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Guided by Hope and Not by Conscience: An Examination of the Arguments of Ivan Illich

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Abstract: Ivan Illich was an incisive critic of aspects of contemporary Western cultures, such as the over-reach of obligatory institutionalized schooling, the excessive medicalization of society, and the dangers of global industrial development. From the outset there was a deeper edge to his work which concerned the formative, but ambivalent, influence of Christianity. His case is that a perversion of Christianity has come to be woven deep into the fabric of modernity and that 'living by one's conscience' is one of the constitutive threads therein. Illich advocates living by hope and not by conscience. The article presents some lines along which Illich's concern with the centrality of hope could be further developed.

Keywords: Ivan Illich; conscience; modernity; Christianity; hope

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1. Introduction: Ivan Illich, 'a Thorough Going Radical'

Ivan Illich, priest, historian, philosopher, and theologian, was 'a thorough going radical' (Taylor 2007, p. 743) who saw his task as 'trying to understand the cultural density of our time by exploring its formative axioms which have now disappeared' (Calley 2005, p. 83). He came to this task first as priest, then as university administrator, and, finally, as itinerant scholar and historian.

Born in 1926 in Vienna, (though his first home was in Dalmatia, Yugoslavia), he came to live in Florence in 1942 and completed his schooling there. He studied philosophy and theology in the Gregorian University in Rome from 1942–1944. He received a doctorate in Salzburg in 1951 for his thesis on "The Philosophical Foundations of Historiography in Arnold Joseph Toynbee's Work" (Illich 1951). Early on, in one of his first influential publications he makes reference to Toynbee: 'Arnold Toynbee has pointed out that the decadence of a great culture is usually accompanied by the rise of a new World Church which extends hope to a domestic proletariat while serving the news of a new warrior class' (Illich 1971b, p. 43).

Illich was ordained as a priest in 1951. He then went to the United States to study the works of Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus) at Princeton. At this time, he became aware of the migration of Puerto Ricans to New York. Their religious traditions and their ways of being Catholic often disturbed established Catholics. Illich requested and was granted an assignment in one of those parishes and worked in this setting until 1956. In that year he was appointed vice-rector of the Catholic university in Puerto Rico. By virtue of that post, he was a member of the board that governed the island's school system. Perhaps prompted by his study of Toynbee, he noted church-like features in the system and its underlying ideology. Here too, like church, obligatory attendance was seen as a roadmap to proper fulfilment, in this case social standing and employment. Obligatory schooling was a pathway to equality of opportunity for all. Illich began to ponder the discrepancy between the underlying assumptions of the system and its results. School was, supposedly, a pathway to equality of opportunity for all. There were indeed privileged opportunities for those whose background enabled them to schooled success. However, for those who

dropped out of the system or who failed within it there was a new kind of poverty. Not only were they bereft of honoured agency in society, they were also constantly reminded that they were the ones who had missed out. There was a glaring discrepancy between the assumptions of the system and its results. The response to such evident discrepancy was not self-scrutiny of the policy, but rather a call for more schooling.

Illich became aware of a profound discordance between contemporary assumptions and social reality. Something was being kept hidden, well out of sight, concealed within the cultural densities of our times. What is veiled from view, systematically, ritually and by force of our most ubiquitous institutions, is the reality of a decaying culture. The cultural and unquestioned certainties of Western industrialised societies were, in reality, a road map to the exhaustion and pollution of the Earth's resources. Furthermore, the underlying assumptions of the major institutions that these societies were founded on was promoting a corrupt image of what it is to be human. This vicious swerve from the true image of what it is to be human is kept thoroughly concealed from view by this decaying culture. It was in this perspective that, in 1971, Illich published *Deschooling Society*: 'I want to raise the general question of the mutual definition of man's nature and the nature of modern institutions which characterizes our world-view and language. To do so, I have chosen the school as my paradigm, and I therefore deal only indirectly with other bureaucratic agencies of the corporate state' (Illich 1971b, p. 2).

Deschooling Society was published simultaneously with *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution* (Illich 1971a). A large portion of this book comprised essays written much earlier, and on a wide variety of topics, including *Puerto Ricans in New York: Not Foreigners, yet Foreign* (1956), and *The Vanishing Clergyman* (1967). Read alongside *Deschooling Society*, *Celebration of Awareness,* it demonstrates the range and scope of the critique that Illich was developing in these decades. Concentration on the issue of compulsory institutionalised schooling in *Deschooling Society* brought an intensity of focus which remained foundational to his later work.

The argument in *Deschooling Society* is that proponents of universal obligatory schooling from a young age turn a blind eye to its systemic failures. The further argument is that compulsory schooling constitutes compulsory induction into the ways of a consumer-driven, growth-orientated society, and that this is its hidden curriculum.

Proponents of obligatory schooling from a young age see it as the pathway to societal progress and to societal development. They see it as an assured route to equal opportunity for all. Illich, on the other hand, saw it as a system for producing drop-outs: 'Two-thirds of all children in Latin America leave school before finishing the fifth grade' (Illich 1971b, p. 7). Those who drop-out are failures, and they are destined to see themselves as such. In societies where obligatory schooling from a young age is insisted on, there is no alternative route to education. The modern compulsory school system monopolizes education. It effectively wipes out all other educational pathways. Illich argues that this is a tragic mistake. There are indeed other routes to education. For example, there is the passing down of a skill from master to apprentice. There is the learning passed on by those who have stored up generations of local knowledge including, for instance, ecological knowledge and the best ways of living in and with their environment. However, when obligatory school is recognized as the specialized institution for education, these and other forms of education, are sidelined. The law of compulsory attendance in school constitutes an anti-educational effect on society in that other educational routes are discredited. They are rendered suspect and dishonoured. Illich's argument is that while equal opportunity of an education for all is indeed a proper aspiration, 'to equate this with obligatory schooling is to confuse salvation with the Church' (Illich 1971b, p. 10).

The school has a privileged role in shaping society, being the institution which forms our critical faculties. In so doing it works according to a hidden curriculum, as Illich argues. It is an initiation into the ways of a consumer-driven, growth orientated society. Regardless of what is taught in schools, obligatory schooling, from a young age, inevitably reproduces such a society. It serves as an induction into what society values, how success is reckoned,

and even what this society counts as hope. Expectation, Illich argues, has come to replace hope in contemporary Western cultures. Expectation means reliance on results controlled and planned by human resources. Within industrialised society, such expectation is a formative axiom. Compulsory schooling from a young age, its ceremonial and ritual, is an immersion into this formative axiom.

Illich writes with the courage and the concern and the responsibility of a true radical. His complaint is not with institutions or institutionalisation as such, but with manipulative institutionalisation which over-reaches proper limits. Schools are valuable for certain kinds of learning. His argument is against the monopoly. The 'deschooling' movement which he advocates would involve a difficult and risky process. Yet, in his judgement, a still greater danger would be to turn a blind eye to the perverse effects of the monopoly.

The school is not the only institution shaping values in contemporary Western societies. Illich explores several of these in a subsequent series of books published in the 1970s, *Deschooling society* (1971), *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), *Energy and Equity* (1974), and *Medical Nemesis* (1976). Illich targeted several institutions of contemporary Western civilisation, all of which, in his view, had developed qualities of over-reach and manipulation.

In these works, theological expressions crop up occasionally, but are mostly used in an ironic, transferred secular sense (Illich 1971b, pp. 44, 45). In these early publications, Illich is engaged in social critique.[1] Very occasionally, there is a direct reference to the over reach (and manipulations) of the historical Christian Church. 'I am reminded of the late Middle Ages, when the demand for Church services outgrew a lifetime, and Purgatory was created to purify souls under the pope's control before they could enter eternal peace. Logically, this led first to a trade in indulgences and then to an attempt at Reformation' (Illich 1971b, p. 43). The presence and influence of Christianity in shaping the 'cultural densities' of Western civilisation was present in Illich's writing from the outset. However, in the early writings of the 1970s it remains an underlay, a kind of subtext. It is not extensively explored. It is there, but it is not brought to the light. In the 1980s, moving aside from his sustained critique of the formative institutions of western civilisation, he began a series of historical studies. These led to an understanding of the role Christianity had played in the rise of Western modernity. He came to articulate a very distinctive understanding of the nature of the decay that was abroad in the cultures of Western civilisation within which he lived, and whereof which he had become a truly radical critic.

2. '*Corruptio Optimi Quae est Pessima*': The Corruption of What Is the Most Glorious Is the Very Worst Form of Corruption

Embarking on studies of a different historical era, Illich is, on the one hand, seeking to understand the perspectives, the language, the spiritualties of that age, while, on the other hand, seeking a fresh purchase on the formative axioms and unquestionable assumptions of his own time, of modernity, by viewing them from the horizons of another age. So dense, so impenetrable, and so harmful are many cultural assumptions of contemporary society that only a view from another time could offer the vantage point that was necessary to unlock what is hidden deep beneath the surface and bring into focus what is well concealed.

In these studies, Illich has a predilection for the twelfth century. He quotes the judgement of Richard Southern, who wrote that this century was 'a hinge time', and that of M.-D. Chenu, who wrote that the twelfth century 'brought about a transformation at least as deep as that which occurred in the age of the Reformation' (Illich 1993, p. 81). The writings of an early twelfth century monk, Hugh of Saint Victor, were of particular importance to Illich: 'he was my greatest teacher' (Calley 2005, p. 52). Hugh of Saint Victor (and other writers of the twelfth century) wrote of how a good life can be lived in Christian terms. They wrote of a way of perfection when human virtues would flower and flourish when they are visited and perfected as gifts of the Holy Spirit.The Christian life flourishes as a life inspired by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Gifts of the Holy Spirit which are not *au fond* human achievements are nonetheless gifted into human reality. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are gifts 'out of time' that are now gifted to be displayed within time, within the social

context of the ecclesial, eucharistic, and monastic community. Hugh and his fellow monks in the early twelfth century searched for a way of perfection which is nothing else than the flowering in their humanity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: 'they cultivated a charity which couldn't have been financed through taxes' (Calley 2005, p. 83).

The twelfth century which spoke in this fashion, nonetheless spoke again (and louder), in a precisely contrary key. Throughout this century, greater regulatory management and manipulation of the lives of the faithful intensifies throughout western Christendom. The faithful are taught to internalise a conception of the '*ecclesia*' as a juridic body. Sin is criminalised, forgiveness is a legislative act, and grace comes in a juridic tribunal. That this should happen in the very century when writers such as Hugo were articulating the marvellous and liberating spirituality of ecclesial life lived as the life of the Holy Spirit prompted Illich to sense a hostile presence at work. This he named a '*mysterium iniquitatis*', after the fashion of 'the lawless one', which St Paul spoke of in the second letter to the Christian community at Thessalonika: 'the lawless one, the one destined for destruction . . . opposes himself and exalts himself above every so-called god . . . so that he takes his seat in the temple of God', (2 Thess 2: 3–12).

A certain conception of the Church as a juridic, legislative body had already come about when the emperor Constantine recognised the Church as an official religion. The Church acquires a certain status in law. It has some legal and administrative functions. When St Augustine writes to a magistrate on a judicial matter, he writes as an equal. This way of understanding what it is to be the Church intensified greatly in the twelfth century. It invaded the very core of ecclesial spirituality.

The immediate context is the struggle over investiture. The investiture struggle was a contention over who has the jurisdiction and the right of appointment to bishoprics. Was it the Emperor or was it the Pope? In response, jurisprudence of the age proposed that the Emperor and Pope held separate, distinct jurisdictions; each was capable of making and administering laws, each in its proper forum. The Emperor administers the '*forum civile*', the Pope the '*forum ecclesisticum*'. This ecclesial self-understanding developed apace throughout the twelfth century and continued to intensify. It reached a powerful expression at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The Council was called by Pope Innocent II, with internal Church reform in mind as well as the affirmation in legal jurisprudence of the Papal stance on investiture. There were 300 bishops present. It lasted just a few weeks (November 1215), but promulgated 70 Canons, the majority of which, in the opinion of several scholars, were composed beforehand by Pope Innocent himself.

In these canons, so Illich argued, we find a concept of Church life lived as a juridic entity. This even reaches into the inner life of the faithful. Canon 21 of the fourth Lateran Council stipulates: 'All the faithful of both sexes shall after they have received the age of discretion faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year to their own priest and perform to the best of their ability the penance imposed', and 'receive reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist . . . otherwise they shall be cut off from the Church during life and deprived of Christian burial in death'.[2] Every member of the faithful, man and woman, must see themselves as living within this juridical framework. They must learn to construct their identity and their spirituality in these categories. Their role is to establish their list of sins correctly and accurately, so that the appropriate forgiveness and appropriate penalty will be administered. Failure to do so, to fail to confess one's sins accurately, is itself a further sin, a deeper entry into lawlessness. The community of the gospel, at the level of its highest institutions, now thinks of managing its most intimate spiritual life in these juridical terms. Though the canons of the fourth Lateran Council strongly emphasise that the judgement of the confessor should be thought of as administering a medical-like remedy to the inner life of the sinner, the dominant judicial framework remains. The practice of 'reserved cases' enters the judicialized vocabulary of the Church. This is to say that some sins, conceived as heinous crimes, cannot be dealt with in lower courts, and must be transferred to a higher court. This is a procedure parallels the state's judicial system: particularly heinous crimes are moved from lower court to a higher

court.[3] Furthermore, the sacrosanct status of the confessor-judge is underwritten: 'He who dares to reveal a sin confided to him in the tribunal of penance, we decree . . . (that he) do penance for the remainder of his life', (Canon 21).

Hugh of Saint Victor (and others) had spoken of the Christian life as a life lived under the breath of the Holy Spirit. This is now recast as a life lived in obedience to the commandments, the norms and regulations that manage (and manipulate) the probity of the faithful within the Gospel community. In this mode it is precisely vital to form and to internalise a right conscience, and to act upon it. Acting according to one's conscience is the measure of one's moral probity. This means acting in accordance with the norms, relations, and laws of God's authority (the ten commandments) and Church authority (the precepts of the Church).

Sin is redefined as a legal offense. It is no longer just simply the betrayal or deflection from a personal vocation to love. The law governs not just what is legal and illegal, but what is good and what is bad. The sinner is prey to a new kind of interiorised guilt. In Illich's view, conscience, in the sense in which we have pangs of conscience and must act in accordance with our consciences, 'is a product of the criminalisation of sin' (Calley 2005, p. 190).

One enters and stands before the tribunal of penance as an individual; the sociality of the life of the faithful had receded from the centre stage. New fears, new darkness, and new loneliness haunt the individual, prompting still greater reliance on obedience to norms. The flowering of a state of perfection through the gifts of the Holy Spirit mediated through the company of others has receded from view.

These ecclesial and cultural developments have left their mark down to the present age, so Illich argues. They participate in the shaping of western modernity. The cultures of Western civilisation were indeed shaped by the narrative, and the reality, of the Incarnation, the enfleshment of God's love, with the new possibilities of human reality. But they were also shaped by a vicious swerve away from those new possibilities, towards a manipulative instrumentalisation of those possibilities, which concealed the true wonder of the Incarnation from view. A good life is a regulated life, a life in accordance with best norms and regulations established by society and by the Church.

When Illich looked back on his early works of social criticism of the ways of modernity he gradually realised that a more fearsome spectre was coming towards him from the depths. The perversity embedded within the practices of Western civilisation arrived there alongside Christian practices and the announcement of the Incarnation. The perversity embedded within the practices of Western civilisation was their malign shadow. In an address in 1987 Illich named the mysterious malignity:

> I want to explore with you a phenomenon that I consider constitutive of the West, of that West which has shaped me, body and soul, flesh and blood. This central reality of the West is marvellously expressed in the old Latin phrase: *Corruptio optimi quae est pessima*—the historical progression in which God's Incarnation is turned topsy-turvy, inside out. I want to speak of the mysterious darkness that envelops our world, the demonic night paradoxically resulting from the world's equally mysterious vocation to glory. (Calley 2005, p. 19)

Illich makes a sweeping interpretation of the entire course of the shaping of Western civilization and the presence of Christianity within it. It is important to notice that, strong though the case may be, it cannot be taken as the whole story. In the next century, the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas powerfully articulated a view of human and of Christian perfection utterly distant from the concept of the good life lived and guided by conscience. Aquinas is quite explicit that the new law of Gospel communities is nothing other than the law of living by the Holy Spirit: 'the foundation of the New Law is in the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is manifested in the faith which works through love', (ST I-II, q. 108, a. 1 c). There is a due role for promulgated norms and laws as guides to good living in the Spirit but, Aquinas insists, it is a minor role. It must not be exaggerated: specific precepts that come from Christ and the apostles were 'very few'. Furthermore, precepts such as these

should always be deployed with moderation, so that the life of Gospel communities would not be a life of servitude, but a life lived in freedom (ST I q. 107 a. 4). It is important to note that in his remarks on conscience, Illich's target is a concept of conscience as a guiding and regulatory inner forum. Not all theological usages of the notion of conscience work with this concept, and Aquinas in particular does not. Aquinas does not have a concept of conscience as a facility or procedure or some kind of guiding and regulatory inner forum. For Aquinas, the guidance towards the establishment of sane and wise human activity is not conscience, but rather the exercise of the intellectual virtue of '*prudentia*', itself animated by gifts of the Holy Spirit, including hope.

To understand Illich's thesis properly, it is necessary to grasp what is the 'optimum' which, he claims, has been subjected to corruption. The 'optimum', the most glorious, the most wonderful, is the reality and truth of the Incarnation. 'Christianity . . . begins with *verbum caro factum est*, or *logos sarx egeneto*'(Calley 2005, p. 204). Something new is done, and said, and seen concerning God and us and the world. The reality of the Incarnation is the 'optimum' most glorious, most wonderful and most vulnerable to corruption.

Illich approached the revelation of this crucial reality from two distinct pathways. The first is his narration of the importance of '*conspiratio*' in the liturgy of the Eucharistic community, and then its gradual decline from centrality. The second is his presentation of the parable of the Good Samaritan as a parable told by Jesus—the Samaritan did not act out of conscience—and then its misinterpretation as a foundational story for universalist ethics.

Illich's claim is that the Eucharistic communities of the early Christian centuries had two focal points, the '*conspiratio*', and the '*comestio*'. Before the '*comestio*', the shared meal, participants greeted each other with a kiss, the *conspiratio*. In those centuries, public greeting with a kiss already had an established ritual meaning. When a soldier left for war, he greeted his pregnant wife with a kiss before a magistrate. This was a public acknowledgement that the child to be born would indeed be his child. In adopting the ritual of the '*conspiratio*', the Christian community was proclaiming, and, in effect, enacting the reality that they, each one participating, Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free, were a community, and with the added depth of the passing on of the Holy Spirit, (the word '*conspiratio*' embeds the meaning of 'with the spirit'). Everyone contributed equally to the community, and through each one's own contribution, they could then belong together as they entered upon the '*comestio*', the shared meal that was the Lord's Supper. Thus the *ecclesia* itself is a body, not in an abstract sense, but in the sense of a new embodied humanity (Calley 2005, p. 107). It comes into existence when Christians share the sacramental meal. The water of baptism signifies their immersion in this new body. In the liturgy of the mass they share in this body, eating and drinking of it, and sharing its spirit, signified by the mouth-to-mouth kiss which was an integral part of the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The ceremony of an embrace before communion remained in many liturgical rites through the centuries. However, its central role has receded. The physicality of the act (which had been a mouth-to-mouth kiss), is eventually reduced to a brief handshake. A deed crucial to ecclesial self-understanding was marginalised. It has, one might say, become just part of the cultural legacy.

The celebration of the truth and reality of the Incarnation in the early Christian communities included their awareness of the vulnerability of this most glorious truth. The ground-tone of their life was contrition and the joy of forgiveness. This joy of forgiveness was not motivated by a sense of culpability but rather by a deep sense of sorrow about their capacity to betray the extension of love into which they had been called. A new sense of sin comes into the understanding of these early Christian communities. This new sense of sin was simply the horror of the possibility of betrayal of their newly gifted human embodiment, the embodiment of the *eccelsia*. To betray that humanity is to contemplate a void. This new sense of sin does not have the culpability of a crime. It cannot be measured by any depth of punishment. This new sense of sin was revealed only in the light of the possibility of its forgiveness. Such forgiveness is not any process of calculation. To live with the fear of this new sense of sin is possible because of the gift of hope which is

beyond understanding. 'To believe in sin, therefore, is to celebrate, as a gift beyond full understanding, the fact that one is being forgiven' (Calley 2005, p. 55).

Illich opened a second pathway to the wonder of the Incarnation through a distinctive reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan. In contemporary Western cultures, the parable of the Good Samaritan is widely known. It could be said to be part of the cultural legacy. Within these cultures the parable of the Good Samaritan functions like a morality tale. Its lesson is that we ought always to come to the help of someone in need and not restrict our concern to those of our own particular ethnicity or nationality. Illich argues that the familiarity of the parable within contemporary culture is a major part of the problem. We are guided towards a reading which is a total misconception. Charles Taylor comments 'From within this perspective, the standard account of the Good Samaritan story is just obvious: it is a stage on the road to a universal morality of rules', (Taylor 2007, p. 742).

Briefly recounted, the episode that includes this parable is as follows. A lawyer puts the question to Jesus, 'who is my neighbour?'. The parable is the answer that Jesus supplies to this question. A Jewish person travelling from Jericho to Jerusalem was beaten up by robbers and left for dead. A despised outsider (a Samaritan) came by. Seeing this person 'he was moved to pity', (Luke 10: 33). Illich urges us to pause over that phrase, 'he was moved to pity'. Something has happened to the Samaritan. The Greek word translated as 'moved to pity' is *esplanchnisthe.* The 'splanxna' are 'the inner parts', hearts, lung, bowels, liver. These came to denote the seat of powerful affections. *Esplanchnisthe* means that he was moved in his inmost parts with pity, moved viscerally. Illich maintains that Jesus uses this word to indicate a deep, internal, shattering experience. The power of this intense transformation sweeps the Samaritan past the boundary of his own ethnic community. He steps into a new, unique relationship with the wounded man. He steps past the most powerful demons, and watchdogs, that guard the boundary of his own ethnic community. Illich writes, 'In a certain way, he is superior to the most powerful demons, watchdogs, dragons, horrors and menaces which, in the world before Jesus, guarded the 'we'' (Calley 2005, p. 99). The Samaritan is not obeying any line of duty. He didn't act out of conscience. He wasn't moved by his conscience. He didn't act out of a moral norm of a universalist kind. He was moved by the wounded person. A personal call to a new kind of community with the wounded person has entered into his body, into his being. This is the story that Jesus tells. This is Jesus' answer to the question 'who is my neighbour?' It is a story about new human possibilities that are brought about by the Incarnation, God's love in human form. Jesus is pointing to a new possibility of love, but, as Illich sees it, not one that can be institutionally managed, secured, and safeguarded or legislated into existence. So it is that when asked what is the alternative to conscience, Illich replied

> It seems amazingly difficult for my auditors and pupils to conceive of conscience as anything other than an appeal to a norm. The norm might be exogenous, given by a law, or endogenous in a Kantian or post-Kantian way. So as far as I can understand, conscience and norm are inextricably bound together and mutually dependent. The Samaritan did not act out of conscience. How should one call what he acted out of? Paul speaks of love, faith, and hope. (Calley 2005, p. 193)

3. Guided by 'Scaffoldless' Hope, Not by Conscience

This is not a post-Christian age, so Illich asserts strongly. A post-Christian age would seem to indicate that modernity had left the age of the Incarnation behind. It might seem to indicate a reversion to a simpler era, no longer burdened with the legacy of Christianity. Illich, to the contrary, asserts that the age of modernity grew out of the Church and grew to become, precisely, a perverted Christian reality. Wherever he looked for the roots of the certainties that are embedded in modern institutions, he finds the attempt 'to provide by human means what only God calling through the beaten-up Jew could give to the Samaritan, the invitation to act in charity' (Calley 2005, p. 180). This is still the age of the Incarnation, the age of calling forth new possibilities that the enfleshed love of God brings, but also the age that reveals the vulnerability of this new calling. There is a *mysterium iniquitatis* at work

in this present age, which is (nonetheless) forever the age of the Incarnation; the world was changed forever by the appearance of a community based entirely on the liturgical kiss, the *conspiratio*.

What does it mean to live in this present age? It means that we live in this age but we do not take our meaning from it. 'When a 'we' can come into existence as a result of a *conspiratio*, we are already out of time. We are living already in the time of the Spirit' (Calley 2005, p. 180). The 'we' that has come to existence transcends the present and takes its outlook from its contact with the future, based entirely on the virtue of hope. In search of a way of spelling out what this means further, Illich turns to the Aquinas concept of '*aevum*' (ST 1, q. 10, art 5). For Aquinas the concept of '*aevum*' was distinct from the concept of 'time' and the concept of 'eternity'. The concept of time has a 'before' and an 'after'. The concept of eternity does not. The concept of '*aevum*' (necessary in order to speak of purely spiritual beings such as angels) does have a 'before', but it does not have an 'after'. Illich offers this concept to illuminate what it means to live in this present age: 'a now which is also forever, in which heaven and earth are facing each other, and therefore the flesh which is already in heaven and the flesh on earth will somehow be glorified together' (Calley 2005, p. 214). In this age, Illich argues, we must spurn all attempts to speculate on a timeframe, as, for instance, the temptation to pronounce whether the present age is the end time, or any other such speculation. We are in an age of 'scaffoldless' hope, without the scaffolding of either the calendar or timepiece. Illich rejoices in this age, and celebrates it: 'what a privilege it is' (Calley 2005, p. 183). In *Deschooling Society,* Illich had distinguished hope from expectation. Expectation, he claimed, was the distortion of true hope which was cultivated within the cultures of modernity. Expectation means reliance on results that are planned and controlled. Hope centres desire on a person for whom we await a gift (Illich 1971b, p. 105). While expectation means reliance on results that are planned and controlled, hope, in the strong sense, means trusting faith in the goodness of nature, and centering desire on a person for whom we await a gift. The survival of the human race, he asserts, depends on a rediscovery of hope above expectation. When Illich returns to references to hope in his final interviews, and when he contrasts hope with conscience, as what moves the agency of the Good Samaritan, as in the passage quoted above—'The Samaritan did not act out of conscience. How should one call what he acted out of? Paul speaks of love, faith, and hope'. The hope that he speaks of is the hope that has come to be in the 'ecology' of the Incarnation. This is hope in a different key, a more profound hope. Yet the contrast with expectation remains. It is in further delineation of this more profound hope that Illich invents the phrase 'scaffoldless hope'. The adjective 'scaffoldless' is placed here to offer contrast to hope bolstered by the security of a time frame. It is precisely this hope which is celebrated and enacted in the Eucharistic liturgy, so central to Illich's understanding of what is going on in the human world. It could be argued that the Eucharist, a sacrament, a sign that realises what it signifies, does offer some kind of scaffolding to hope. The hope that is realised in the Eucharist is also a sign, a symbol of what is realised. Furthermore, Eucharistic hope, like all genuine hope, has a performative as well as an optative dimension. Hope is something we do, not just a way of thinking and feeling and yearning. One such performative practice is to attend to and develop the virtues, the human resources, that living with hope requires. These are qualities such as courage, resilience, humility, and truth- telling, all strategies that Hugh of Saint Victor (and others) had outlined. There is a sense in which Illich's work pauses at the threshold of a fuller disclosure of what it would be to walk in hope along the passageways of contemporary Western modernity, knowing full well that there is indeed a *mysterium iniquitatis* abroad there.

Ivan Illich, a true radical, courageous, dedicated, and learned, offered brilliant, even prophetic insight to our time. Eric Fromm, writing the introduction to *Celebration of Awareness* says, 'I see the great value in the writings of Dr Illich precisely in the fact that they represent humanistic radicalism in its fullest and most imaginative sense' (Illich 1971a, p. 11). While this is indeed a legitimate estimation, it is, perhaps, incomplete. Illich writes of

himself, 'I, Ivan, have tried to recognise the greatness of God' (Calley 2005, p. 191). In the final analysis, the greatness of God is the theme of which his work resounds.

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Notes

[1] *Celebration of Awareness* is an exception in this respect.

[2] See (Medieval Sourcebook 1215), https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp (accessed on 23 December 2020).

[3] These are termed 'reserved cases' in the 1918 *Code of Canon Law*, changed to 'reserved sins', in the 1983 Code.

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