotence, helplessness, powerlessness, *ahimsa*. We can suffer such evil, we can be broken by it, but we cannot make sense of it; we cannot direct it. Only he who finds his joy in friends can bear up under it. Our "No!" is thus a universe apart from every "Yes!" to the secondary accompaniments of progress.

5. And, finally, it would be either stupid or malevolent to label the "No" of which I speak as cynical indifference. Quite the contrary! In the forefront of our thoughts stand the many -- innumerable people -- for whom four decades of development destroyed the cultural, technical, and architectural space in which the inherited arts of suffering and dying were formerly nurtured. *Today*, the vast majority is poor, and becomes poorer. When we say "No!" to implanting health at home or abroad, we first of all speak about something which for me is unthinkable: four billions in new wretchedness. Only if we ourselves start with "No, thank you!" can we attempt to be there with them.

The ground of our ethical "no," therefore, does not place us in the service of any of these five: professional paternalism, the ideology of scarcity, systems thinking, liberation psychology, or the new "commonsense" which asserts that in the fourth world no grass has grown over the consequences of development. But it grows, that grass; it is called self-limitation. And self- limitation stands in opposition to the currently fashionable self-help, self-management or even responsibility for oneself -- all three of which produce an interiorization of global systems into the self, in the manner of a categorical imperative. Renunciation of health seems to us to be a starting point for conduct ethically, aesthetically, and eudaemonically fitting today. And I refuse to define self-limitation as responsibility for myself. With Orwell, I would rather speak of decency.

The concept of health in European modernity represents a break with the Galenic-Hippocratic tradition familiar to the historian. For Greek philosophers, "healthy" was a concept for harmonious mingling, balanced order, a rational interplay of the basic elements. People were healthy who integrated themselves into the harmony and totality of their world according to the time and place they lived. For Plato, health was a somatic virtue, and spiritual health, too, a virtue. In "healthy human understanding," the German language -- despite critiques by Kant, Hamann, Hegel and Nietzsche -- preserved something of this cosmotropic qualification.

But since the 17th century, the attempt to master nature displaced the ideal of the health of a people, who by this time were no longer a microcosm. This inversion gives the a-cosmic health created in this way the appearance of being engineerable. Under this hypothesis of engineerability, "health as possession" has gained acceptance since the last quarter of the 18th century. In the course of the 19th century, it became commonplace to speak of "my body" and "my health."

In the American Declaration of Independence, the right to happiness was affirmed. The right to health materialized in a parallel way. In the same way as happiness, modern-day health is the fruit of possessive individualism. There could have been no more brutal and, at the same time, more convincing way to legitimize a society based on self-serving greed. In a similarly parallel way, the concept of the responsibility of the individual gained acceptance in formally democratic societies. Responsibility then took on the semblance of ethical power over ever more distant regions of society and ever more specialized services for delivering "happiness."

In the 19th and early 20th century, then, health and responsibility were still believable ideals. Today they are elements of a lost past to which there is no return. Health and responsibility are normative concepts which no longer give any direction. When I try to structure my life according to such irrecoverable ideals, they become harmful I make myself sick. In order to live decently today, I must decisively renounce health and responsibility. Renounce, I say, not ignore I do not use the word to denote indifference. I must accept powerlessness, mourn that which is gone, renounce the irrecoverable. I must bear the powerlessness which, as Marianne Gronemeyer tends to emphasize, can perhaps rob me of my awareness, my senses.

I firmly believe in the possibility of renunciation. And this is not calculation. Renunciation signifies and demands more than sorrow over the irrecoverable. It can free one from powerlessness, and has nothing to do with resignation, impotence, or even repression. But renunciation is not a familiar concept today. We no longer have a word for courageous, disciplined, and self-critical renunciation accomplished within a community but that is what I am talking about. I will call it *askesis*. I would have preferred another word, for askesis today brings to mind Flaubert and Saint Antony in the desert turning away from wine, women and fragrance. But the renunciation of which I speak has very little to do with this.

The epoch in which we live is abstract and disembodied. The certainties on which it rests are largely sense-less. And their worldwide acceptance gives them a semblance of independence from history and culture. What I want to call *epistemological askesis* opens the path toward renouncing those axiomatic certainties on which the contemporary worldview rests. I speak of convivial and critically practiced disciplines. The so-called values of health and responsibility belong to these certainties. Examined in depth, one sees them as deeply sickening, disorienting phenomena. That is why I regard a call to take responsibility for my health as senseless, deceptive, indecent -- and, in a very particular way, blasphemous.

It is senseless today to speak of health. Health and responsibility have been made largely impossible from a technical point of view. This was not clear to me when I wrote *Medical Nemesis*, and perhaps was not yet the case at that time. In hindsight, it was a mistake to understand health as the quality of "survival," and as the "intensity of coping behavior." Adaptation to the misanthropic genetic, climatic, chemical and cultural consequences of growth is now described as health. Neither the Galenic-Hippocratic representations of a humoral balance, nor the Enlightenment utopia of a right to "health and happiness," nor any Vedic or Chinese concepts of well-being, have anything to do with survival in a technical system.

"Health" as function, process, mode of communication, and health as an orienting behavior that requires management -- these belong with the post- industrial conjuring formulas which suggestively connote but denote nothing that can be grasped. And as soon as health is addressed, it has already turned into a sense-destroying pathogen, a member of a word family which Uwe Poerksen calls plastic words, word husks which one can wave around, making oneself important, but which can say or do nothing.

A political deception. The situation is similar with responsibility, although to demonstrate this is much more difficult. In a world which worships an ontology of systems, ethical responsibility is reduced to a legitimizing formality. The poisoning of the world, to which I contribute with my flight from New York to Frankfurt, is not the result of an irresponsible decision, but rather of my presence in an unjustifiable web of interconnections. It would be politically naive, after health and responsibility have been made technically impossible, to somehow resurrect them through inclusion into a personal project; some kind of resistance is demanded.

Instead of brutal self-enforcement maxims, the new health requires the smooth integration of my immune system into a socio-economic world system. Being asked to take responsibility is, when seen more clearly, a demand for the destruction of meaning and self. And this proposed self-assignment to a system that cannot be experienced stands in stark contrast to suicide. It demands self-extinction in a world hostile to death. Precisely because I also seek tolerance for suicide in a society which has become a-mortal, I must publicly expose the idealization of "healthy" self-integration. People cannot feel healthy; they can only enjoy their own functioning in the same way as they enjoy the use of their computer.

To demand that our children feel well in the world which we leave them is an insult to their dignity. Then to impose on them responsibility for this insult is a base act.

Indecent demands. In many respects, the biological, demographic, and medical research focused on health during the last decade has shown that medical achievements only contributed in an insignificant way to the medically defined level of health in the population. Moreover, studies have found that even preventative medicine is of secondary importance in this respect. Further, we now see that a majority of these medical achievements are deceptive

misnomers, actually doing nothing more than prolonging the suffering of madmen, cripples, old fools and monsters. Therefore, I find it reprehensible that the self-appointed health experts now emerge as caring monitors who, with their slogans, put the responsibility of suffering onto the sick themselves. In the last fifteen years, propaganda in favor of hypochondria has certainly led to a reduction in smoking and butter consumption among the rich, and to an increase in their jogging. It has also led to the fact that the U.S. now exports more tobacco, butter, and jogging shoes.

But throughout the world, propaganda for medically defined health coincided with an increase in misery for the majority of people. This is how one can summarize the argument of Banerji. He demonstrates how the importation of western thought undermined hygienic customs and solidified advancement of elites in India. Twenty years ago, Hakin Mohammed Said, the leader of the Pakistan Unani, spoke about medical sickening through the importation of a western concept of health. What concerned him was the corruption of the praxis of traditional Galenic physicians, not by western pharmacopeia so much as by a western concept of health which sees death as the enemy. This hostility to death (sic!) -- which is to be internalized along with personal responsibility for health -- is why I regard the slogan of health as indecent.

Life as blasphemy. The art of the historian consists in the interpretation of traces and texts of those long dead. In the course of my life as a medieval historian, there has been a fundamental change in this task. Before a recent radical transformation -- roughly, in *actio* and *passio* -- it was possible for the exegete to relate substantives and verbs to things and activities which lie within the circumference of his own sensed experience. After this radical transformation, that capacity was lost. This watershed, separating the historian from his object, becomes particularly clear when the experienced body is the subject of historical writing. Dr. Barbara Duden presents this convincingly in reference to body history in the experience of pregnancy. And I myself am made dizzy. How deeply the ways of speaking and experiencing have been altered in the last two decades!

In a very short time, the representation of the substantive concept "life" has prominently emerged. During the Vietnam War, there was still a body count of the enemy; only the lives of Americans were saved. But soon after it was taken for granted that something called "a life" begins and then ends. Around 1969, the *quality* of life suddenly became an issue. Immediately, the physician was required to take over responsibility for *life*. Biomedicine discovered its competence over "life."

Studying the history of well-being, the history of health, it is obvious that with the arrival of life and its quality -- which was also called health -- the thread which linked what is called health today with health in the past was broken. Health has become a scale on which one measures the fitness for living of an immune system. The conceptual reduction of a person to an immune system corresponds to the deceptive reduction of creation to a global system, Lovelock's Gaia. And from this perspective, responsibility ends up being understood as the self-steering of an immune system. "Responsibility" is a word that, as a philosophical concept, only appeared in German around 1920. As much as I might like to rescue the word for future use, to be able to use it to characterize my actions and omissions, I cannot do it. And this is true, not primarily because through this slogan for self-regulation of one's own "quality of life" meaning is extinguished, management transfigured into something beneficial, and politics reduced to feedback -- but because God is thus blasphemed.

I ask you to pay careful attention to my form of expression. I am a Christian, but when I speak here about blaspheming God, I want to be understood as a historian and *not* as a theologian. I can only claim solidity for an argument constructed by a historian. I accepted the invitation to speak in order to contradict the opinion of many I know. I hope I do this respectfully, but I cannot mince words.

I have outlined my thinking. Longing for that which health and responsibility *might* have been in recently arrived modernity I leave to romantics and drop-outs. I consider it a perversion to use the names of high-sounding illusions which do not fit the world of computer and media for the internalization and embodiment of representations from systems and information theory. Further, I consider the renouncing of these fictions a real possibility. And I call the practice of this renunciation an epistemic askesis. I believe that an art of suffering appropriate to contemporary life can grow out of this askesis.

What is important to the argument is to understand that all the central concepts that I discuss here are of profoundly western origin: health and responsibility, life and askesis . . . and God. They were put in the world and became powerful through beliefs that took hundreds of years to come into being. Only if one understands the history of health and life in their historical interconnection is there a basis for the passion with which I call for the renunciation of "life." I completely agree with Dirk von Boetticher when he quotes T.S. Eliot:

Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.

Eliot here inquires about life pertaining to God, about the life of which Christ says in John 11:25 "I am the life."

Aristotle did not know about this. Aristotle knew living beings which were different from all other things because they had "psyche." He did not know "life." As an appearance in the world, only in the 18th century did life acquire that dominant and exclusive significance which gave it the character of its own answer, not from God, but from the world. Lamarck and Treviranus, who around 1800 founded biology as the "science of life" in a conscious turning away from the classifications of natural history, were quite aware of the fundamental newness of their object. This life, which owes its origin and definitions to the world is, however, profoundly influenced by western Christianity, and can only be understood as a perversion of the tradition in which the God become flesh describes himself as life, and calls everyone to this life.

This is mystery. And every person who occupies himself seriously with almost two thousand years of history must admit that not only individual mystics but great cultures between Novgorod and Santiago de Compostella, between Uppsala and Montreal, have honored this mystery. This is simply historical reality, even for a historian who has no concept and no sense of what it means. And just as plain and unquestionable is the derivation of the biological concept of life from the Christian mystery. When seen in this way, the concept of a life which can be reduced to a survival phase of the immune system is not only a caricature, not only an idol, but a blasphemy. And seen in this light, desire for responsibility for the quality of this life is not only stupid or impertinent -- it is a sin.

Translated by Jutta Mason, edited by Lee Hoinacki, from a talk in Hannover, Germany, September 14, 1990

Against Health

An interview with Ivan Illich

Question: "Taking Responsibility for Your Health" is the theme of this conference. Isn't this in accord with your way of thinking?

Illich: I didn't know what to think, because I hadn't intended to come here. I told the conference organizers that I have one single response to "taking responsibility for one's own health": a hearty "No thanks!"

Q: Why?

I: Health and responsibility are concepts from the 18th century. Health in the sense of the health of the people, in the sense of something desirable, begins around 1760, 1770, at the same time as the concept of happiness, the happiness that is inscribed by the Americans in the Declaration of Independence. This is a materialization of the right to happiness around which entire professions were formed whose duty is the happiness or the health of the nation. But even if I make fun of this concept which stems from the Enlightenment, it still made some sense at the time of my birth, 64 years ago. I was also able to give it meaning when I wrote the book *Medical Nemesis*, which begins with the sentence, "The biggest threat to public health is the medical profession." If someone were to say that to me today, I would say, "Well, so what?"

Q: What's changed?

I: We have been deluged with information about it: ozone hole, greenhouse effect, radiation, chemistry, overuse of antibiotics, the destruction of what one now calls the immune system, genetic impoverishment, urbanization. This is not a concept of health. It is adaptation to noise, adaptation to gluttony, adaptation to the rhythms we are living with -- and, above all, adaptation to inner destruction.

Q: Describe this inner destruction.

I: A few days ago I was having dinner in Philadelphia with some friends. A French-Swiss Colleague, Robert, is there. He is speaking to Tracy, wanting to give her a second mug of good apple cider, and she says, "No, my system can't take that much sugar at once. I could be thrown off balance." This woman, now 27, had been in an elementary school in which she had been confronted in the second grade with pictures of the muscles, the nerves and the endocrine system. She projected them into her own self. She does not only think of herself but she experiences herself as something that is turned on and off, something to be regulated, something totally unreal.

Q: In other words, all the concepts of medicine . . .

I: . . . are disembodied . . .

Q: . . . and alienate us from ourselves . . .

I: . . . because we take them from medicine. And I see in the slogan "Health is your own responsibility" a really malicious pedagogical intention which says to us: look at yourself and experience yourself in the perspective of the system- theories which we preach. We tell you that you are a temporarily surviving little immune system in the womb of the world system of the goddess Gaia. She is life and you are a life! And we define life -- like a snake that consumes its own tail -- as the phenomenon that optimizes the chances for its own survival. This excites the Greens who march in the streets and the systems analysts who babble about control of the world and the gentlemen whom I've heard at this conference -- they all talk the same nonsense that I saw a few days ago in Washington, where thousands of school children marched in the streets and cried, "We are against the greenhouse effect, we don't want the ozone hole!"

Q: But who wants an ozone hole?

I: The point is we've got one! We have no alternative but to say: I renounce health. It's terrible. I refuse to delude myself with the possibility of an Enlightenment-like concept. I know that no path will lead me back into the Indian yoga or into the Chinese notion of a heaven and earth that correspond to one another and into which I would dissolve. I admit my powerlessness and experience it profoundly. One cannot do this alone -- for this, friendship, the old *philia*, is the basis -- it won't work without it. But renunciation is possible. Renunciation which is self-aware, critical, exercised with discipline and for which there was once a name -- asceticism.

Q: That sounds very monastic?

I: Yes, I'd prefer another word. One thinks only of the "No, thank you" to wine, women and song. But that has nothing to do with asceticism as I mean it. It is much more challenging. It is a "No, thank you" to the certainties that our society is built on.

Q: For example?

I: Every era is like a firmament, with its conceptual fixed stars, under whose direction the ideas, but also the material experiences of the era come into existence. These basic concepts I call certainties, I should rather say assumptions which sound so obvious that no one examines them. My friends and I have made it our responsibility to write the history of the certainties of the modern era, systematically, carefully and scientifically -- and one of these certainties is health.

Q: You once said that health is a plastic idea.

I: I adopted this term from my teacher and colleague, the linguist, Prof. Uwe Poerksen of Freiburg. He says that there is a new category of words, which we use ceaselessly. They don't refer to anything precise, but they carry great significance and self-importance with them. They are like stones which one throws into a lake, when one can't see where they end up, but they make big waves all the same. He calls these words plastic words, or amoeba words. I

believe that conversation in amoeba words is the reason for our difficulty in getting to the heart of the matter, for example, of my "No-to-health," of my demand for renunciation. It can either be called nonsense, and it is necessarily called that by most people, or it can be seen as vanity: where do you stand, when you pronounce such a renunciation? My point of comparison is historical. For example, in the 19th century "health" meant primarily fewer lice, fleas and mice, larger windows, bandages, access to doctors. Aspirin didn't exist yet. In the medical practice of a doctor of that time -- the historian Barbara Duden examined his notes -- the word health hardly appears.

Q: What did people complain about then?

I: They were tired. Something has gone to their head. They hurt themselves. Their heart was broken .... I would go so far as to say that to propagate "Taking responsibility for your health" is politically insolent. It is asking people to look for something that they should know is not attainable. I am disgusted by experts who can look back 30 or 40 years and know that world health has deteriorated incredibly in the last 20 years and wash their hands of it and beat up on the victims. I angers me that health refers nowadays to me as a system, as "a life." A crazy propaganda has been perpetrated by the concept that each of us is "a life."

The concept "a life" is a Christian-Western concept. It is Jesus' answer to Martha: "Yes, I am *the* life." For 2000 years Christians have believed that to become one with him is to enter into life. This was the only life one knew. The inventors of biology the word comes into existence around 1801 or 1802 knew full well that they had created something new with their life-on-earth, for which there is now a science, biology. This life is increasingly presented as a system, a delicate immune system, to be treated with care, which should always be properly kept in balance. To imagine health as "quality of life" is a further total dehumanization, a radical abstraction and to propagate it seems to me nonsensical, because it is a-sensual, but finally also because, given the Christian connection to this concept, it is even blasphemous.

And "responsibility" in a world in which one cannot even cast a ballot reasonably! In a world in which increasingly that which one earlier called "democratic freedom" has become symbolic conformity. In a world in which you are asked: what kind of birth do you want, c-section, vaginal or maybe even with a surrogate mother? In a world in which you are seemingly given a choice, but in which in reality you only endorse what a given profession has decided to do with you. To trumpet responsibility in such a world instead of saying: People, friends, we are powerless, we must accept our powerlessness to speak of one's responsibility for one's health publicly and normatively is profoundly annoying and offensive.

Q: You have sketched a depressing scenario. Do you also see a hope there?

I: Yes. And it is not only strong, it is also often fulfilled. This scenario of which I have spoken, in which we are very isolated if we seek and preserve meaning, is also an occasion for an intensity of friendship which would hardly be imaginable in a world of inherited ties, familiar culture, middle class values, wealth and security. This is my hope. Otherwise I have none.

Translated by Stephen Lehman
from the Berlin newspaper *TAZ* (23 October 1990)

Reflections On "Health As One's Own Responsibility"

Lee Hoinacki

In the last several years, Illich has begun to talk and write about *askesis* in higher education. To understand the sterility and confusion in the West's institutions of higher learning, one can examine the division of reading which occurred in the 12th century. At that time, monastic reading was split into scholastic and spiritual reading, the former coming to characterize the universities, leading to what today is called "critical thought." Previously, Illich had asked for research into *askesis* in learning. In "Health," he calls for the convivial *practice* of *askesis*. Further, he maintains that to exercise this kind of disciplined "No" today, one needs friends. A striking feature of this piece, then, is the apparent distance between its "positions" and Illich's previous writings. I shall note other instances of this below.

In earlier writings, he has said that modern certainties -- the unexamined axioms on which the West rests -- must be questioned and, in various books, tried to show how this can be done. Now, for the first time, he baldly states that the certainties must be renounced, and begins with a denial of health and responsibility. Of course, these are not the only modern certainties for Illich. But this is an appropriate place to start.

The renunciation of these certainties is necessary in order that one might be able critically to confront what Jacques Ellul some years ago called, *la technique*. This is the first time in his writings on industrial society that Illich explicitly takes up Ellul's concept. In "Health," *la technique* is seen as *the* mode in which contemporary society is organized and managed, or rather controlled, as a system.

In *The Technological Society*, Ellul attempted to analyze modern society, and concluded that because of the *necessary* character of *la technique*, people could not hope to exercise control over their inventions. "Health," taking *la technique* to mean the set of interlocking and coordinated systems in which society is structured, proposes a similar assessment.

Looking around, Illich finds that people today are in a situation of utter powerlessness. Since this is true, no social or political action is any longer possible . . . it is too late -- assuming that such action would be aimed at genuine change. All social action can only work to reinforce the existing systems. Indeed, the more sensible, more rational, more ethical -- the better such action, the worse the result, for the action can only serve to give greater legitimacy to one or several of the systems in place. This will happen because of the character and power of the various contemporary systems.

And this occurs in spite of the fact that modern systems -- as a form of order and control -- lack legitimation in any traditional rite, image, or custom. They are newly constructed and in a constant process of being up-dated. Hence, reform initiatives -- serious or frivolous -- distractions, highly developed specializations, are all welcomed warmly. It appears impossible to find any activity which cannot be appropriated by one of our abstract systems.

In the past, human beings acted through ideas, war-making, law-giving, and social movements to change their respective societies. The insights of "Health" reveal that such is no longer possible. But although I find myself in a position of total helplessness, there remains something I *can* do: Say "No." And Illich clearly states the specific sense in which he *must* say "No." This is the situation of a person who accepts the possibility of blasphemy. And it is Illich's position that blasphemy is *the* characteristic of contemporary society, that is, in its fundamental structure. Our world is built on blasphemy.

Blasphemy is to attribute something to God that does not pertain to the divine goodness, as the denial of that which does so pertain, usually accompanied by an attitude of contempt. But that which is most properly constitutive of the modern project -- the attempt to conceptualize and manipulate reality as a system -- is just such an attribution and denial, colored by a peculiarly modern arrogance. This modern project attributes a systematic character to what is while denying its created nature.

Ultimately, blasphemy is a sin against faith. Through faith, what I see and feel I *know* to be creation. What I see as real exists only by participation, through faith I know that the world *is* only contingently. But the world in which I am placed today is an artificial world, "a manufactured reality ever further removed from creation." This construct, issuing from the inventiveness of human experts, denies creation. In a kind of final hubris, they wish to assume responsibility for what was traditionally understood as creation.

Formerly, whether people acted humbly or arrogantly, trustingly or fearfully, all accepted creation as a gift, as *the* primary gift, the original expression of the divine goodness. But the world viewed as a global system, with the human being seen as an immune system responsible for maintaining order, is to deny this ancient belief.

Aquinas teaches that blasphemy is the most serious sin because it attacks what basically establishes us in the world -- through faith we place ourselves *in* creation. Illich holds that to live in blasphemy is to live in "a bottomless evil," a place where "elevated discussions of the atom, the gene, poison, health and growth" take place. Some years ago, when he was invited to participate in such a discussion, he insisted on "the right to dignified silence," and stood mute on a street corner in Germany to protest, by his "silent scream," the stationing of American missiles on German soil. His action was a step toward the unequivocal "No" about which he writes in "Health."

For the person of faith in today's world, the very first question is: How shall I act, vis-à-vis the systems construct? This is precisely where the denial of faith occurs. Illich believes that one must begin with "No," with a renunciation -- of health. This seems fitting, since health is often viewed as *the* unquestioned "good" of modernity. And modern medicine is said to produce miracles of healing. But, Illich claims, "the flood of poisons, radiations, goods and services which sicken humans and animals more than ever before" is a more accurate characterization of contemporary reality. Here also he is much more explicit than in his earlier writings.

In a strange irony of history, those things for which men and women in the labor movement fought and died must now be recognized as equivalent to deadly poison and radiation. But this can seem a terribly extreme judgment. How is it to be understood?

Today, the planning, production and delivery of goods and services is accomplished in systemic terms. This means, ultimately,

the infliction of a new kind of sickness, something far beyond anything previously seen or imagined in history. The contemporary project is nothing less than to structure society in such a way that no human act is possible.

In the West, we have come to see that a human act is one in which a person, recognizing alternatives, chooses one over another. But this is precisely what cannot be done if one lives in a system. For example, during a recent visit to Germany, I was startled to discover that in places where the public has access almost every door had been fitted with an apparently simple and innocent device: an electronic eye which automatically opens and closes the door. For me it was immediately evident that this is an image which truly illustrates the structure of modern society. One can no longer choose to open the door for someone burdened with packages. One can no longer carefully and quietly close a door, or thoughtlessly -- perhaps deliberately -- slam it in another's face. One can no longer thank a stranger for courteously holding the door. In a word, one can no longer practice virtue -- the comeliness and joy of living have been removed.

The world of interlocking systems -- always being multiplied and perfected -- annihilates the moral beauty formerly shining out from lives illumined by the life-long practice of justice, fortitude, temperance and prudence. Such a mode of living no longer appears possible. The world of systems immerses one in "a bottomless evil" because its structure of society is such that it eliminates the setting in which one can love another. In place of opportunities to create beauty and experience joy, one is locked into the delivery of goods and services. All that which is supposed to establish a high quality of life actually sickens one to death.

Why is it that so few have said so little about these matters? -- if the situation is as Illich claims. One might begin to answer by suggesting that our world is, indeed, as it is described by Alasdair MacIntyre at the beginning of *After Virtue*. Historically, we may have lost the ability to make moral judgments, to recognize ugliness. Further, Illich's discussion of reading in the 12th century can help one to see the situation. Prior to the division into two kinds of reading -- scholastic and spiritual -- one simply entered the book in the act of reading, and the book entered the reader. There occurred a real transformation in one's being, taking place over a lifetime, and made possible through the discipline of a continual *askesis*. The various ascetic disciplines, developed over centuries, were designed to enable one to read in this way, namely, to be transformed through the reading with the result that one came to see -- in charity. Over and over again in the medieval texts one meets the concept, *lumen* light. One was not the same person, before and after the act of reading. And the text was one of substance, eminently suited to invite a person to be incorporated into it.

Over the centuries the scholastic mode of reading -- in which one could imagine an abstract text independent of both the page and oneself -- developed into a kind of lifeless intellectual critique which, in its most extreme form today, finds its ultimate end in the critique, not in the original text, nor in the person of the reader. Contemporary academic specialization distracts one from seeing the world as it is. But contemporary reading vitiates the very act of seeing, that is, seeing as occurred in monastic reading. It is not surprising, then, that the character of our age is recognized, not by academic philosophy, but by those inspired by poetic imagination -- persons such as Czeslaw Milosz, Flannery O'Connor, T. S. Eliot, and Mark Rothko. And it seems quite fitting that Illich, sometimes called a philosopher, does not express himself in the logical arguments generally found in philosophical discourse, but finds his own voice in stories and images.

In "Health" there is scant systematic progression of thought; one might have trouble tracing the line of the argument. He proceeds here and elsewhere -- in a manner similar to what occurs when one is under the influence of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, here, specifically, the gift of understanding (*donum intellectus*). Through this gift, one *knows* through the apprehension of spiritual goods, subtly penetrating their intimate character. With a clarity of vision, one simply sees ... what is there, having first sensed some of the outward aspects. According to Aquinas, the gift is opposed to blindness of mind and dullness of sense. These obstacles originate in the distractions resulting from the sensual delights of venereal and food/drink pleasures, respectively. Today, however, I think that additional, powerful, distractions are also at work.

Why, for example, do so few intellectuals -- secular *or* religious seem capable of penetrating the darknesses of our age? I strongly suspect that the *luxuria* and *gula* of the middle ages do not nearly exhaust contemporary obstructions to seeing. Traditionally, two areas of experience contributed to the sharpening of one's intellectual vision: the very precariousness of existence and the various ascetical exercises practiced throughout one's lifetime in order to purify the external and internal senses. Contemporary religious and secular academics are the most protected and privileged persons in society. They are the ones who most benefit from the securities and perquisites which the various social systems offer. And they seem to be singularly unaware of the need for a *moral askesis*, that is, the complex of disciplines traditionally designed to affect and transform various aspects of one's being and faculties or powers with a view toward reaching a clear vision, a pure insight. In this sense one can recognize that the goods and services of modernity are a poison, sickening one, making one blind.

Now one can focus Illich's call for an *askesis* beginning with a renunciation of the principal illusion, health, that is, survival in a technical system. And such a renunciation can lead one toward the reality of precariousness. The world today is drearily lacking in the sensuality known to the middle ages, but inundated with the abstract fictions of disembodied systems. If one wants to see, it is necessary to free oneself from these systems. Further, faith in these institutionalized guarantees is yet another form of the current blasphemy. In this sense, blasphemy is the source of the darkness in which we stumble.

There is a final point, the most important one in Illich's call, and here it is clear that he proceeds according to insight or gifted vision, not according to discursive argument. This occurs in the discussion of Life ... and ... life.

The founders of biology sensed something which they believed could be the subject of their science. They named this "life," a concept available to them in their culture. They did not create their subject *ex nihilo*. And they had to give their subject meaning from *this* world, for they wished to found a science, a discipline of this world. But, over the years the subject became more and more abstract, totally removed from soil and slime, indeed, finally removed from creation. Their "life" came to get its meaning only from the internal demands of a system today, of an immune system. And this transformation, from a divine gift to a man-made abstraction, constitutes the principal blasphemy of the age.

The Teddy Bearracks

David B. Schwartz

In a local weekly newspaper in New York State the other day there was a short item under the heading "Daycare News."

> On a more helpful note, the _____ Community Hospital is initiating a daycare program for sick children called TEDDY BEARRACKS. Located on the hospital's pediatric unit, the service charges parents $3 an hour, which includes meals, snacks, beverages, and supervision. The service will be open Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and is open to children over two months old whose registration is "on file" before parents need to use the program. . . . There are 16 beds on the pediatric floor and the average daily use is about eight patients. That leaves six to eight spaces open for sick children on a daycare basis. Those spaces may not go very far once flu season hits, but it's a much needed first step toward addressing the real needs of working parents.

At first thought a program like this didn't seem like a bad idea. After all, most day-care programs will not accept children who have the flu or some other kind of illness. This obviously poses a real problem for the many two-job and single-parent families who depend upon day care in order to work. But when I thought further about it some more disturbing implications came to mind. Is this really, I began to wonder, likely to be a program that is good for children and families?

Many people have commented on the increased use of day-care services for children in our society due to economic necessity, changes in the role of women, and erosion of traditional family structure. In a situation in which many adults who might once have been care-givers are working, and in which grandma is in a retirement village, child-raising is changing from a familial task to a purchased service. "When I was growing up in North Philadelphia," a woman told me recently, "we kids were just raised by the block. Any adult was likely to give you a swat if you were cutting up. Everything was all just together."

You have to search to find a place where life is like this anymore in this country. In the changes which have taken place, child-raising has become something which has entered the economic sphere. In the economic world, unlike the community world, there are providers of service and purchasers of service. Providers of service in this case are often human service organizations. Human service organizations, unlike communities, operate under the formal rules that govern large systems, i.e., bureaucratic rules.

In Pennsylvania, day-care providers are now required by law to conduct background checks on the people they hire, following scandals over child abuse in some centers. Day-care centers require registration and admission, and must worry about low enrollment if the staff/child ratio falls below planned economic parameters. In communities you always knew who was with your child because you lived on the same street, or in the same village. You didn't pre-register a child to go to Mrs. O'Brien's house -- you just talked with her. And while there might be economics involved, they were the economics of community; informal, flexible, and outside the formal economic system.

The conversion to child care as a "human service" is visibly underway, through expansion of professional child-raising functions, as the trend moves to completion. Part of the next stage of this conversion can be expected to be the appearance of specialized programs for specific groups. As I thought about all of this I realized after a moment that the hospital's day-care program for sick children probably had significance as a sign that the larger trend had reached a point in which this was already taking place. Even one's sick little child would now be given over to an institution for care.

From the point of view of the individual parents concerned, the development of such a program is probably seen as a blessing. A single mother, after all, might even lose her job if she had to stay home too often to care for her sick child. But I worry greatly about these little children. And I worry about their families.

What must it be like, I wonder, to be a little boy or girl, even as young as a two-month-old baby, and be bundled, sick and miserable, taken out of your bedroom and through the early morning traffic up to the gleaming new hospital wards? The big white building, anxiety-provoking even to us adults because of its images of sickness and death, its complicated machinery and the bustle of doctors and nurses and technologists coming and going -- what must it seem like to a little sick child? What must it be like to be taken over the gleaming waxed floors, under the endless bright fluorescent lights, to a crisp white unfamiliar bed in a ward? The nurses are nice, but they are not Mommy, or Mrs. Fredricks, or probably anyone you have ever even seen before.

Children will adapt to the necessity of being in the hospital when they have the flu. Children are very adaptable. They have always adapted to difficult and even scary and oppressive circumstances. Thousands and thousands of children have spent most of their childhood in sterile institutions and have, in one way or another, survived. We have learned, however, that this experience inevitably leaves scars.

One can speculate on what the scars might be for such children. What ideas might they begin to get about sickness, and what happens to you when you are sick, and what Mommy and Daddy do when you are sick because they are busy with their work? Might we not speculate that at least some children will gain or expand some haunting insecurities about their acceptance, when ill and troublesome? Might they not even begin to get the idea at an early age that when a person is sick or needs something what you do is take them to a big building somewhere where knowledgeable people in white uniforms know what to do?

In my years in human service and public policy I have become convinced that policy and program developments that are potentially injurious to people and to society are virtually always the result of hard work by good people who are sincerely trying to meet a pressing need that is before them. Yet while the immediate need always exists, I have begun to conclude that the ways in which such problems are addressed are usually shaped by larger and often unfavorable factors that are frequently unconscious.

We hear, for example, a great deal these days about the financial pressure on hospitals to utilize beds. We learn that this hospital's pediatric unit of 16 beds has a daily census of eight, a situation that translates in hospital terms into a utilization rate of only 50%. A low occupancy rate can cause difficulty for a hospital. Perhaps this was a factor here, perhaps not. Perhaps the influence was more subtle only that the empty beds exist. No doubt there was a genuine desire to help. Without anyone realizing it, is it just possible that these vacant beds in the hospital ward have "drawn" youngsters into, in their own words (and words signify and reveal a great deal) a "barracks" for sick children -- a "Teddy Bearracks?"

own words (and words signify and reveal a great deal) a "barracks" for sick children a "Teddy Bearracks?"

Could the creation of such a "sick child" program have been unconsciously driven by a combination of the expanding professionalization of child care and the availability of hospital beds? I don't know the details of this particular situation, so I can't say whether this speculation is true. But it makes me wonder.

I know little about programs for children, at least "normal children." My work is concerned with the welfare of people with disabilities. But from the vantage point of my own field, this little program at the community hospital brings a nagging sense of disquiet. For some years much of the work of my colleagues across the country has consisted in trying to take apart the institutional solutions of our predecessors. Our predecessors were wonderful and honorable people -- giants of social conscience and action, in many cases. But as the late Syracuse University dean Burton Blatt pointed out, despite the best of intentions their work for mentally retarded people ultimately led to the loss of everything important for those about whom they cared. We have been trying very hard, my colleagues and I, to learn from their well-meaning but terrible mistake.

I wonder if the most far-reaching result of this little program may not be to further embed the habit of institutionalization in our hearts and in our society. Is not a child likely to learn that institutions, be they hospitals, mental hospitals, reformatories, prisons, or whatever, are the appropriate way to address personal and social problems? What long-term habits may we foster through such seemingly innocent attempts to meet real human needs?

The comparison with my own field brings this question more vividly to my attention. Once we said that children with mental retardation needed to be cared for (permanently, in this case) in large professional facilities, the "state schools." When these became visible failures and our consciences rebelled, we replaced them with smaller "community" facilities like special schools, and workshops, and day-care and treatment centers. Only recently have we realized that even the latter have more in common with big institutions than with true community.

Seymour Sarason, a noted scholar on this subject, commented that even small community centers of this kind paradoxically make the real community's ability to meet problems weaker, for they transfer both the need and the solution out of the hands of the community itself. For the benefit of meeting a short-term need, society pays the price of giving up a portion of its people. This is why the seemingly innocent creation of training institutions for children with mental retardation in the last century eventually led to the fact that I never really met a person with mental retardation until I was an adult. By that time, communities needed to learn all over again that these people were of their own social body, and didn't need to be served exclusively by professionals. This is proving difficult to relearn, for they listened too well to us before.

How curious it is, as I observe sick children starting to get day care in a hospital, to see my own field now moving in the opposite direction! Many people with developmental disabilities have very significant needs. We used to think that they all had to come to the same place. Just last month, though, my organization gave out grants to people to initiate what we term in my field "family support" by building upon the strengths of communities themselves. These children have far greater needs than those of a normal child with the flu, yet they can be cared for without leaving their homes or their neighborhoods. The program's goal is to link up parents and neighbors with each other, to provide petty cash to hire the elderly lady next door, to bring nurses and medical equipment, when needed, right into the child's home. This is being done now all over the country, and there is evidence that it works wonderfully well.

Paradoxically enough, now that we know that this can be done with really needy children, we discover that minorly ill children, children that we don't ordinarily worry about, are being taken right into the very hospital beds that we have finally started to get handicapped children out of. It is enough to make you worried.

If I were a parent and my board meeting was today and my child had the measles, and I couldn't find anyone else to look after her, I don't know what I'd do. I guess as the clock was approaching nine I'd have to take her to the hospital. I'd kiss her and reassure her, before I walked down the long corridor toward my car, that I loved her very much and that I'd be back. I know that children in hospitals tend to have irrational fears that they will be abandoned, that they in some way have been "bad." I would worry about her picking up an even worse bug there on the hospital ward. I know that hospitals tend to be very good places for getting other diseases; there are so many of them there, all right next to each other. And I would worry, deep in my heart as I rushed off to chair my meeting, that I would have to do this again because there was no other way, because everyone did it, and because I couldn't figure out anything else to do.

But I hope after this I might get all of the parents in my block, or at the day- care home, together in my living room and try to figure out some better way for us, all together, to care for our children in our own homes. I hope if I were a hospital administrator with empty pediatric beds, I wouldn't let them even be used at three dollars an hour for day care, even if parents were in need and asked, because I would be afraid of what ultimately might happen if we embarked upon this course. And I hope that if I were a government official making policy decisions regarding hospitals, and it was proposed that hospitals be permitted to offer day care of this type, I would work to prevent it. I hope that instead I might be able to find a little grant to help parents who have set up baby-sitting cooperatives meet those who would like to learn how. I hope I could carefully steer money toward local community-based imaginative solutions that parents dream up themselves.

I am not, in this case, any of these people. So I will just watch the Teddy Bearracks from afar. I think that after a little while it will feel pressure to grow. As the newspaper article noted, eight beds won't be much in flu season once this new program opens its doors. There are so many parents in need, so many children who fall ill. No, eight, I am afraid, surely won't be enough, once we get into the habit.

Posthumous Longevity

Epiphany, 1989

Dear Mother Prioress,

When I spoke with you and Lady Abbess after Advent Vespers you urged me to remember my ties to your sisters. I can assure you that I have never forgotten the roots I have on your side of the grill and the strength I draw from your community's love. And now, prompted by you and Mother Abbess, I invite you all to share a bit in my life. This letter is primarily a plea for prayer for a helpless woman in serious distress, a woman who is my friend. Some of you might also feel moved to accept these lines as an invitation to accompany me to the evil Newland into which she has strayed, and come to agree with me that this region deserves your attention as contemplative nuns.

I am writing as a friend who has known you since before you became a nun more than a quarter century ago. This allows me to write freely and in a personal manner on a very touchy subject. But you will have noticed that I address you as "Prioress." Doing so I am able to speak without worrying about the traps that lie in the domain of privacy and that destroy the traditional style of openness that was characteristic of our ascetical communities. What I write does not call for secretiveness but for utmost discretion.

Let no one among your sisters take scandal at my writing about two real people, myself and a friend. There is something concrete and surprisingly new here on which we -- you and the Church -- need *discretio*. Discretion, which Benedict called "the mother of virtues," is the measured discernment of unique situations; it makes our obedience the very opposite of regimentation. The reflection which I want to foster demands discretion on the part of the reader, but this does not make it "private." Privacy is a newfangled social construct. It depends on possessive individualism which forms divisive opinions. What I want you to share with me is not an opinion, but an almost unbearable anguish at the commemoration of the *undead* who have slipped out of the reach of our ordinary forms of charity.

I want you to pray for my friend. She was born early in this century, brought up as a socially self-conscious Protestant, but was not touched by faith; she has never tasted prayer. Throughout our acquaintance, I admired and suffered her un-godly and grace-less moral beauty. Though these two words may seem offensive in modern English, I use them deliberately, albeit with apprehension. I know of no others which would allow me to note the absence of an evangelical dimension but which, emphatically, imply no evil and tarnish no beauty.

As a young woman, my friend left her own country. She did so in protest against her philistine family, against the sickness of Nazism, and as an alternative to the kitsch in which others of her class and generation tried to salve their conscience. She settled in the forest of Scandinavia. There she lived in obstinate, solitary independence. She earned her living by spinning, weaving, and teaching her skills in a trade school. She also shaped haunting, abstract objects, creating them out of the stuff she had woven on her loom. Occasionally, some of her "sculptures" received international recognition. We came to know each other discussing a soft, long, brown woolen cloth that she had drawn into tight knots spaced at irregular intervals and arranged on aluminum spikes in front of a dull mirror.

When my friend felt that the time had come to let herself die, she looked to me. We had just taken a walk through the woods to a little restaurant where she enjoyed being treated to a slice of venison. Over cranberry sauce, she spoke about her end time. In a couple of months, she would walk down toward the sea, sit under a tree, drink from a bottle of schnapps, and fall asleep in the snow. I knew that she meant what she said. In her rasping matter-of-fact voice, she then asked me to procure something stronger than schnapps to swallow upon reaching the spot near the shore. But I knew that, being who she was, she did not depend on me to get what she wanted. She made the request because she wanted a sign that I had accepted her resolve. After decades of wary independence, she was perhaps ready to acknowledge fear to one friend. She wanted to hold me in her heart when the moment had come to step into the darkness.

On that November day I noticed something special in her -- an unaccustomed serenity, but with a sense of its frailty. Without a word from her I understood that now she was ready for the step, and knew that the moment was precious. Scandinavian welfare systems are efficiently care-full and intrusive. For only a short while yet, the "art of dying" was still within her reach. As she spoke, I saw her life-long, self-willed obstinacy slacken and saw too a glimpse of the glowing embers in her heart. Looking back, it now seems that this was the dreaded moment at which the Lord passes by. I would not want to abandon the ancient maxim, *timeo Deum transeuntem*.

That year on the same wooded path I spoke with Dom Helder Camara about the terrain onto which faithful friendship leads the believer if his friend is *desgraciado*, "graceless." How to let my hope become so transparent at that moment that it does not throw the slightest shadow on the other? Helder said that fidelity means to stand by, aware of one's empty hands, and without expectation. We might or might not ever come to see the glow of grace in the other's heart. I remember his words as much as his wrinkled face, "When your hands are folded, they are ready for that *delicado* puff, when the right moment has come." He showed me how to do it.

Looking back, I failed my friend. I failed to speak to her about Michael and his hosts ready to pick her up from beneath the birch tree, leaving the body behind in the snow. I failed to respond by simply respecting her freedom. I did not urge her to listen more carefully to what Moses called "the rustling." I took her question about an opening she was discovering to be one more attempt on her part to remain in control. I now fear that I distracted her from listening to the Lord whose steps she might have followed without knowing whose they were.

Soon after she became ill with pneumonia and locked herself into her home. You probably know that well into the 19th century pneumonia was called "the old man's friend." But the caring state could not leave her in peace. Its minions picked the apartment lock in time to administer antibiotics. Since then, it has been too late. Welfare and medicine have broken and confused her, made her into an inmate. Now she worries all day whether there will again be a bed for her at night in the clinic where she has been placed. She missed the hour of her death. She let it slip by, and lost an autumnal moment's desire to let go.

For over sixty years she had forged her own *bios*. I use the Greek term that is opposed to *zoe* and *psyche* because the English word "life" cannot render the strong sense of *curriculum vitae* that *bios* expresses. For decades she had left traces on everything she touched, and had then been herself shaped by these traces. Catching her in danger of dying, society has deprived her of her *bios*, her own life's shape. Bereft of it, she has lost the ability to disentangle herself. Far removed from what St. Francis called "Lady Poverty," she is embraced by professional wardens. They make certain that she does not take off her cloak.

When she spoke to me at the inn, I had an inkling that she was ready to divest herself of all trappings (*nuda nudum sequere Christum* was the motto beloved in the 13th century), even if she did not suspect whom she was following. Now she is securely taken care of. The personal act of dying, which in English is expressed by an intransitive verb, is beyond her reach. Now that it is too late for graceful dying, she has become a frightened woman who shirks death. At eighty she has been socialized into the so-called aged. Sooner or later the house physician will write on her chart, "no more re-animation." This is the woman I ask you to remember in your evening prayers, when the lights in the chapel go out, somewhere between *fratribus absentibus . . . et animarum fidelium.*

It is, however, not only my friend whom I wish you to commemorate. There are other millions in the Newland into which she has moved. And this switch from her to them, from the friend in distress to the inhabitants of the psychic slums, is not easy. I cannot reflect on her state without being impelled to ask myself, "Could I not have her live with me?" or, "Is there no friend around who could invite her?" As long as she breathes, the "Why can't I?" will haunt me. But I cannot allow this anguish to distract me from the issue which we must think through. It is not the quality of care under which this one friend survives that is at issue, but the fact that, after confiding in me, she lost what might have been the last moment in which she could have accepted her death.

I hope it is clear that I am not raising the issue of euthanasia (professional assistance in suicide), or the practice of medicide (which, in the terminology I use, implies an ethics committee's judgment on the termination of life-support systems). I am exploring two aspects of friendship that are characteristic of the late 20th century: first, respect for my friend who judges that the time has come for her to choose between dying now and being turned off later and, second, the mode of spiritual presence about her once that moment of decision has passed.

Further, I want to be able to reflect on this matter without being paralyzed by the issue of suicide. My friend would have been more than satisfied if I had presented her with a bottle of good whisky wrapped in fall-colored leaves. What she asked of me was not poison but a sign of unconditional trust. I can assure you that, at the luncheon, she was not contemplating killing herself. She wanted to die before it would be too late to consent to her own death. She explicitly wanted to avoid recruitment into that borderland where millions now vegetate who are neither here nor there.

All this I do not guess, I know. We first met at a conference in 1975, called by the World Health Organization, where I was to discuss the theses stated in *Medical Nemesis*, among them the medical expropriation of death. Since then she had thought about the Nowhere of which I speak. She came to understand that, as an aging inhabitant of the First World, you are recruited into this state where you are made impotent in front of death, unless you make a timely decision not to let yourself be kept -- alive or dead. These are the neighbors whom I ask you to recognize in your prayers, those whose *bios* as persons has ended, but who are kept hovering on the brink of eternity as a result of modern techniques.

I do not know which word to choose to refer to this state of suspension and aimlessness, a spiritually debilitating *a-topia*. One reason for my loss of words is that the thing itself is new, a result of society's recent success in the war on death. Therefore, I am not speaking of the world of the aged. The old have always been with us. Nor am I speaking of the decrepit. Each traditional society had its own way for them, as for the mad or monsters. One culture extended a place for them, another restricted it.

I am also not speaking of those who, in the language of Hippocrates, have entered the *atrium mortis*, the antechamber on the way to the shadows. In the Greek-Arabic-European tradition, the physician's task was the restoration of a unique balance of humors, never the fight against death. He was trained to recognize the Hippocratic signs on the patient's face, symptoms which manifested to show that the patient's humors were irremediably out of balance. When his art showed him that he stood at a death bed, the physician had to return his fee and take leave from a room which had ceased to be a sickroom. The Hippocratic oath, which forbids the physician to use his art on those in agony, has been interpreted away.

Nine out of ten Americans who are not killed by car, bullet, or massive stroke become terminal care patients and are placed under the control of physicians before they have a chance to die. I am not speaking here of these last hours of medicide that have replaced the death struggle depicted in hundreds of illustrations of the *ars moriendi*. The great prayers of the *proficiscere anima christiana* and the Litany of All Saints are still appropriate for assistance, even when we must say them in the waiting room out of fear that our presence interfere with the life support systems. I am also not recommending improvements on the terminal education through which Kübler-Ross and her pupils would like to normalize dying.

What I am speaking about is something historically unprecedented. I am speaking of those who have missed the opportunity to die when they were still able to do so, and for whom modern technology and organization effectively hold death at bay. I am calling your attention to a new social class. I am speaking of a New Age appended to the three-score and ten, which is as much a novelty now as the teenage years were two generations ago.

Finally, I am not asking -- at this moment -- what physicians, social workers, or policy makers should do with or to this new kind of people, or what their status ought to be in the law. You do not need me as a guide to the bibliographies on employment, investment, litigation, technology, or research which this new clientele has inspired. After the underdeveloped, the disappearing races, and then women, the disabled have become the pets of bleeding hearts and the wards for new careers. They have become so useful for so many that the viewpoint I propose has become taboo. I report to you, across the grill, something which I see as an epoch-specific evil, from which the grill is meant to protect you.

What I pursue is this: I ask that you make those who are caught up in this new evil the beneficiaries of your contemplative action, that you consider them as brothers and sisters for whom you offer prayers, as Benedictines have done for the poor souls who wait at the gate of Heaven, at least since Cluny was founded. And I ask for your help so that those of us who have not yet been caught by this evil learn to avoid this modern "fate." I myself ask for this grace each time I say the Hail Mary: ". . . pray for us now and . . . that we may not miss the hour of our death. Amen."

I just mentioned Cluny. I did so because you are Benedictines and I want to appeal to your family history. Cluny is a symbol for many innovations, among them the relatively recent date at which purgatory was discovered. Only since the 12th century has purgatory been understood as a special place, and the "poor souls" then came to loom large in popular religion, being recognized as the most helpless community within a tripartite Church. For a good millennium, the Church had been praying for the deceased before this distinction became part of belief and iconography, and before the cult of the poor souls found its solemn place within the liturgy. Without getting into theology or the history of ideas, I dare to suggest that there is a similarity here. The Church has always prayed for special people: the sick, those burdened by the power to govern, those specially tempted, travellers, and those in agony -- before it discovered the "poor souls." Now, at the end of the 20th century, the time has come to recognize another community that, like the

poor souls, is marginalized in a unique way: the captive souls whom science and technology, welfare and biocracy glue to their bodies, preventing their departure. I believe that this Wasting Age engendered by modernity deserves its special *memento*.

I am aware that I ask you to heed a kind of misery which, on a world- wide scale, is class-specific. It still mostly afflicts the affluent. Most of those unfortunate souls whom I ask you to remember as the companions of my Scandinavian friend are citizens of rich countries. The privilege of escaping death and thereby quite often becoming unable to face it is one of the many doubtful benefits that economic development has brought. Excepting their exploitative elites, Africans, Indians, and Mexicans still lack the economic resources needed to close the door when the Angel of Death approaches. The Nether Region this side of death is still a gilded ghetto. But it will not remain exclusive much longer. Chemists and geneticists are doing their best to lower the entrance fee into this Nowhere, and thereby make its population more democratic.

By praying for my friend and those like her, by praying for enlightenment and courage, you would also advance the Christian exploration in the difficult and obscure moral issue recently created by social and biological engineering -- how to relate the fear of God with the fear of being deprived of one's own death. To do so today requires extraordinary *discretio* to clarify the meaning of the *cupio dissolvi* in a society in which social policy mandates professional guardians, be they physicians or bioethicists, to procure optimal life prolongation as a universal social right.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to reflect on this issue in the form of a letter to you. Let me know if this is a way in which you can share what it means to live on this side of the grill, as in your prayers I join you on the other side.

Ivan

Toward A Post-Clerical Church

Dear Kelly,

When you dropped in on my hideout it was two in the afternoon. Now it is two in the morning. You are on your way back north, for a second semester in a course of *aggiornamento* for aging missionaries offered at a Canadian Jesuit university. I am still ruminating on the conversation we had. For myself and a couple of friends, "Kelly" already evokes two realities: the thoughtful, generous, and delicate man and priest whom I was surprised to meet, and a contemporary "type" for whom I just cannot think of a more thought-provoking representative, and into which both Lee and I would want to fit.

This is not really a personal letter. It's a letter to the Kelly whom you have given us for reflection. I write it because I will not sleep peacefully until the format of a letter gives me the framework within which I can say something that has haunted many conversations during the last years. If something in this introduction sounds too personal for a letter I would like to share with others, you and I both know that the Kelly I address is a critter of my imagination.

When you called from downtown, where you had somehow gotten my number, I was sitting under the banana tree excerpting 12th-century rules of hospital communities. That's the century in which the very first houses specializing in the recovery of sick people had been established in western Christendom. Crusaders, who had been impressed by such houses in Byzantium, and who had observed the practice of medical hospitalization in Islam, brought the idea of *nosokomium*, "the sick house," to southern France. In the course of only a few decades the new idea caught fire, and not just dozens but a few hundred examples of the new institution began to dot the world of the Pope.

With the idea of such a house a new kind of religious community came into existence whose members dedicated their lives in obedience, celibacy, and poverty to the care of the sick. To guide their common life, they picked up a letter addressed to pious women by the Church Father Augustine, and added a set of recommendations made at the beginning of the century by Raymond de Guy. He had founded such a house for crusaders in Jerusalem when they were too sick and tired to venture a return home. Some of these rules were for "sisters and brothers called to the hospital," healthy persons who had heard an intimate invitation to care for those marked by disease. In other early rules, the bodily mark of disease was interpreted as a divine calling to religious community life, and the healthy who joined as members found in leprosy or gangrenous ergotism a reason to live with those more visibly marked, apart from the rest of society.

I mention this at the outset of my letter because it indicates the mood I was in when you called. In conversation with Lee, I was trying to find the right sentences to make it believable to my readers that the very idea of "hospitalizing the sick under Christian care" has a beginning in history, and that half of the Christian history we know was over before it was accepted as an obvious "need" in the medieval town.

Then you walked in. What a pleasure it was to make your acquaintance! In a few minutes it was obvious that you were not only a fellow historian, but a learned one at that. First you began a decade of ecclesiastical studies, completed when the 19th-century routine of seminary training was still uncontested. This made you acquainted with a standard canon which -- for those of us born sufficiently before World War II -- gave a common culture to Catholic priests all over.

Just ordained, you went to Africa for a first "trial" without any preparation. You had to grope your way into the history and culture of the mission, trusting your basic intuition and letting yourself be imbued by the prejudices floating around at the mission station. A dozen years followed as a missionary in tropical Africa. You were sent to care for people whose language in the meantime had changed beyond recognition, and because you did not properly record it, will no longer be remembered.

Next came demanding studies. As a middle-aged man, you spent several years as a graduate student at one of the world's major universities and wrote a doctoral dissertation in cultural history, based on oral testimony you had collected. And back you went for another ample decade as a white cleric in a region which had turned into a black nation, mostly "to care" for people who had little use for you. What a life! In many profound ways, a life that follows a pattern which people twenty years younger than we will be forced to reconstruct from biographies, because it will be beyond their grasp.

I do not know how you took the seminary fare of the postwar period with its insistence on Latin, its smattering of Thomas Aquinas for the sake of the clergy's mental insurance, its fragments of Biblical studies -- just prestigious enough to discourage personal reading and totally insufficient for nourishing homilies. But one thing became clear as we sat around Valentina's table with your Central European traveling companion who works among the Basutos: The new generation, which poor John Paul II brings forth from contemporary places of clerical learning -- in comparison to those of our time -- no

longer has either canon or study habits, nor that minimum of ambiguous rootedness which came as a bonus with our experience.

What a maddening idea, that you should now be on leave from your equatorial mission station to submit to a pedagogical potpourri of curricular offerings planned to bring you "up to date" in theology, spirituality and pastoral care! How sad the state of the Church that, after years of isolation and intellectual starvation, a lack of books and consequent dependence on journalistic reports about Church and faith, overwork and aging in the boondocks, she has nothing better to offer you on your sabbatical than one more return into the curricular market. This is the point at which our luncheon conversation became serious. Both of you asked questions, and I gave answers by which, unwittingly, I may have shocked you.

I meant what I said. Yes, I do believe that current discussions on the future of the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church are overwhelmingly beside the point because they focus on the *future of the clergy*: Should there be a married clergy? Should ordination be limited to the male clergy? What place should be given to the local community -- clerical and lay -- when it comes to the election of a bishop or the shaping of liturgical forms? Must clerics who hold opinions divergent from the Roman tradition be removed from their posts? Not the mystery of the Trinity or of the Incarnation, but the "mystery" of the clergy now polarizes the Church. A mystifying "class struggle" has been thrashed out with such noise over the last twenty-five years that not only sophisticated Jews but even Japanese tourists have the impression that to be a Catholic means to take sides on these issues.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not one who denies that these are important questions on which, to a high degree, the kind of political institution which the Roman Catholic Church becomes, depends. But they are relevant only as long as you accept a hypothesis that results from a historical accident, and not from anything in Scripture or Tradition. These questions are important only as long as you live with the certainty that "the clergy" is a God-willed attribute of the community founded by Christ.

From personal experience, many conversations, and phenomenological analysis, I have come to the conviction that clergy -- when mentioned in connection with the Roman Catholic Church -- has at least one essential characteristic today which was absent from the essence of any church-grouping in previous epochs of Church history. This characteristic is the result of a proposed *professional education*, first formulated by Cardinal Pole in England (in the National Synod of 1556), which slipped almost verbatim into the 3rd session of the Council of Trent through Cardinal Morone, and whose provision was then defined as a duty incumbent on every bishop in the 23rd session of the Council. This proposal envisages the institutional formation of secular priests, something as unheard of in Latin Christendom at this time as poor houses which limit admittance exclusively to the sick had been unheard of during the 11th century. But unlike the idea of a specialized recovery of the sick -- which spread like wildfire -- it took several centuries before Canon Law began to define the attendance at seminaries as a prerequisite for ordination.

Perhaps these remarks will explain my deep interest in the "invention" of hospitals in the 12th century. I believe that this social creation of a new institutional device, motivated by heroic charity and deep trust in personal divine vocation, in the course of the next half millennium was to transform our perception of what a good society ought to be. We can no longer imagine a good society which would lack such special institutional agencies where people with special physical or mental incapacities can be bedded, stored, and treated. The need for hospitalization has become one of our basic certainties, and with it we accept as obvious that there are certain acts of charity which "just cannot be absolved by simple hospitality." I am studying not so much the history of the hospital, but the history of hospitality -- now largely reduced to invitations for Christmas dinner. I argue that this degradation of hospitality happened in good faith, in the shadow of a society built on the idea of hospitalization.

Just as there is a profound difference between a society that abandons the stranger who finds no hospitality, and a society that mediates the needs of strangers through taxation and professionalism, it should be clear that there is an essential phenomenological difference between a Church which prescinds from an institutionalized routine for the specialized preparation of its priests and one in which formal education is seen as a prerequisite for ordination, and increasingly to be repeated for the continued exercise of priestly functions.

What I find scandalous is the cocky innocence with which a Western Roman tradition that claims catholicity is bound up with the fate of clergy whose competence, status, function and income are determined by a factor which is radically alien to the first three-quarters of the history of the Church. I write you this letter in the hope that you, or other "Kellys" who are returning to old age inservice seminary retraining will help to make this point. Unless persons such as you take the Church's non-clerical future into your own hands by sharing your wisdom and discipline as hosts rather than as educators, the reform of the Church will be a miracle rather than the promised marvel it has always been.

We had so little time, yesterday, that I take the liberty as a colleague to remind you of the literature which supports my claim. Let me sum up: Until the Council of Trent, there were no institutions of any kind whose purpose was the training of pastoral agents. What in retrospect is made to look like the ancestry of seminaries are historiographic phantoms invoked to justify the contemporary existence of an educational agency which, at its best, gifted those alumni it almost inevitably warped. Until the late 16th century, you became a priest the way in which you became a healer or cobbler or musician -- by picking up what it takes for the task. You picked up what you needed for your ordination as best you could get it -- your Latin, your store of pious stories and your common sense -- on which the bishop might test you before making you a priest. There is no evidence that the need for institutional initiation for the secular clergy had ever been felt. Certainly Canon Law which so often is a mirror for ecclesiastical utopias -- gives no sign of a desire to institutionalize preparation for the priesthood. It is only the Second Lateran Council which admonishes bishops to employ a *Magister* in each cathedral, who will be available to teach poor clerics without asking for tuition. The decree reflects both the new opportunity available for scholars to make money on their learning and the new trend to put the emerging profession under ecclesiastical control.

The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 made its wish more explicit: There should be a "theologian" who can instruct priests and others in Holy Scripture, and who could be placed particularly at the service of those who are engaged in the "care of souls." The Council did not dare request that this be done by every bishop, but only that such a charge be created by archbishops at their Metropolitan Sees. It took a millennium from the time of the Greek Fathers to the time of monastic and conventual training in early scholasticism -- for a council to make a first attempt toward a separately institutionalized, "learned service" for the diocesan, as opposed to the religious, clergy. Two hundred years later the first colleges were created with the explicit purpose of housing students whose intent was pastoral rather than learned and legal: Capranica and Nardini in Rome, Antonio di Siguenza (1477) in Spain. But it would be reading a non-existent category into these early Renaissance foundations to interpret a few charitable hostels -- meant mostly for poor boys who were looking

for a curial benefice -- as forerunners of the kind of college which came to be known as a seminary.

It took the Tridentine decree on seminaries as many centuries to be accepted by the Catholic world as it took to have all dioceses recognize the decree on the need to solemnize marriage. Most of the seminaries started in the first hundred years after the Council by the bishops themselves did not survive their first or second generation of students. The late 16th-century colleges that were run by Jesuits and later by other orders for future secular priests -- as distinct from their own members -- survived better, but served the formation of elite ecclesiastics rather than local pastors.

In Spain it took until the late 17th and 18th century for the idea of seminary training to enter the majority of dioceses. In Germany, the practice never was accepted. In France, Jean Jacques Olier created that unique company of St. Sulpice which, after 1642, succeeded in stemming the extinction of the few remaining seminaries founded in the aftermath of Trent.

As the seminary memories of your traveling companion brought to our attention, the spirit and literature generated by this band of spiritual pedagogues still affected people born in the second quarter of this century. Over the next 300 years the Sulpicians created an unprecedented style of fervent piety which would be a fascinating subject for an unusually gifted historian of religious mentalities. Outside of France, and especially in Latin America, only during the 19th century did seminaries become standard equipment in the typical diocese. And at that, they were often the one place where a boy could get some classical preparation. I still remember the Puerto Rican generation of seminary alumni, most of whom became the province's lawyers or poets rather than priests.

When one discusses this background of Church reliance on seminary- trained clergy with churchmen or almost anyone, at least two points are immediately made. First, admiration is voiced for the seriousness with which the post-Reformation Church accepted the challenge by insuring "educational" progress, and then my interlocutors call attention to the claim that "modern times" demand formal education. They interpret the Church's dependence on professional preparation of its staff as a consequence of a secular trend, and are blind to the evidence that this trend might just as well be interpreted as a secularization of an ecclesiastical model. They ask me if I can imagine a modern Church indifferent to the "education" of its leadership and without professional formation among the myriad of new fields that must be related to the Gospel if the Christian message is to remain relevant to the modern world. This is a point made very explicitly yesterday while we ate our rice.

My answer to both these questions is "no." Of course, I could *imagine* both, but I abstain from doing so. History is what I know has been. I need all the imagination I have to grasp what has been, something I find even more difficult when the subject is the Church. But I would like to insist on two points: First, it is the Church which has pioneered the concept that a certain amount of "education" is the prerequisite for admission to status, function, and privilege. In the process of adapting the medieval *artes* into a condition for the ordination of its priests, the idea of the curriculum took shape, and with it the basic assumptions upon which the ideology of universal education could be built.

That social topology, within which our various institutions are concrete configurations, depends on the assumption that eminence in any specialty presupposes curricular inputs rather than what you pick up. The prejudice against the informal learner which has grown during the last several hundred years is a characteristic of all our institutions, not just of the Church. But, in a unique way, the Church initiated this prejudice: with the *seminarium* -- the seed bed of the next generation -- it set the model for a leadership qualified by curricular consumption. The one institution which solemnly celebrates its continuity over the last two thousand years is also that institution which pioneered a gnoseocratic bureaucracy based on certified curricular consumption, *and* the institution which claims that this kind of "knowledge"- based aristocracy is not just opportune or "natural" but the result of God's own will.

Second, men such as you, and many others I know, are in danger of *apostolic castration* due to these historical and ecclesiastical assumptions about the relationship between schooling and evangelical leadership. I purposely use the above word. After you had gone, and I tried to return to the 12th-century transmogrification of hospitality into hospitalization that was motivated by compassionate mercy, after long silence Lee (whom you met) quoted Matthew: "He sent them out . . ." Did He not trust each of his disciples to gather with whom they met? Did He not expect, even bless, their "balls," encourage the practice of personal hospitality in men who, for his sake, had forsaken their own home?

Yes, you were right in your suspicion that twenty-five years ago I wrote that book on the deschooling of society in the hope that a secular discussion would lead to proposals for the deschooling of the Church. As far as I know, I failed. But my conviction has only deepened. The time of qualification by curricular attendance, the time of schooling which grew out of the idea of the seminary and the *ratio studiorum*, is over. Even now, higher learning depends crucially on hospitality and friendship and lifelong personal emulation in those virtues which establish the independent stance of heart and mind on which *studium* -- in the age of AI, sociobiology, and the apocalypse of science depends.

Bob, am I wrong when I feel certain that the future of Christian learning depends on how I share it with others, or you with your friends? Am I wrong when I suggest that you tell a few of your friends that next year, between two rainy seasons, you can give sack and sorgo to no more than seven; that you have two books which you want to follow when you address them between Psalms on Monday and Wednesday; that you would like to read beforehand the books which they will comment when they speak on the other evenings?

Ivan Illich

P.S. I do not believe that the de-clericalization of the priesthood and the de- clericalization of consecrated asceticism, at this moment, depend on the de-clericalization of learning; but rather, on the creation of *faits accomplis* here and there. Further, the unique view on the current predicament of the world which a rootedness in the Roman Catholic tradition enables us to have can be celebrated in with circles of friends by you and by Lee and by Dara (of whom I told you) and can be celebrated with a scope which is and must forever be out of the purview of those caught within the "educational assumption," be they the Pope himself.

"Dear Kelly" Memo

TO: Joe Cunneen (editor, *Cross Currents*), in response to your critique

FROM: Lee Hoinacki

Several readers of the letter have suggested that the format of the piece be changed. The feeling seems to be that an open letter is somewhat unsuitable, that it shows a certain lack of seriousness.

Over the years, I've noticed that in each of his "statements" published as articles or books -- Illich attempts to create the proper or fitting genre for that particular moment, place, and, if appropriate, interlocutor. For the serious reader, it is instructive to study, for example, the great differences between *Deschooling Society* and *Gender*.

Here ("Dear Kelly") Illich writes directly to a person with whom he has just had lunch. Their conversation moved him, and he came to see this man's situation in the light of themes and perspectives which have been present in his work for some years. And "Kelly's" presence brought about the specific focus of his thought which then resulted in the letter.

In "The Vanishing Clergyman," Illich made a statement about clergy in the Church. Through a phenomenological approach, he found the Church to be a corporate bureaucracy -- that is what he saw. And he suggested that this specific historical development might be questioned, it might be something unfaithful to the Founder's intention. What question would a man of faith raise today?

Instead of writing a treatise on the historical church, or a monograph on some aspect of institutional expression, he has taken up the precise question put to him, the question embodied in two men who "just happened" to drop in on him one day. He does not want to write in the artificial structure of a professional journal. I think he wants to express himself, in both content and form, in a manner true to his experience one afternoon in Mexico. His letter shows how theological reflection can come out of particular events, and be faithful to them. Illich has lived his life denouncing and fleeing from bureaucratic leviathans. And his love for the truthfulness of the Church requires a suitably ascetic expression fitting the circumstances of the origin of his statement.

And why must historical theology and Biblical exegesis be written in an arbitrary format elaborated by professionals deeply infected with the current bureaucratic fashion? Can one believe that these standards have any real authority? In contrast, I would argue that Illich's authority rests solidly on his life of prayer, virtue and study. I am not aware that anyone has ever claimed that his scholarship is thin. And the truth of this statement ("Kelly") depends on his reading of history. To ask him to present his research in a form acceptable to the "guardians" of academic expression is as deeply insulting as to ask him for a sociological solution to the problem of gender. His faith does not encompass sociology; his vocabulary resolutely shuns solutions and problems except for those found, for example, in plane geometry.

In *Tools for Conviviality* Illich writes that "The industrial mode of production was first fully rationalized in the manufacture of a new invisible commodity, called 'education'" (p. 19). This book contains his most complete outline for a theory of industrial society, the one which rules the lives of those of us who live in the West. And he demonstrates, first in *Deschooling* and later in *Tools*, that the industrial mode of production characterizes the making of *both* goods and services.

In "Dear Kelly" he sets up two parallel arguments: Just as the Church first institutionalized the care of the sick (that is, bequeathing *this* structure, the hospital, to the West, thereby making it more and more difficult to practice hospitality), so the Church also gave the West the *institution* of education. In this sense, the Church is "responsible" for the industrialization of the West. Such is the argument. In both *Deschooling* and *Tools*, Illich describes how education -- that education we have all known and experienced is organized in an industrial mode. Then, in the penultimate paragraph of *Tools*, he notes that "the industrial dominance over production [is] the ultimate form of idolatry" (p. 119).

Perhaps I should put these last words in italics -- they are the most explicit statement in this book that it, too, forms part of his lifelong "exercise in apophatic theology" (the phrase comes from Sally Cunneen's *Cross Currents* review of H_2O). And one can work toward an understanding of why he takes this approach through reflection on this long-held thesis, *corruptio optimi pessima*, namely, that those horrors which haunt our society are of an unimaginably frightening character, worse than anything he observes in other ("non-Christian") societies, *and* they are mysteriously derived from the corruption and perversion of the sublime truths of Biblical revelation. (He and Jacques Ellul share this opinion.)

As Cunneen rightly points out, "Kelly" is *not* a "contribution to current discussion of the shortage of priests or who should be ordained or how do we produce a more adult laity." Illich unequivocally states that "current discussions on the future of the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church are overwhelmingly beside the point because they focus on the *future of the clergy* [his italics]." And he means precisely, fully, what he says. The questions I hear being discussed today, regarding a vocation to ministry, have meaning *only*:

- if one believes that the Church is divinely organized as a corporate, bureaucratic organization, uniting early Byzantine, Renaissance court and rational managerial elements;

- and if one accepts "the clergy" as a divinely-willed component of the community which finds its origins in Jesus Christ.

In "The Vanishing Clergyman," Illich questions the first belief, and in "Dear Kelly," the second. Through his studies, he discovers that the organization *and* clergy of the Church are indeed historically contingent. In a Thomistic sense, I guess, one can say that the Church today enjoys (or suffers) a clergy and *this* organization, *per modum accidens*. While he has not published any study on the historical etiology of the Church's structure, he does point out how the phenomenon of clergy is specifically constituted by "professional education."

Further, with far-reaching results for the society at large, the Church pioneered the idea that education -- understood as curricular consumption -- be a "prerequisite for admission to status, function, and privilege" ("Kelly"). And this resulted in the basic modern assumption questioned *only* by people such as Illich upon which "the ideology of universal education could be built" (*ibidem*).

As Cunneen points out, Illich is suspicious of "refresher courses to keep academe going." But "accidentally" running into this person who is offered such fare by the Church, he seizes the occasion as a springboard for his reflections on the very notion of a clergy, thereby exposing the flimsy -- and destructive -- assumptions on which these various modern certainties rest. But I don't think the issue here is

confined to the fact "that Kelly is in a better position to train... future priests," that he can do something more than pass out "the new theological fads" (Cunneen). Illich's argument here definitively implies what "Clergyman" earlier suggested: the disappearance of a priest-*hood*. And it provides much more....

When he uses the word "crisis" Illich takes it to mean the opportunity to make a choice (as he pointed out years ago, the Greek verb of origin means "to decide"). Cunneen would like to see Illich "suggest possible new directions." I think that he does indeed to do this. In *Deschooling*, he wrote:

> [W]hat characterizes the true master-disciple relationship is its priceless character. Aristotle speaks of it as a "moral type of friendship, which is not on fixed terms: it makes a gift, or does whatever it does, as to a friend." Thomas Aquinas says of this kind of teaching that inevitably it is an act of love and mercy. This kind of teaching is always a luxury for the teacher and a form of leisure (in Greek, "*schole*") for him and his pupil: an activity meaningful for both, having no ulterior purpose (p. 146).

We can see, as Illich notes (in the quote from Matthew "Dear Kelly"), that there is a consonance between the action of the Lord and the thought of Aristotle-Aquinas, vis-à-vis teaching and learning. And, twenty years ago, Illich had sincerely hoped that *Deschooling* would lead to proposals to re-think present institutional forms in the light of the Gospel. He suggests the possibility of a more radical view of divine vocation, a more radical abandonment to grace. He contrasts grace/vocation with institutional insurance, believing them to be contradictory.

A question must be asked: Is the reliance on *this* formal arrangement -- clerical education -- the denial of the reality of personal vocation in response to the Lord's voice? Is this to reject the example of the Lord sending out his disciples? to say -- with the Grand Inquisitor -- we know better?

Illich's letter is also on friendship, on the essential place of friendship in learning today. He is definitely *not* concerned with the reform of clerical education. He recognizes, however, that the vocation to follow the Lord does indeed entail a kind of learning. But all higher learning today, quite apart from any reference to a ministry vocation, "depends crucially on hospitality and friendship and lifelong personal emulation in those virtues which establish the independent stance of heart and mind on which *studium*... depends" ("Kelly"). In a position which makes him far more radical than the current critics of higher education, Illich states his belief that the modern university is bankrupt, that it has reached an impasse out of which -- given its principles, structure, and operating ethos -- it cannot move. A fortiori, learning in the context of the Gospel must seek a milieu totally different from the available examples of higher learning, a spirit and structure appropriate both to the time in which we live and to its (Gospel) origins.

To claim, literally, that the very shape of learning in the Church rests on friendship is to suggest a new version of the Church. "The Vanishing Clergyman" did not go so far. It only prepared its readers for this later, evangelically-inspired proposal. Here, Illich goes to his sources to outline the basis for a de-clericalized church, for what he earlier called a *secularized* church. Through his historical research, we can now see that the Church need not be so dependent on bureaucratic and hierarchic structures, but can rest precariously -- evangelically -- on the friendship between me, this other person, and the Lord.

Many in the Church today appear to be fear- and anxiety-ridden. But there is no cause for alarm, Illich says. Genuine church reform can begin, now, with two or three gathered in His name -- that's all it takes.

Recent & Forthcoming Works By Jacques Ellul

by David W. Gill

(Box 5358, Berkeley, CA 94705).

Two of Jacques Ellul's most important sociological works were reprinted at long last in 1990. *La Technique, ou, L'enjeu du siecle* (ET: *The Technological Society*) is now available from the publisher Economica (49,rue Hericart, 75015 Paris). The publisher's cover note says that in 1960 Ellul submitted a second, revised edition of *La Technique* but his publisher decided not to publish it. The Economica text is this 1960 revision. *Propagandes* (ET: *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes)* was also reprinted at the same time by Economica. Both *La Technique* and *Propagandes* are in a series called "*Classiques des Sciences Sociales*." Both volumes are listed at 195 francs.

It should also be noted that the same Economica series has made available two works by Ellul's old friend and intellectual conversation partner, Bernard Charbonneau: *L'Etat* and *Le systeme et le chaos*.

Ce Dieu Injuste...? Theologie Chretienne pour le peuple d'Israel appeared in April 1991 from the publisher Arlea (Librairie Les Fruits du Congo,8,rue de l'Odeon, 75006 Paris). The book is being distributed (also?) by Le Seuil,27,rue Jacob, 75006 Paris. 203 pp. paperback. 100 francs. In this book, Ellul discusses St. Paul's famous statement of Romans (9:1-12:2) on the status of Israel in light of Jesus Christ and the New Testament. This is a biblical Christian theology in support of the ongoing, unique and special election of the Jewish people by God.

Si tu es le Fils de Dieu: Souffrances et tentations de Jesus appeared in June 1991 from the publisher Le Centurion (Paris). This brief paperback (110 pages; 78 francs) was co-published with R. Brockhaus Verlag in Zurich. In Part One, Ellul explores the Gospel accounts of the "suffering servant" and in Part Two the various "temptations of Jesus" beginning with Satan in the dessert. What Ellul has offered us here are some fifty brief meditations on the humanity of Jesus.

In conversation at his home in Bordeaux on June 25, 1991, Ellul clarified once again that he has a completed manuscript on "Technique and Theology" for which he has never found a publisher. He also has a thousand hand-written manuscript pages on "The Ethics of Holiness" but has not had the time or secretarial support to convert this to typescript and complete his own revisions and editorial work.

The only other work in the pipeline at present is his major study of Islam. As of last summer Ellul felt that one third of this book was completed, another third (on the Koran) had been finished but now needed major revisions because of the appearance of new translations of the Koran, and yet another third had barely been started. The shock of Yvette Ellul's death in the Spring and Jacques Ellul's own ongoing health struggles have quite understandably slowed his progress on his writing projects. I assured him of the prayers and best wishes of his North American students, colleagues and friends.