

The Convivial Life

CONVERSATIONS WITH IVAN ILLICH & "FRIENDS"

Course Summary

In this course we will explore the convivial life around four main themes:

- Education
- Tools, Technology & Techne
- Institutions & the Production of Subjectivity
- Church & State

In each module, we will use provocative quotes from Ivan Illich to ignite generative conversations "among friends" – by bringing in contemporary voices that can be seen as carrying forward these ideas in their own ways.

The "friends" we will meet around our table are: Jan Zwickey, *Frost & Snow* and Jaques Ranciere *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (education); Timothy Morton, *All Art is Ecological* (Tools, Technology & Techne); Donald Oliver, *The Primal, the Vital & the Modern* (Institutions & the Production of Subjectivity); ee cummings, *a man who had fallen among thieves* (Church & State) and other surprising guests. (Pdf and online versions of all material will be provided for live participants.)

Course Outline: Prompts for Conversations

Week One: Education

- Consumer Education
 - The real purpose of education is to elevate the consumer standards of each successive generation.
 - Consumer education will become the human capital theory of the next decade as the global society transitions from economies based on labor and income, to economies based on consumption and debt.
- Village Education
 - The ontological design of education is the extra-curricular signal that will outlast the curricular content.
 - A typical day in class would have the same sensorimotor stimulation of a typical day sauntering through a village, participation in the vibrant life of well-placed community, grounding the children in both a sense of belonging and place.
- Saying without Naming

- *Educare* means to bring forth more life.
 - We know that by saying, we will capture just some—but not all (and perhaps not much) of what is possible to say.
To say- but-not-name means to keep open the passed-over possibilities through an artful use of language.

Week Two: Tools, Technology, Techne

- Tools for Conviviality
 - Why shouldn't it be possible to think about objects of daily use as products of human intention and the use of appropriate tool? ~ Ivan Illich
 - It should be clear by this point that I think that modern technological society stands in the same relation to this discovery of tools, as the death of nature does to the discovery of nature as a continuous and contingent creation. ~ Ivan Illich
- A(l)pocalypse
 - Digital technology lack instrumentality. It lacks the necessary distance between a tool and the user.
 - The hammer remains an instrument of the person, not the system. In a system, the user ... by the logic of the system, becomes part of the system. ~ Ivan Illich
- Art & Aesthetic Reason
 - *All art is ecological* ~ Timothy Morton
 - We'll be seeing how the experience of art provides a model for the kind of coexistence ecological ethics and politics wants to achieve between humans and non-humans. ~ Timothy Morton

Week Three: Institutions & the Production of Subjectivity

- People vs Systems
 - The Gaia Hypothesis takes on a gruesome meaning when it is used by someone who has been swallowed by the system to express his self-consciousness. ~ Ivan Illich
 - What of the person who has himself been swallowed by the world conceived as a system, a world represented or made present to his fantasy in a disconnected but deductive sequence of visiotypes? ~ Ivan Illich
- Death of the Communal Self – WORKSHOP DESIGN

- o At the core of the convivial society is the communal self generating networks of trust

This part of the course is a workshop with exercises that help you discover your distinct trust style and understand the complexity of trust styles in the human system.

- The Production of Conviviality – **WORKSHOP DESIGN**
 - o The Convivial Society is constituted by the four domains of care.
 - Understanding the Domains of Care
 - Commons = non-reciprocal care + shared space/place
 - Economy = reciprocal care + a ledger
 - Platform = disintermediated care + user network
 - Congregation = deep mutuality + shared assembly

Week Four: Church & State

- Politics & Governance
 - o Whenever I look for the roots of modernity, I find them in the attempts of the churches to institutionalize, legitimize and manage Christian vocation. ~ Ivan Illich
 - There is no question that modern service society has is an attempt to establish and extend Christian hospitality. On the other hand, we have immediately perverted it. It creates an impersonal view of how a good society ought to work. It creates needs, so-called, for service commodities, needs which can never be satisfied—is there enough health yet, enough education? ~ Ivan Illich
- The Religious Life
 - o How is it that Jewish people came into existence around their prophets?
 - What makes the ancient Jews unique is that they became a social “we” and “I” in the plural ... They made the astonishing claim that they could step outside the context in which tomorrow turns in a circle with yesterday, and instead speak about a tomorrow which will be totally surprising.
- The Good Samaritan
 - o God didn’t become man, he became flesh. ~ Ivan Illich
 - I believe... in a God who is enfleshed, and who has given the Samaritan, as a being drowned in carnality ... not just in a physical sense, but a deeper sense, as a human being. God’s love is in the flesh, and the relationship between two people, the mystery of the Samaritan, is inevitably a mystery of the flesh.

- 1) Education
 - a) Consumer Education
 - i) Raising consumer standards

Bonnitta Roy: Consumer Ed

ii) Creating an intellectual class

Jacques Rancière: The Ignorant Schoolmaster

Jacques Rancière's "The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation" doesn't exactly provide five neatly delineated 'lessons' in the typical way we might expect. Rather, the 'five lessons' can be seen as five broad themes or ideas throughout the book, some of which can be summarized as follows:

1. **The Emancipatory Master:** The master or teacher doesn't need to have knowledge of the student's learning process. The master's ignorance can be a powerful tool to stimulate student self-reliance. The master's role is to prompt and provoke rather than to instruct in the traditional sense.
2. **Equal Intelligence:** Rancière promotes the idea of 'universal teaching,' which is based on the belief that all people have equal intelligence. This intelligence doesn't mean equal knowledge or talent but signifies an equal capacity to learn and think. This fundamental assumption guides the rest of his pedagogical method.
3. **Learning as Verification:** Learning is not about the passive absorption of knowledge, but an active process of verification and understanding. Students should not be spoon-fed information but encouraged to understand and interpret information independently.
4. **Circle of Power and Will:** The book critiques the traditional pedagogical relationship between teacher and student, viewing it as a circle of power, where the teacher holds knowledge, and thus power, over the student. It proposes a shift towards a circle of will, where the teacher's role is to incite the student's will to learn.
5. **Intellectual Emancipation:** The goal of the educational process is intellectual emancipation, enabling students to be self-sufficient learners, capable of learning without the guidance of a master. This is not about achieving specific knowledge outcomes but developing the ability to think critically and independently.

These concepts underscore Rancière's broader philosophical arguments against societal hierarchies and in favor of intellectual equality and autonomy. They represent a radical critique of the traditional educational system and its perpetuation of social inequalities.

b) Village Education

- i) Learning happens everywhere
- ii) Ontological design

Bonnitta Roy: Village Education

iii) Task of education is to transform people

Jan Zwickey: Frost and Snow (from Once Upon a Time in the West

iv) Donald Oliver – *The Primal, the Vital, the Modern*

"Spheres of Existence (adapted from Donald Oliver)

	Primal	Vital	Modern	Transformative
1	Constitutive	Communal	Constructivist	Congregational/Convivial
2	Ontological realism	Judgmental rationality	Epistemic relativism	Participatory Enactment
3	Labor	Action	Work	Meta-action
4	Autonomous	Relational	Atomistic	Holistic
5	Schema	Principles	Rules/ Scripts	Protocols
6	Meaning	Sensemaking	Knowing	Enacting
7	Care	Cultivate	Teach	Educate
8	Purpose	Understanding	Explanation	Disclosure/ Revelation
9	Non-reciprocal	Reciprocal	Transactional	Mutuality
10	Timeless	Present	Past	Future
11	Sensorium	Experience	Knowledge	Reflexivity
12	Feel	Say	Name	Collective Insight
13	Deeper universals	Dynamic coherence	Functional system	Novel Emergence (Uniqueness)
14	Replenish	Resilience	(Re)production	(Re)Creation
15	Complex potential states	Wholistic awareness	Complex Adaptive Systems	Mindful heeding/ simplicity
16	Terrestrial Life	Eudaemonia	Tech-know-lodgy IOT, the "Stack", the "Matrix"	Human and non-human solidarity

c) Saying Without Naming

i) Educare – Quality without a name

Bonnitta Roy: Saying Without Naming

ii)

2) Tools, Technology, Techne

a) Tools for Conviviality

- i) Tools as instruments, extending the human body, mind
 - (1) Self-organized relationships with animals, matter, electrons, energy
- ii) Technology as cultural protocols, language
 - (1) Capitalism, democracy, internet, psychotechnologies
- iii) Techne as dispositional state, attending in a certain way, a sensitivity toward the instrument a relational responsiveness

- b) A(l)pocalypse
 - i) Vocabulary shaping social space
 - ii) Action Protocols

- c) Art & Aesthetic Reasoning
 - i) Cross-modal synaesthesia

- ii) Aesthetic judgment

[Timothy Morton: All Art is Ecological](#)

And you may find yourself living in an Age of Mass Extinction

So if the truthfeel of beauty is telling you something true about anything at all—anything at all is called objects in OOO, and these sorts of objects are sharply different from objectified things, because they are radically mysterious – what truthfeel is telling you is that things are open. Also the beauty experience is telling you that this thing, this

- a) People vs Systems
 - i) Public vs Private
- b) Death of the Communal Self
 - i) Trust
 - ii) Domains of Care
- c) The Production of Conviviality
 - i) Action Protocols

4) Church and State

- a) Politics & Governance
- b) The Religious Life

The Old Testament of the Christian Bible, taken as a whole, is prophetic. At its heart are people who speak about what has not yet come to be. Older Biblical scholarship tended to ask how it was that such people arose only amongst that particular tribe, or people whom we today call the Jews.

Biblical scholarship of the last forty years has altered the question. The authors who have most impressed and interested me [Illich] have asked: how is it that the Jewish people came into existence around their prophets? What makes the ancient Jews unique is that they became a social "we," an "I" in the plural, around the message that whatever happens in history or can be seen in nature is a foreshadowing, in the sense that pregnancy foreshadows birth.

The prophets of Israel made the astonishing claim that they could step outside the family and tribal context in which tomorrow turns in a circle with yesterday, and instead speak about a tomorrow which will be totally surprising, messianic. It is around the announced Messiah that the historically unique phenomenon of God's people comes into existence, and the Old Testament in this sense is pregnant with the Messiah. "The whole creation, the apostle Paul says, "has been until this time, groaning in labor pains."

c) The Good Samaritan

a man who had fallen among thieves

ee cummings

a man who had fallen among thieves

lay by the roadside on his back

dressed in fifteenthrate ideas

wearing a round jeer for a hat

fate per a somewhat more than less

emancipated evening

had in return for consciousness

endowed him with a changeless grin

whereon a dozen staunch and leal

citizens did graze at pause

then fired by hypercivic zeal

sought newer pastures or because

swaddled with a frozen brook

of pinkest vomit out of eyes

which noticed nobody he looked

as if he did not care to rise

one hand did nothing on the vest

its wideflung friend clenched weakly dirt

while the mute trouserfly confessed

a button solemnly inert.

Brushing from whom the stiffened puke

i put him all into my arms

and staggered banged with terror through

a million billion trillion stars

