Ivan Illich and René Girard

The Dream of Modernity Ends

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 2002, I came across a manuscript by Jean-Pierre Dupuy that linked the work of Ivan Illich with that of René Girard. I immediately set about translating the text, which was published in Spanish as part of the essay collection *The Other Titan: Ivan Illich*.[1] The original "Detour and Sacrifice" can be found in two books that pay tribute to the authors. The first was compiled by Lee Hoinacki and Carl Mitcham, Illich's disciples;[2] the second is a book edited by Sandor Goodhart, Jorgen Jorgensen, Tom Ryba, and James G. Williams that celebrates Girard's work.[3]

The genesis of Dupuy's text actually goes back to 1996 and was inspired by Ivan Illich's seventieth birthday, which was celebrated with a series of lectures in Oakland, California. Asked to contribute, I produced two texts, one published in the magazine *Ixtus*—"The Place of *Gender*"[4]—and the other "The Convivial Philospher."[5] Later, in 2006, I published an essay on René Girard.[6]

The first two paragraphs of Dupuy's text elicit reflection on the link between the two authors:

Illich and Girard barely know each other's work. Neither of them has been influenced by the other. It is through readers like myself, who think there are discernible truths in the writings of both authors, that their works are finally more complementary than contradictory, that their ideas have been able to enter into a synergy. I won't recount in this context my own intellectual journey. I will limit myself to summarizing what I have drawn from both of them in a way that brings to light the challenge each constitutes for the other.[7]

Despite this promising beginning, the essay then loses force; in fact, instead of analyzing one author's work in light of the other's, it considers them separately and avoids the confrontation of their ideas. Instead, Illich is compared to Jon Elster and Girard to Friedrich von Hayek and Adam Smith. My intention in writing the present article, then, is to evaluate each author's body of work as it relates to the other's, delving deeper than Dupuy and emphasizing reciprocal criticism.

It is noteworthy that while, as Dupuy pointed out, Illich and Girard did not inspire each other, they were clearly well versed in the other's approach. The two met at the beginning of this century in Palo Alto; while there is no written account of what transpired, José María Sbert spoke to Illich shortly thereafter and reported that "Ivan was amazed at how well Girard knew his work. Apparently, he had read all of it."

There is also some evidence of mutuality, as Illich quoted Girard on more than one occasion. We can thank Dupuy for establishing this connection. As Illich himself wrote in *Shadow Work*:

we have become blind to the paradox that scarcity increases in a society with the rise of the GNP. The kind of scarcity which we take for granted was—and largely still is—unknown outside of commodity-intensive societies. The history of this sense of scarcity, however, still remains to be written.

A major step toward such a history was made in 1979 by Paul Dumouchel and Jean-Pierre Dupuy in the two separate essays they published under the joint title *L'enfer des choses*. Both authors start with an insight which they reached with the help of René Girard.[8]

Illich had the highest praise for Girard when in the sixth note to *Gender*, titled "Envious Individualism," he stated:

Girard finds in the nineteenth-century novel a source of evidence for a historic transformation of desire: the evolution of *needs* based on invidious comparison

with others' aspirations. Rather than analyzing Dostoevsky's figures through Freudian categories, he demystifies Freud by looking at him through the eyes of the brothers Karamazov. In this perspective, what is considered economic progress appears as the institutional spread of triangular, or *mimetic*, desire. The history of economic individualism coincides with the modernization of envy.[9]

Furthermore, in one of several conversations with David Cayley in 1989, transmitted on the CBC Canada Radio program "Ideas," Illich said the following:

> So, I really have to send people back to read Dumont, and even more importantly, to read René Girard, whose reflections on mimetic desire cast a new light on Dumont's work. Girard proves through his study of certain novels of the last century that *Homo economicus* comes into existence only from the middle of the nineteenth century. I begin to be a person who can desire only what I see you and others desire. Desire becomes mimetic when it's no longer my fantasy but the imitation of the other's expression of his need through which my need will be shaped.[10]

Further along, these notes will be considered more closely, not only in terms of their relevance to Girard's work but as a misinterpretation of his thought.

The familiarity with which Illich spoke of Girard during the Eighties is clear in a letter to David Ramage. Dated November 14, 1989, Illich is accepting an invitation to participate in the *McCormick Seminary* in Chicago. The letter makes reference to research on the "trivial certainties of the West," which go beyond what "Weber, Girard, Tawney, and Louis Dumont have suspected." It was Illich's last reference to Girard and marks the beginning of a new research approach based on the history of perception and the senses, culminating in his book *In the Vineyard of the Text*.[11]

DIAGNOSIS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION: DESIRES AND NEEDS

In one of his most recent books, Girard provides the following description of the catastrophic contemporary world:

> Violence is presently being unleashed . . . across the entire planet, fulfilling the predictions of apocalyptic texts: confusion regarding those disasters caused by nature and by man, confusion regarding what is natural and what is artificial. At present, global warming and rising sea levels are no longer metaphors.[12]

Several other sources reflect a similar opinion of present-day life. One example is his accusing Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Paul Dumouchel of being overly optimistic about consumer society. He asserts that for these authors, the modern world is flooded with merchandise in such abundance that desires are shaped by it. Thanks to a general currency (money), individuals have no need to cling to a particular object and fight for it; rather, they can simply replace it with a similar one or one that at least produces a similar feeling. Thus, envy is lessened and, while still ever present, is no longer deadly because competition becomes secondary. In the face of this Tocquevillian view of a social stability that arises from relative indifference to others, Girard responds as follows:

> Dupuy and Dumouchel's interpretation of present-day society strikes me as accurate, if a little too optimistic. According to them, consumer society constitutes a way of deactivating mimetic rivalry, by reducing the potential for conflict . . . making it possible for the same objects and merchandise to be available to everyone, thus reducing opportunities for rivalry among individuals. However, if such a system becomes permanent, people end up losing interest in objects precisely because they are too easily obtained; furthermore, they are all identical. Clearly, such a *wearing away* happens over a period of time, but it is inevitable. . . . As occurs with all sacrificial mechanisms, this society must be periodically *reinvented*. In order to survive, novel technological gadgets need to appear. Meanwhile, the market society is devouring the planet's resources, more or less the way the ancient Aztecs did; the number of victims sacrificed increases steadily. Over time, any sacrificial *medicine* loses its potency. . . . The world is full of objects that bore us enormously and get in our way. And many times, precisely those objects designed to seduce us are the ones we tire of the most quickly. At present, a shopping trip tends to consist of acquiring a large amount of objects that will be thrown in the garbage without any sense of continuity. . . . And while this is happening, half of humanity is starving to death! . . . Consumer society almost always becomes a system in which signs, as opposed to real objects, are exchanged. Our contemporaries tend to live in a minimalist and anorexic world; from the moment when consumption became an external sign of wealth, it lost its appeal. To really seem cool nowadays, one must either look malnourished or completely subversive. . . . The problem is that we are all pulling at the same strings and that is how we end up, hanging by them.[13]

Illich's view of the world was not much brighter. In his words, "there is no off-switch for an ecological apocalypsis."[14] In *Tools to Conviviality*, he assessed the counterproductivity, environmental destruction, and social injustice that modern society has produced. His view is clear:

Compulsory maddening behavior in Hades was considered the ultimate punishment reserved for blasphemy. Sisyphus was forced to keep rolling a stone uphill, only to see it roll back down. When maddening behavior becomes the standard of a society, people learn to compete for the right to engage in it. Envy blinds people and makes them compete due to addiction.[15]

In a speech he gave regarding Mexico City's 1985 earthquake (cowritten by Gustavo Esteva), Illich asserted:

Until recently, questioning the benefits of development had been considered almost taboo. From the far left to the far right, academics supported the political position that mass suffering was an inevitable price that had to be paid for the well-being that would, over time, be achieved. But then oil prices dropped, debts increased, "austerity" regimes were implemented, and Mexico was transformed into a freer trade zone in which transnational capital installed automatized factories in which Volkswagen parts could be built and exported to Germany. Political corruption and environmental destruction—implicit in the development process—became so severe that they could be seen and felt by everyone. A new group of experts document the causal relationship between the deteriorating environment and a loss of solidarity previously only seen in the lowest classes. We are now in a better position to question conventional wisdom regarding this topic. Even academians, who are trained to trust experts instead of following their own perceptions, now recognize that development stinks.[16]

In short, Illich considered the contemporary world a disaster zone. He expresses this clearly in a 1992 essay on the concept of modern "needs":

No matter where you travel, the landscape is recognizable. All over the world it is cluttered with cooling towers and parking lots, agribusiness and megacities. But now that development is ending–earth was the wrong planet for this kind of construction—the growth projects are rapidly turning into ruins, into junk, among which we must learn to live. Twenty years ago, the consequences of the worship of growth already appeared *counter-intuitive*. Today, *Time Magazine* publicizes them with apocalyptic cover stories. And no one knows how to live with these frightening new Horsemen of the Apocalypse, many more than four of them—a changing climate, genetic depletion, pollution, the breakdown of various immunities, a rising sea level and millions of fugitives. . . . But even more difficult than to survive with these environmental changes is the horror of living with the habits of need which four decades of development have established. The needs produced by the

rain dance of development have not only justified the despoliation and poison-
ing of the earth; they have also acted on a deeper level. They have transmogrified
human nature. They have reshaped the mind and senses of *homo sapiens* into those
of *homo miserabilis. Basic needs* has got to be the most insidious legacy left behind
by development.[17]

For both Girard and Illich, the root of the gravest contemporary evils lies in the
cultural framework that shapes desire, limiting it in some ways and increasing it
in others. Both authors establish a stark contrast between traditional and mod-
ern societies and consider Christianity a type of bridge between the two. They
attest that traditional societies were better at fulfilling desire than present-day
ones are. The dichotomy they observe between traditional and modern worlds
merits further examination.

In Girard's work, we find the thesis that desire tends to be imitative and
that its mimetism can open one of two doors. When it stimulates creativity
and feeds cultural development, it is healthy imitation; but when it incites
competition, jealousy, and envy, it is not only negative but invariably leads to
violence. Girard calls the first variety positive mimetism, positive reciprocity,
positive indifferentiation, or a mimetism that is controlled externally. The sec-
ond he considers mimetic rivalry or negative indifferentiation.[18]

The problem, then, is that in the modern world, desire that leads to the
destructive type of imitation is strengthened, while the former variety loses
force. This is unlike the dynamics of a traditional society, in which a clear set
of prohibitions were in place and people were motivated to respect them, one
result being that men did not desire the same object. That is, moral codes repu-
diated mimetic rivalry.[19] But, perhaps more importantly, such societies offered a
positive model for imitation:

> The disadvantage of prohibitions, however, is that they don't finally play their role
> in a satisfying manner. Their primarily negative character . . . inevitably provokes in
> us the mimetic urge to trangress them. The best way of preventing violence does
> not consist in forbidding objects, or even rivalistic desire, as the tenth command-
> ment does, but in offering to people the model that will protect them from mimetic
> rivalries rather than involving them in these rivalries.[20]

However, the establishment of both prohibitions and positive mimetism
requires a hierarchy to be in place, so that degrees or differentiation are clear:
an authority or "higher power" must guide society toward an acceptance of
what is to be considered sacred. This vital element motivates each person to

comply with his or her social role and strongly discourages transgressions.[21] But the scenario may strike the modern man as unbearable, as he idealizes equality and freedom.

The modern world is thus one of unleashed competitive desire. Abandoned by the gods, humans are forced to imitate each other. The problem that arises is that far from creating peace, such desire is a constant source of psychological malaise and frustration. Violence ensues, and the principal mechanism for trying to contain it is an even more violent entity—the judicial system. This is the very heart of the Hobbesian Leviathan.[22] When the only element in place to placate societies malfunctions, violence becomes widespread.

Similarly, Ivan Illich believes that in earlier societies, desire was oriented toward virtue[23] and not toward envy. Traditionally, the main virtues were austerity,[24] asceticism,[25] love,[26] hospitality,[27] and a clear separation between realms that are taken to be masculine and feminine.[28] Without them, it is impossible to maintain an ecologically viable society that will stay afloat and cultivate equality, friendship, and creative autonomy.

Modernity prevents these classic virtues from being fostered, as emphasis is no longer placed on the development of an inner life, one that is the fruit of discipline and requires stimulation not only of the senses and appetites but also of the intellect. Contemporary societies, in contrast, tend to exacerbate impatience; people are tempted to forego discipline and, instead, to adopt a worldview in which the senses and brain are separate entities.[29]

According to Illich, "modern desires" can be distinguished from traditional ones in four different ways. First, they are converted into "needs"—that is, they take on a sense of urgency and are characterized as being fair and satisfiable.[30]

In the second place, present-day desires tend to increase without rein.[31] He points out that "in rich countries, the poor expect a quantity and quality of commodities beyond the dreams of Louis XIV."[32]

Thirdly, these urgent, ever-increasing desires are universalized; in fact, what seems to make a person human is sharing the common condition of "being in need."[33]

Finally, the satisfaction of these "needs" is conditioned on the products that radical monopolies place on the market. Thus, people do not seek an education but attendance at certain schools; health is no longer as important as the availability of doctors and hospitals.[34]

A radical monopoly forms when "one industrial production process exercises an exclusive control over the satisfaction of a pressing need and prevents nonindustrial activities from competing."[35] This can happen through force,

degradation of the means by which a particular need can be satisfied, or the seduction of an industrial machine that appears to be ultra-efficient.

But no number of hospitals can take the place of healthy habits, and the same can be said of learning: when an individual has taken the position that independent learning is negative, he is unable to profit from a school setting. He has acquired a need (schooling) but is incapable of satisfying it.

He may then discover that his feet are less efficient than a car but cannot figure out how to acquire one. This is when the frustration of "modernized poverty" sets in. Illich explains it in the following terms:

> On the day Venezuela legislated the right of each citizen to *housing*, conceived of as a commodity, three-quarters of all families found that their self-built dwellings were thereby degraded to the status of hovels. Furthermore—and this is the rub—self-building was now unacceptable. No house could be legally started without the submission of an approved architect's plan. The useful refuse and junk of Caracas, up until then re-employed as excellent building materials, now created a problem of solid-waste disposal. The man who produces his own *housing* is looked down upon as a deviant who refuses to cooperate with the local pressure group for the delivery of mass-produced housing units. Also, innumerable regulations have appeared which brand his ingenuity as illegal or even criminal. This example illustrates how the poor are the first to suffer when a new kind of commodity castrates one of the traditional subsistence crafts. The useful unemployment of the jobless poor is sacrificed to the expansion of the labour market. *Housing* as a self-chosen activity, just like any other freedom for useful unemployment of time off the job, becomes the privilege of some deviant, often the idle rich.[36]

Thus, modernity generates an "addiction to paralyzing opulence," which, in turn, produces a "modernized poverty." Furthermore,

> As development, or modernization, reached the poor—those who until then had been able to survive in spite of being excluded from the market economy—they were systematically compelled to survive by buying into a purchasing system which, for them, always and necessarily meant getting the dregs of the market. Indians in Oaxaca who formerly had no access to schools are now drafted into school to "earn" certificates that precisely measure their inferiority relative to the urban population. Furthermore, and this is again the rub, without this piece of paper, they can no longer enter even the building trades. Modernization of *needs* always adds new discrimination to poverty.[37]

For both Illich and Girard, unreined desire is modernity's main problem. On this topic, however, Illich cites Girard incorrectly when describing the contrast between traditional moral and modern criteria. As previously cited partially:

> Good is desired and value is needed, chosen, or picked. Desire has no horizon, needs are made to be satisfied. We live in a world of needs and most people really believe that they have needs. We forget that, as Michael Ignatieff has shown so well, my needs are the result of my having attributed them to others and then saying, me too. It's what René Girard calls mimetic desire, which transforms desires into needs, needs for commodities, needs for products, needs which can be satisfied.[38]

It thus appears that for Illich, mimetic desire is modern desire, what he calls "needs." But Girard's definition is more complex: mimetic desire was also present in the traditional world. Furthermore, it is an essential part of hominization itself.[39] This is not a trifling misunderstanding but an argument that Illich returned to over and over, always erroneously.

The author of *The Scapegoat* never referred to Illich's reading of the work directly, but he did mention that of Lucien Goldmann, whose interpretation is similar. Basically, it takes the position that mimetic desire is a bourgeois phenomenon.[40]

The misunderstanding may have arisen, at least in part, because Illich, like Goldmann, concentrates on *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, which takes as its subject of study novels of the bourgeois era. The confusion is still hard to understand, however: Illich had also read *Violence and the Sacred*, in which it is clear that for Girard, mimetic desire is a phenomenon as old as mankind itself.

DEMYTHIFYING MODERNITY

In intellectual circles, both Illich and Girard are of prime importance. Their books have been translated into many languages, with dozens of editions of each. The two thinkers have even inspired the creation of research centers. Illich has been compared to such illustrious authors as Paulo Freire[41] and Erich Fromm,[42] and Girard to thinkers such as Gianni Vattimo,[43] Roberto Calasso,[44] and Regis Debray.[45]

But both authors sought to transcend academia and influence society's destiny. It is not clear whether or not either succeeded. José María Sbert wrote the following about Illich:

Across the ideological spectrum, from *Time Magazine* to *Le Monde Diplomatique*, those who have commented on Ivan Illich's death agree that despite being a Seventies-era hero for the "baby boomer" generation, he was later rejected or forgotten by most of his previous followers.

It would be difficult to argue that the problems Illich posed have lost their gravity. On the contrary, all the evidence is that they have become increasingly tragic—some to the point of delirium, such as the automobile problem that Illich described in *Energy and Equity*. At present . . . [t]he counterproductivity of such advances has followed the path that Illich had predicted. . . .

The fact that the situation becomes harder and harder to correct does not mean that the concerns of Illich and his 1970s readers no longer make sense. It means that recognizing our impotence in the face of civilization is immensely painful, and that—just as Illich feared—having lost control of our own tools, we are now dominated by them.[46]

Similarly, Girard discusses how worthless policies are to detain the "march toward the extremes," as well as how his own warning about negative mimetism has failed.[47]

The personalities of our two authors are markedly different. While Girard preferred to fly under the radar, considering scandal-mongering—an expression of man's perversion—one of the most damaging aspects of social life, Illich had a different perspective. At least until the Seventies, he took advantage of the public hunger for scandal in order to call attention to the social issues that he hoped to influence.

The difference can be partially explained by their contrasting upbringings. Girard grew up in a favorable environment, surrounded by intellectuals, artists, and—later—academics. He had ample opportunity for quiet study; over time, he sought and found the means to develop the serene creativity that characterized his work.[48]

Illich, in contrast, spent his formative academic years feeling smothered by the church, as he was a vice rector. He couldn't just study but had to fight a political battle, many times against the Catholic Church, for what he felt was the true Evangelical Message. During the Sixties, he devoted great effort to sabotaging the Vatican's apparent plan to expand the "American way of life" throughout Latin America. His criticism of the ecclesiastic bureaucracy was vast.[49]

Illich abandoned the church in the late Sixties, but the ironic and scandalous tone that he had adopted lived on. He himself referred to his writings during the following decade as "my pamphlets," as the objective was not to delve

deeply into the topics covered but to get people talking about them. This is why he often considered a highly disparaging tone appropriate.[50]

Despite this dissimilarity in the character of their criticism and the impact that they hoped to achieve, Illich and Girard spoke about the modern world in similar terms. Both felt that the commonly accepted scientific language was inadequate to describe present-day phenomena. Using metaphors and referring to traditional concepts, they tried to belie the "certainties" of their era. They both brought to life ancient images, although the convivial philosopher spoke of Greek mythology while the French anthropologist cited the Gospels.

Their starting points were also quite different. Illich took on the task of demythification on the basis of primitive tribal rituals. In his own voice:

> When . . . I began to engage in a phenomenology of schooling, I first asked myself, "What am I studying?" Quite definitely, I was not studying what other people told me I was—namely, the most practical arrangement for imparting education or for creating equality because I saw that most of the people were stupefied by this procedure, were actually told that they couldn't learn on their own and became disabled and crippled.[51]

The issue can be described in the following way: if we develop a tool (in this case, an institution), it must satisfy a desire. If it turns out not to fill that requirement, why do we continue using it? In *Deschooling Society*, Illich writes as follows:

> The capacity to pursue incongruous goals requires an explanation. According to Max Gluckman, all societies have procedures to hide such dissonances from their members. He suggests that this is the purpose of ritual. Rituals can hide from their participants even discrepancies and conflicts between social principle and social organization. As long as an individual is not explicitly conscious of the ritual character of the process through which he was initiated to the forces which shape his cosmos, he cannot break the spell and shape a new cosmos. As long as we are not aware of the ritual through which school shapes the progressive consumer—the economy's major resource—we cannot break the spell of this economy and shape a new one.[52]

Thus, Illich began to demystify the modern world by adhering to basic categories recognized in anthropology. Girard, in contrast, based his own approach on literature. His first unmasking related to the very nature of desire. In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, he provided two possible origins for human desire. The first, the romantic vision, maintained that desire was linear in structure, running

from the desirous subject to the object in question. In that view, man longs to satisfy his natural appetites, which are manipulated by his subconscious, genes, mode of production, or any other metaphysical power that could play the role of a god. For Girard, this is a "romantic lie" because all desire is actually imitative. It is the lie of novelists who put forth a supposed human autonomy that does not exist.

The romantic lie arises from a world in which originality is overvalued and is linked to individuals' neverending search for the deeper meaning of their actions and desires. The characters that appear in many novels believe, either because they are fooled or are fooling themselves, that their desires are original; but the novelist knows that the character is nothing but an imitator. The romantic vision cannot go beyond the perspective of these fictional personages. The romantic lives in that world and is just another actor, while the novelist views things from the outside and therefore has a wider perspective. He observes characters and notes that their belief in their own originality is unfounded. Thus, novelists are the great philosophers of human behavior. Scientific texts, in contrast, consider desire from perspectives such as psychoanalysis, Marxism, and structuralism; they cannot understand that "desire means the desire of others."

To continue analyzing how Illich's and Girard's views evolved, we should briefly consider how the authors viewed life in the modern world. Illich took rituals as his point of entry into comprehending this world; he therefore draws from Greek mythology. In *Deschooling Society*, he begins with the myth of Sisyphus, with this description of the purpose of a tortuous ideological trap created by increasing expectations:

> The man who knows that nothing in demand is out of production soon expects that nothing produced can be out of demand. If a moon vehicle can be designed, so can the demand to go to the moon. Not to go where one can go would be subversive. It would unmask as folly the assumption that every satisfied demand entails the discovery of an even greater unsatisfied one. Such insight would stop progress. Not to produce what is possible would expose the law of *rising expectations* as a euphemism for a growing frustration gap, which is the motor of a society built on the coproduction of services and increased demand.
>
> The state of mind of the modern city-dweller appears in the mythical tradition only under the image of Hell: Sisyphus, who for a while had chained up Thanatos (Death), must roll a heavy stone up the hill to the pinnacle of Hell, but the stone always slips from his grip just when he is about to reach the top. Tantalus, who was invited by the gods to share their meal, and on that occasion stole their secret of

how to prepare all-healing ambrosia—which bestowed immortality—suffers eternal hunger and thirst while standing in a river of receding waters, overshadowed by fruit trees with receding branches. A world of everrising demands is not just evil; it can be spoken of only as Hell.[53]

Near the end of *Deschooling Society*, Prometheus and Epimetheus appear. The former asks the latter to abandon Pandora, but Epimetheus is set on marrying her. In Ancient Greece, the name "Epimetheus" means "he who lags behind, the obtuse or mute one." Hesiod studied the story and discovered that his people had become misogynistic and that the patriarchs had panicked upon seeing the first woman, Pandora. Following their macho vision, they built a "rational" and authoritarian society. With the intention of overcoming various evils, men created institutions. They learned how to shape their world so that it produced services, and this led to heightened expectations. Such a scenario differs radically from that of primitive man, who had faith that his participation in sacred mythical rites would protect him.

Moreover, primitive man was governed by destiny, fact, and need. He looked to Prometheus, who, by stealing the gods' fire, brought trouble upon himself. His need is therefore questionable, and by defying destiny he sealed his own fate. Ancient man was aware that by challenging nature and destiny, he was putting his well-being at risk. Contemporary man sees things differently: he tries to create the world in his image and make it revolve around human beings.

Yet, modernity can be compared to the Promethean tale; in fact, it surpasses it. Classical man discovered that the world could indeed respond to his intervention, but at an enormous cost. His manipulation of reality created intrinsically precarious, dramatic, and even comical results. The same is true today, but while ancient humankind had the sagacity to find a balance between hopes and expectations, modern humankind does not. It is lacking a vital sense of perspective and does not see that myriad tragedies—the suffering of patients due to medical and cultural iatrogenesis, the relationship between ignorance and poverty, the scarcity of housing, air pollution, traffic jams—tend to be a subproduct of industrial society's tools. Ironically, these tools were created in order to protect people, improving them with improved material conditions and increasing their freedom. But "by disrespecting the threshholds that nature and history have imposed on man, industrial society has engendered disabilities and suffering in the name of their elimination!"

To delve further into his argument, Illich cites Homer and recounts how Prometheus, bound by a radical code (*pleonexia*), transgressed the frontiers of

the human condition. Full of arrogance (*hubris*), he stole fire from the heavens and thus condemned himself. He was then chained to a rock, where an eagle ate away at his liver day after day; unwilling to allow him to die, the healing gods regenerated the organ every night.

> The encounter [of Prometheus] with Nemesis made the classical hero of this epic tragedy an immortal reminder of inescapable cosmic retaliation.
>
> With industrialization and strategies for progress . . . Everyman now becomes Prometheus; he has fallen prey to the envy of the gods in his inordinate attempt to transform the human condition. Nemesis has become endemic; it is the backlash of progress.
>
> With progress aimed at ending the elements' threat to man, the servitude of one man to another, man became enslaved to professionally managed techniques and the very institutions that provoke the destructive envy of the cosmos. In the industrial society we have constructed, man cannot do without his CO_2-belching automobile, his radiation therapy, or his non-biodegradable plastic packaging at the supermarket.
>
> Common to all pre-industrial ethics was the idea that the range of human action was narrowly circumscribed. In pre-industrial times, technology was a measured tribute to necessity, not the road to mankind's chosen action.[54]

To understand how Girard demythifies the modern world, we can begin by considering his definition of "mythic crystallization." According to Girard, all myths originate in real acts of violence against real victims: "All ritual practices, all mythical implications, have their origins in an actual murder."[55] Furthermore, the scapegoat is a central mechanism in the mythological machine; in fact, it can be considered the origin of all religious thought.

The anthropologist examines myths from diverse eras and cultures—those that describe a merger between night and day, the sun and moon, men and gods. He also focuses on the inclusion, in many, of a scapegoat, who tends to be a marginal character that is either superior or inferior to his community and therefore "external" or even "sacred."

Although myths change over time, they always strive to exculpate the violent party by sanctifying the victims. Some even depict the aggression inflicted on the scapegoat as a mistake, so that neither men nor gods can be held responsible. The social mechanism acts without our being aware of what is occurring; Girard postulates that the less we know, the better it works.

Mythologizing violence means externalizing it, and this leads to a "mythic crystallization." The myth is always told from the viewpoint of the pursuer;

therefore, the arbitrariness of a murder is barely noticed, and the possibility that a guilty party is innocent is not even considered. Girard considers that not only in myths and primitive rituals do we find the mechanism of a sacrificial victim. In *The Scapegoat*, he analyzes different versions of the Remus and Romulus myth. Livius breathes life into one version of the myth. He tells of a legend in which the death of Romulus is nonviolent; he simply leaves on a cloud in the presence of an assembly that deifies him. Other authors have questioned this version. Plutarch affirms that Romulus's enemies murdered him in his sleep, or perhaps at the Vulcan Temple or during the March of the Goat. Girard believes that the cloud version is the most recent and that it serves the function of "crystallizing the myth." In Livius's opinion, Remus was done in by Romulus, his twin, while prancing along the city's border in celebration. In this iteration, the brothers begin to argue about who will govern Rome, with the omen favoring Remus. This explains why the Romans would approve of the fratricide.

A scapegoat substitutes for all other members of a community. He is marred by their defects; he is accused of their awful crimes, acts that jeopardize a society's culture and order. Patricide, incest, regicide, and treason are some of the most frequent accusations made against these sacrificial victims.

When deciding whom to immolate, the community's abilities and peculiarities are magnified. The first thing that this accomplishes is to give a real sense of danger; the second is that the community can feel purified, having been freed from evil. But once the victim has been sacrificed and order restored, the immolated character loses his aura of guilt and becomes a savior. For example, in Greece the *pharmakos* was both a force capable of threatening civilization and the only one capable of redeeming it.

Two different types of violence appear in this context. There is the tainted variety, which corresponds to the "guilty"; it is bad and causes chaos, while the good type of violence leads to the formation of the cosmos. In the Bible, for example, Job's detractors judge and attack him in the name of God, saying that He is the offended party. Thus, they sanctify their violence and become "celestial warriors." Likewise, the aggression of a mob often seems to become externalized, going beyond the possibilities of a human phenomenon. According to Girard, the scapegoat is one of culture's "generative principals."

In *Violence and the Sacred* and *Job: The Victim of His People*, Girard analyzes tragedy, establishing a fundamental difference between it and mythology. In myth, no one has reservations about the guilt of the immolated; in tragedy, doubt is admissible. For Girard, tragedy can be seen as a criticism of myth. But he goes beyond that idea and describes how tragedy reveals rites. In Euripides's *Bacchae*, for example, a party begins as an idyllic celebration of a Theban but

turns into a "blood-filled nightmare" when a delirious woman attacks both men and beasts, with everyone present succumbing to her insanity. The Dionysian elimination of gender- and age-related distinctions, circumscribed in a harmonious liberation, degenerates into a more virulent form of indifferentiation. Even the distinction between men and gods becomes blurry, and the community decides to immolate its king, Pentheus, after attributing the choice to Dionysus.

While it can be argued that "mythical crystallization" starts to disintegrate in tragedies, the Gospels provide a clear indication of what is behind myth. Violence is not external either to man or to his community; rather, it is within every human being. Sacrificial victims are not guilty of the group's sins but are taken as simple scapegoats.

According to Girard, there is a huge gap between Greek and Shakespearean tragedies. In the former, no one is fully aware of the scapegoat mechanism; in the latter—for example, in the case of Brutus—there is often full consciousness. The greatest difference between ancient and modern tragedies is their "evangelical influence." The contemporary world has a vast capacity to examine its sacrificial victim mechanism. This is probably a result of the biblical tradition.

According to the anthropologist, Judeo-Christianity proposes a new way to found a society by following methods that have nothing to do with myths or scapegoats. Girard offers an "anti-sacrificial" reading of the Bible. Cain kills Abel, Yahweh's favorite, out of envy. The murderer then founds the Cainites' city to the east of Eden. As in the story of Romulus and Remus, a fratricide leads to a city's birth, but there is a major difference. Romulus becomes sanctified as the first priest and sacrifier, while Cain is little more than a vulgar criminal. Yet God prohibits anyone from killing him despite the fact that he has not participated in a sacrificial rite.

Unlike Romulus's crime, Cain's was never justified or forgiven. He is incapable of reining in the violence that ensues and multiplies, a violence that characterizes the descendants of God's envious son. From the first murder arises a culture unable to prevent the spread of aggression. In fact, the loss of differences leads to the dramatic flood, which represents a return to total chaos.

In *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, Girard affirms that the Jewish tradition never completely demythified violence. From the very start, Yahweh is an aggressive God, one who in many circumstances appears ambivalent about violence. It is only with the Gospels that the idea of a peaceful God is proffered, one that forces men to conclude that hatred is an exclusively human characteristic. This represents a radical shift away from the Old Testament.

The crucifixion does not sanctify Jesus Christ: the three days between his death and resurrection dissociate violence from that which is sacred. God's

son shows that aggression and divinity are separate, which is why he does not respond to the crowd's request that he show his powers. Jesus's mission on earth is precisely that, to show that God is peaceful. What makes Jesus divine is that he proved himself to be above violence.

Girard makes it clear that the Gospels are not myths (which would hide the scapegoating elements), literature (which explores that mechanism without explaining it), or history (which would only document atonement). The originality of the Gospels is that they are "revelatory texts." In them, Jesus is given a name that emphasizes his innocence: he is "God's lamb." What is novel about the narrations is that they consider the sacrificial solution to be an error.

Furthermore, the Gospels show that man can unite with God without making sacrifices. His kingdom is not a utopia but a community in which reciprocal murders do not have a place; it is a setting where estranged brothers become close again. But as long as they use violence to maintain order, men will always be sons of Satan.

For Girard, the New Testament shows us that unless we learn to control our anger, we will self-destruct.

Girard and Illich agree on the importance of demythification, but they disagree over what should be demythified. What Illich considers essential is to show the arrogance of modern man through examples like Tantalus and Prometheus, figures who were done in by the envy of the gods. Their counterproductive actions bring forth Nemesis, who mocks mortals when they think that they are overcoming their human condition. She is the goddess who inflicts suffering on those who dare to think they can escape suffering.

In Girard's view, what needs to be demythified is violence, so that it is clear immolated victims are nothing more than scapegoats. The evangelical message of self-control through brotherly love must be heard. There are two reasons why modernity has failed and continues to fail: 1) the rise of Christianity makes it clear that mythical crystallization is no longer possible; and 2) people do not listen carefully enough to the evangelical message and, instead, continue seeking out a scapegoat.

Interestingly, although on this point Illich's and Girard's perspectives appear extremely divergent, it marks a place where the two authors come together: both devote a substantial body of work to explaining the modern world based on the perversion of the Gospels.

THE FAILURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

Illich conceived the history of ethics in three phases. The first is the vernacular, in which the individual has a commitment to his tribe, nation, and blood; *ethos* and *ethnos* are inextricably linked. In *Shadow Work* and *Gender*, he defended the vernacular as that which escapes domination by market exchange and the State's redistribution of goods. Vernacular is similar to Polanyi's reciprocity, a form of social organization. For Illich, the vernacular tends to arise from a community space in which gender is important. Furthermore, it favors equality, or at least encourages ambiguous social relationships that do not permit the clear domination of one class or gender over another.

Illich considers myriad societies to be traditional or vernacular: the primitive, egalitarian ones described by Pierre Clastres—twentieth-century Thai communities, the twelfth-century villages of southern France, and Spanish settlements before the time of the Reconquest of Spain. For Illich, the idea that one has an ethical obligation only to those nearest comes from Plato's *Symposium*, in which only my fellow citizens can aspire to win my friendship.[56]

Additionally, Illich's definition of what is vernacular includes the notion that the world, nature, good and evil, and that which is sacred are embedded in a referent that is beyond the reach of gods and men; it cannot be manipulated.

The second ethical phase begins with the appearance of Christianity. It is the ethic of the Good Samaritan, who helps anyone regardless of origin and therefore takes hospitality to a universal level. With Christianity, friendship breaks through the boundaries of citizenry. The figure of the missionary is born; man becomes more open to his fellow man, whom he observes without classifying or conceptualizing him.[57]

The Christian cosmovision, unlike the traditional one, conceives of the world as a contingency that lies in God's hands. As an example, Illich turns to the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, who shocked the Chinese Emperor with an explanation of the Christian perspective. For the Chinese, Heaven and Earth are separate dominions but with a precise correspondence between the two: there is nothing on Earth that does not have some impact in Heaven and vice versa. Furthermore, Heaven and all that is sacred is also present on Earth.[58] In contrast, the Christian notion of the world sustains that good, bad, and nature are not separate entities but simple objects that are manipulated by the hand of God.

Finally, there is the third phase, Christian "deviation." It is reflected in the following phrase: "The corruption of the best is the worst." Here, the ethic

relates to the mask of charity, worn by a false missionary. In it, a supposedly Good Samaritan attempts to help a stranger when in fact, the only parties who benefit are counterproductive institutions, corrupt powers, and false idols. Illich said that he had always fought against the powers that be, as they "have an ambiguous taste." Power can be renounced through *askesis*, an ethically sound discipline that was practiced by both Good Samaritans and vernacular societies.

Illich describes the advent of Christian perversion as the replacement of a church community for a Mother-church:

> The female personification of an institution did not fit the Roman style; the idea is first taken up only late in the fourth century in a poem by Pope Damasus.
>
> This early Christian notion of the Church as mother has no historical precedent. . . . The description of the Church's maternity is, however, quite explicit. The Church conceives, bears, and gives birth to her sons and daughters. She may have a miscarriage.
>
> She raises her children to her breast to nourish them with the milk of faith. In this early period, the institutional trait is clearly present, but the maternal authority exercised by the Church through her bishops and the ritual treatment of the Church building as a female entity are still balanced by the insistence on the motherly quality of God's love, and of the mutual love of His children in baptism. Later, the image of the Church as a prototype of the authoritarian and possessive mother becomes dominant in the Middle Ages. The popes then insist on an understanding of the Church as *Mater*, *Magistra*, and *Domitia*—mother, authoritative teacher, sovereign.[59]

The mother figure exemplifies the ambiguity of power: at the same time, she emanates sweetness and violence, safety and suffocation. This model of domination means that the other party is transformed into someone who needs to be helped; his image must be altered so that it reflects his neediness. He is a man who is wrong and needs to be saved. The concept of a barbarian disappeared in late antiquity and was replaced by that of the pagan; the Muslim became an infidel, the Indian a savage, and the poor person "undeveloped." Such shifts made it seem as though the colonizers were reaching out to help their fellow men. Of course the ethical model works better if the colonized party is willing to adopt the colonizer's image of who and what he is.

In this final ethical phase, the world is in human hands. There has thus been a transition from a world that was controlled by no one to one controlled by God—and now, by humans. Strangely, it would appear that the modern human

who, overcome by *hubris*, rejects the presence of God deifies himself as a result. He gives himself superhuman powers and assigns himself tasks that surpass his ability. Once again, we return to the Promethean metaphor. This ethic fails because humans have attempted to be more than human. His behavior, as Nietzsche would put it, is all too human.

The Promethean ethic is presented as a formula for building a strong tomorrow. But in Illich's view, the first two ethical stages must be defended: if we believe in the future, we are "feeding on idols" because "institutions may have a future, but individuals do not, as they have only hope."

In Illich's mind, modernity derives from the perversion of Christianity, and the first radical monopoly is that of the salvation generated when the Church turns into a mother figure capable of offering a ticket into Heaven. "There is no salvation outside the Church" was the slogan of medieval evangelization.[60]

Just as, in the Middle Ages, the Church sought to annul other routes to the satisfaction of spiritual needs, modern institutions ensure control over meeting the public's material needs by monopolizing the media. Contemporary systems of health care, education, transportation, housing, and so on, were originally modeled on the Church as a loving mother, one always concerned with her children's wellbeing; the result is that she simplifies their needs and can easily become a tyrant. Furthermore, like the Church, modern institutions become powers in and of themselves. They have no qualms about betraying the beliefs on which they were founded; their only interest is in perpetuation.

In ethical terms, Christianity overwhelms the vernacular world, but it also opens the door for something worse: the notion of a "broken gender" that is promoted by the Church, the economic sexism of modernity, radical monopolies that wear a mask of charity, and centralization that becomes self-defeating. Illich gives a large number of examples of how this perversion has taken place, but the idea is synthesized in a quote about John Chrysostom:

> In the early years of Christianity, it was customary in a Christian household to have an extra mattress, a bit of a candle, and some dry bread in case the Lord Jesus should knock at the door in the form of a stranger without a roof—a form of behavior that was utterly foreign to any of the cultures of the Roman Empire. You took in your own but not someone lost on the street. Then the Emperor Constantine recognized the Church, and Christian bishops acquired the same position in the imperial administration as magistrates, so that when Augustine [354–430] wrote to a Roman judge about a legal issue, he wrote as a social equal. They also gained the power to establish social corporations. And the first corporations they started were

> Samaritan corporations which designated certain categories of people as preferred
> neighbors. For example, the bishops created special houses, financed by the com-
> munity, that were charged with taking care of people without a home. Such care was
> no longer the free choice of the householder; it was the task of an institution. It was
> against this idea that the great Church Father John Chrysostom [347?–407] railed.
> He was called golden-tongued because of his beautiful rhetoric, and, in one of his
> sermons, he warned against creating these xenodocheia, literally *houses for foreign-*
> *ers*. By assigning the duty to behave in this way to an institution, he said, Christians
> would lose the habit of reserving a bed and having a piece of bread ready in every
> home, and their households would cease to be Christian homes.[61]

Illich agreed that institutionalizing charity was a perversion, and his reasoning
was two-fold. In the first place, professionals were now in charge of orchestrat-
ing what the faithful used to do spontaneously, before institutionalization. This
meant that believers missed out on an opportunity to please God and show the
depth of their faith. In the second place, by institutionalizing charity, it became
a power that needed to be administered—that is, a body that grows, becomes
bureaucratic, and becomes autonomous. Its original purpose is lost, as all pow-
ers seek to perpetuate themselves even if that means betraying the values upon
which they were founded. Furthermore, Illich tried to show that modern health
care, educational, and transportation systems suffered a transformation similar
to that of institutionalized charity.

When the world is seen through the lens of its institutions, "the other"
becomes a type of subsystem, a *manipulandum*. This is clear, for example, in
modern medicine: the patient becomes an object, and what the doctor sees is
the disease, not the person who has it. The same thing happens in sociology,
with "the other" being a simple actor, as opposed to a valued individual capable
of formulating his own ethics.

An institutionalized ideology leads to mediations that are often manipula-
tive, but even when they are not, they give the impression of manipulating. Illich
tells us how some evolved: the history of the look, the body, pain, and death.

In his view, the only escape from these mediations and powers is personal.
The individual must use modest tools and remain within his or her circle of
friends, where a physical and spiritual self-discipline can be achieved. There,
both MTV and the car can be given up, at least partially. The author of *Tools for*
Conviviality warned that such defensive actions cannot be expected to have a
massive impact that alters institutions or the universe; in fact, the megalomania
of "social change" is part of the problem. As Illich told his friend Romano Prodi,
"this is a time when prophecies should be abandoned, leaving only friendship."[62]

The prophecy of Christianity also points to its downfall. The cross is a symbol of universal compassion, but at the same time it represents how misunderstood Jesus Christ was. It is the product of Constantine's incomprehension, as he thought that he could turn the Gospels into an empire's ideology.

This is a point at which Illich and Girard meet up once again—although for the latter, it is not the cross itself but the Apocalypse that symbolizes the self-announced failure of Christianity.[63] But this is only the beginning, and the differences between the two authors' ethical narrations must be carefully examined. The French thinker shows that vernacular communities cannot be idealized, as Illich attempts to do.

In 1983, the historian Keith Thomas wrote a piece that criticized *Gender*.[64] In it, he affirmed that the communities described by Illich simply did not exist. In reality, in his research, *Shadow Work*, and numerous essays and speeches, Illich described concrete societal experiences that took place in vernacular settings. Some of his favorites were communities that the French anthropologist Pierre Clastres called "stateless societies" or "primitive communities."

But it is precisely when Illich describes communities in which the vernacular gender flourishes that we note a strange absence: sacrifice. Very seldom does Illich mention it when referring to these settings, although it is a favored theme when he refers to the modern world and its alternative, convivial society. This is a point that we will take up again.

The lack of sacrifice in Illich's description of vernacular societies must be given a closer look. He only refers to the topic once in *Gender*, and then the context seems almost involuntary. The author describes the gender-based division of labor in a kitchen located in Minot, a small French village:

> Only the woman can choose which animal will be slaughtered, addressing it as *Monsieur*, but the man must set the day for the slaughter. They go through dozens of appointed steps, as if dancing a minuet. Women prepare the sausage and men salt the lard. But while, in Minot, only women beyond their menopause can pick up salted pork from the larder, a few miles down the road not even they may trespass into this male space. Each village does its own dance to the tune of its own regional music.[65]

Thus, the death of an animal becomes part of a meaningful ritual that allows men and women to commune. The notion of sacrifice in a vernacular context arises again in *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, in what also appears to be an accidental manner:

neither a founder's vocation nor the mandate of a Delphos oracle—not even the inhabitation of a region—can suffice to make it a village. What is required is the intervention of a renowned figure, an augur who creates a space within the site marked by the founder. This social creation of a space is called "inauguratio." The augur has a special gift: he can see celestial bodies that are invisible to common mortals. He sees the *templum* of the city in Heaven; this term forms part of his technical vocabulary. The *templum* has a polygonal shape and hovers over the site that the founder has discovered and is visible only to the augur and only while the inauguration is celebrated. During his *contemplatio*, the act in which he projects the figure, he sees in the Heavens onto the site selected by the gods. During this *contemplatio*, the celestial *templum* acquires the contours of the world.[66]

But sacrifice has made only a chance appearance. Why is it rarely mentioned despite being so important within vernacular communities? A pat answer that one might give would be to accuse Illich of having a biased viewpoint that makes this "oversight" strategic. But I do not think that is the correct answer. Rather, it seems as though Illich insisted on constructing a phenomenology that permitted him to approach reality "the way another perceives it." He saw the appeal of an exercise in deep empathy through a language capable of transcending the limited categories of the modern *mainstream*; he favored a vocabulary that went beyond "plastic words," "amoeba words."

Illich touched on modern man's inability to understand phenomena such as the "evil eye" or even the different ways we can perceive by sharpening the five senses.[67] Likewise, in *Gender*, he stated that to comprehend the modern world, one needed to understand the "gendered speech" of traditional communities.[68] That is, Illich tried so hard to see the world through the eyes of vernacular men that he adopted—quickly and uncritically—their perspective. Thus, when he speaks of the problem of violence, he invariably sees it as a factor extraneous to the community.

Shadow Work and *Gender* feature discussions of a Church-inflicted violence intended to subdue vernacular communities by centralizing salvation. It is the type of violence propagated by a Church, State, or Market that strives to abolish community environments, replacing "practices by people" with "practices for people." Several other replacements also take place: informal sectors of the economy become formal ones, vernacular speech becomes a mother tongue, self-teaching becomes formal education, and the search for a well-balanced body becomes health services.

The type of violence that he conceives is more structural than explicit. As Jean Robert pointed out in a speech a few years ago, Illich was more interested

in the cold violence of capitalism and the State than in the raging violence of war or crime. In that sense, the author is much closer to Marx than to other liberal thinkers, many of whom have considered the crime rate more dangerous than the rate of exploitation.

In his talk titled "The De-linking of Peace and Development," Illich made an explicit reference to violence as an element found outside of the vernacular. It is a clear challenge to the *establishment*, which considered development as a remedy for totalitarian regimes and the world wars that they caused during the first half of the twentieth century. For Illich, peace and development do not go hand in hand. On the contrary, he noted that on most of the planet, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, development has sparked two wars: one against local "subsistence cultures" (as opposed to consumer cultures) and another against the planet.[69] These wars insert chaos into traditional ways of life. They trap territories and populations in the whirlwind of progress; a modern entropy sets in, and traditions lose their value. The air becomes contaminated, and garbage accumulates everywhere; as expectations rise, dissatisfaction becomes widespread. The economy takes on a sexist character, and the individual becomes envious.

Sometimes it is a Church that converts women into witches and men into sinners who are tormented by a guilty conscience. It is also a State or Market that turns every human into a submissive consumer of "necessary services," whether it be the unemployed or an unquestioning worker. Regardless, Illich believes that we have suffered the degradation of traditional communities by centralized powers. Thus, violence is always external to the vernacular environments that it damages. In fact, "vernacular" and "peaceful" can be considered synonymous.

For René Girard, the situation is quite different. In the first place, he affirms that violence precedes the human race; therefore, regardless of the type of society in question, it is always present. In the second place, for him our history does not relate to the degradation of ethics but to the degradation of elements capable of controlling violence.

Girard does not adopt a vernacular perspective but that of the Gospels', and he refers to three phases: 1) the pre-Christian world, in which the "sacrificial mechanism" worked correctly; 2) the Christian era, in which divine violence was revealed to be the simple "lynching of a scapegoat"; and 3) the apocalypse, which has resulted from two failures: the demythification of the scapegoat and the remythification of sacrifice itself. The first two phases have been discussed earlier, but the third merits further analysis.

The apocalyptic period was only possible after the Gospels. Christ's message denied humanity the sacrificial mechanism by showing that it was not the guilty who were dying but scapegoats. However, the same message offered a solution: internal mediation produced love, not violence. Exaltation became compassion and humility. The desire for enviable objects was deflected toward virtuous practices, thus avoiding the eruption of violence and making a scapegoat unnecessary.

But there were two obstacles to the reception of Christ's message. In the first place, as Christianity became known, its misinterpretations also spread. Evangelized pagans, barbarians, and savages gave their new religion a sacrificial reading. Thus, paradoxically, the Church itself ended up becoming an immense sacrificial machine that produced, among others, heretics, infidels, and witches. Modernity is the result of this same, continuing process.

The second difficulty was that people who had understood evangelism started to broadcast the message that a sacrificial victim was not guilty, being merely a scapegoat. With that, "mythic crystallization" became impossible. On the one hand, sacrifice had lost much of its appeal as a fair measure that could keep violence from propagating to such a degree that society would be endangered. On the other, the antisacrificial strategy was not adopted in full, as violence was not an exterior element but one that resided inside each individual.

For Girard, this third phase does not represent the betrayal of Christianity, as the Apocalypse had announced the failure of the evangelical phase. The modern drama is part of this self-inflicted fiasco: since there is no consensus as to whom is the guilty party, sacrifice is no longer meaningful. But this does not mean that modernity has given up on sacrifice. Marxists use their bourgeois and neoliberal sectors to explain all of the evil in the world: liberals have their conservatives; the non-secular have religious fanatics; Republicans have their terrorists; the developing world has its imperialists, etc.

Interestingly, then, we note that Illich's three ethical periods correspond, *a grosso modo*, to the three phases that Girard considers attempts to control violence. But each thinker interprets the first phase differently: Illich's vernacular benevolence is, for Girard, the bloody world of mythic crystallization.

There is greater similarity in how the two authors see the second phase. The ethics of a Good Samaritan have their parallel in the Girardian mechanism that an individual uses to control his own violence. There is, however, one difference: Girard gives greater weight to the demythification of the sacrificial mechanism than to Gospel ethics. This theme does not appear in Illich's work, as he considers the sacrificial mechanism irrelevant. The author of *Gender* accepts the point of view of vernacular lynchers as valid.

By the third phase, violence has erupted. According to Illich, this has occurred because a powerful minority—the Church, State, some professionals, etc.—has used the evangelical message to concentrate its power, sugar-coating the process so that the toxic results go undetected. In contrast, for Girard, the violence that characterizes this third phase does not relate to the control of a manipulative elite but has resulted from the fact that this elite has no legitimizing "mythic crystallization," nor has it managed to take effective measures that help people control their own desires. This failure results from the fact that the elite itself is unaware of the operative mechanisms; therefore, while lacking mythic crystallization, it refuses to give up the practice of "immolating the guilty," an act that, for many, is simply the use of a scapegoat.

ILLICH WITHOUT GIRARD? GIRARD WITHOUT ILLICH?

Before we consider how Girard criticized Illich, a sketch of the latter should be drawn. He attempted to link his texts to reality—sometimes taking the role of an agitator and, at others, that of an adviser. This continued throughout the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties; but during the Nineties, there was a major shift in his thinking. At that point, Illich suggested that the playing field be redrawn, making it possible for a friendship-based ethic to thrive among those who were close and facilitating resignation as opposed to social action.

His activist period can be subdivided into two different phases. During the first, he invited readers to participate in the transition from a society dominated by professionals to a convivial community; that is, he called for the destruction of radical monopolies. During this period, he spoke of two sacrifices—one bad and one good—that were made in the name of development, or "techno-fascism," and that needed to create a society capable of survival and equality, and the cultivation of autonomous creativity. This, he felt, could make conviviality possible.

This first phase has noteworthy features. At the time, Illich referred to making sacrifices in the name of conviviality as "necessary"; also, he began to replace the concept of "sacrificing" with "giving up." It is also thought-provoking that Illich associated progress with fanaticism and inefficiency, while conviviality was linked to reason and efficiency.

During the second period, Illich turned to a different topic: the violent sacrifice implicit in the substitution of a vernacular society with one of radical monopolies. This also meant no longer trusting one's senses and, rather,

depending on conceptual or technological mediations that distance us from reality and keep us from enjoying life.

Several elements tend to be sacrificed when vernacular society is abandoned: 1) a degree of egalitarianism found in stateless societies and the creative autonomy that might prevent a minority group monopolizing on the means to satisfy needs; 2) the ambiguous relationship between the genders, which could keep one from dominating the other; 3) harmony with nature, so that man does not push beyond the environmental limits that permit sustainability; and 4) an approach to the world through both the senses and concepts that are unique to a local culture.

Finally, there is the phase during which Illich argued in favor of re-dimensioning responsibility and abandoning social action:

> Majid, over the years we have learned a lesson of impotence. Once we feel impotent in terms of acting, we realize that we are even impotent at recommending. We no longer move within the realm of social responsibility that used to motivate us. Now we understand: social responsibility was nothing more than the illusion of creating a better world. We got distracted and have stopped seeing what is right in front of our eyes. We have abandoned the illusion of social responsibility, which has nothing to do with legal responsibility but, rather, is a type of responsibility that arose just this last century. We have abandoned it and accepted the lesson of impotence.
>
> We have learned the lesson of impotence in terms of really rejecting development. That means that we recognize that we are not more powerful than our grandparents. . . . Both the East and West are living in a time when ethics have disappeared—or, in MacIntyre's words, when virtues have been lost. Trust in progress has extinguished the possibility of an agreement in terms of what the public good means. Information, communication, and administration techniques now define political processes, and "political life" has become a euphemism.[70]

At that point, it would appear, Illich had finally come around to Girard's perspective and had even learned to doubt the meaning of goodness. But the ways in which the two authors converged during this final stage go beyond that. In the end, neither was looking for an exterior evil or trying to sacrifice professionals and other obstacles to conviviality; what interested them at that juncture was looking in the mirror, criticizing themselves, and cultivating self-discipline.

It was not until late in life that Illich understood the sacrificial dimension of his proposals. Without this clarity, it would appear that the establishment of conviviality costs nothing, while a society plagued by radical monopolies is patently sacrificial. The way he posed the question earlier complicated the

debate, taking it away from real politics and—in the history of ideas—turning it into a utopia.

Girard, in turn, understood that the search for social reform can turn into a massacre of scapegoats. When we analyze the French author's work, we get a clearer picture of how Illich converted missionaries of both progress and the Church into scapegoats. For Girard, there is no point in searching for scapegoats, especially since Christianity has demystified sacrifice.

One of Girard's most illustrious students, Jacques Attali, asserted that radical monopolies do not arise from the Church but from sacrificial religion, which he distinguished from cannibalistic religion. The "cannibal order" is egalitarian, as each member of the clan fights against evil and uncertainty when eating human meat. Each participates in the religious rites. However, once power becomes centralized—with sedentarism taking the place of nomadism and agriculture replacing hunting, fishing, and gathering—we enter the "sacrificial order," in which only a minority has the power to make contact with the gods and with that which is sacred.[71]

And how would Illich criticize Girard? In the first place, it is noteworthy that Girard, who devoted volumes of work to topics such as sacrifice, the Plague, sickness, and death, never really reflected on the theme of pain and suffering. Illich, in contrast, delved deeply into these subjects, at least from the time of *Medical Nemesis*. He thoroughly examined their historical, social, philosophical, and anthropological dimensions.

In the second place, Girard refers to the notion of *gradus* or "difference" as a basic element created by culture to deflect, channel, and sometimes even avoid violence. But although these cultural functions are clear, the author does not clarify exactly what culture is. Illich, in contrast, described its components meticulously. It is especially noteworthy that Girard wrote so little about the concrete elements of culture that might prevent violence. He barely mentions laws and prohibitions;[72] it would appear that in his mind, violence can only be resolved once it has erupted, and then only through the use of a scapegoat. Preventive measures barely appear in Girard's work. Illich, in contrast, demonstrated that hierarchies, moral codes, and the cultivation of specific virtues such as generosity, hospitality, and modesty are at least as important as prohibitions in terms of controlling conflicts.

Illich and Girard shared a concern for the modern world, and they both gave great weight to Christianity. Furthermore, some of the conclusions that they reached on these topics were similar. However, the two authors saw many of the same problems in very different ways, and parts of their work are in stark contrast despite the fact that they often complement each other.

NOTES

1. Jorge Márquez, ed., *El otro titán: Ivan Illich* (México: Tomo, 2003), 137–70.

2. Lee Hoinacki and Carl Mitcham, *The Challenges of Ivan Illich* (New York: State University of New York, 2002), 189–204.

3. Sandor Goodhart, Jørgen Jørgensen, Tom Ryba, and James G. Williams, eds., *For René Girard: Essays in Friendship and in Truth* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 57–78.

4. Jorge Márquez, "Ixtus," *Espíritu y cultura* 28 (2000): 36–52.

5. Márquez, ed., *El otro titán: Ivan Illich*, 9–6.

6. Jorge Márquez, *Más allá del homo oeconomicus* (México: Galma, 2006), 107–50.

7. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, "Detour and Sacrifice," in Goodhart et al., *For René Girard*, 60.

8. Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (New Hampshire: Marion Boyars, 1981), 124. A few lines further along, Illich mentions "the modernization of envy," the thesis stated in René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*.

9. Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 12.

10. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Converstation* (Toronto: Anasi, 1992), 153.

11. Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Most of Illich's perception research appears in essays, rough drafts, or lectures. One of the most cogent essays on this topic appears in the essay "The Modern Text and the Cybernetic Dream" by José María Sbert, published in *Epimeteo, Ivan Illich, y el Camino de la Sabiduría* (México: Ediciones sin Nombre, 2009), 183–216.

12. René Girard (conversations with Benoît Chantre), *Clausewitz en los extremos*, trans. Luciano Padilla (Madrid: Katz, 2010), 11; *Battling to the End* (2007), trans. Mary Baker (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010), x.

13. René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion* (London: Continuum, 2007), 79–81.

14. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 79.

15. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, 451.

16. Ivan Illich and Gustavo Esteva, *El Desarrollo, Metáfora, Mito, Amenaza* (México: Tecno-política, 1985), copy of the original manuscript.

17. Ivan Illich, "Needs," in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books, 1992), 88.

18. René Girard, *Clausewitz*, 105, 116, 199; René Girard, *Romantic Lies and Novel Truths*, trans. Joaquín Jordá (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1985), 14, 71, 82, 94. I am using the Spanish translations of two texts that, in English, are known as *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre* and *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*.

19. René Girard (conversations with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort), *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 11–20.

20. René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 14.

21. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 50.

22. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 15–24.

23. Ivan Illich and Majid Rahnema, *Conversation* (Bremen, 1994), copy of the original manuscript.

24. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, 12–13.

25. Ivan Illich, *Ascesis: Introduction, Etymology, and Bibliography* (1989), copy of the original manuscript.

26. Ivan Illich and Matthias Rieger, *The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr* (Bremen, 1996), copy of the original manuscript.

27. Ivan Illich, *Hospitality and Pain* (Chicago, 1987), copy of the original manuscript.

28. Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 105–68.

29. Ivan Illich, "Philosophy . . . Artifacts . . . Friendship . . . ," speech at the American Catholic Philosophical Association annual meeting, March 23, 1996 (Los Angeles), copy of the original manuscript.

30. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 163–69.

31. Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 73–74.

32. Ivan Illich, *Celebration of Awareness* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1983), 179.

33. Illich, "Needs," 89–90.

34. Ivan Illich, *Toward a History of Needs* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1978), 9–12.

35. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, 66.

36. Ivan Illich, *The Right to Useful Unemployment and Its Professional Enemies* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), 29.

37. Illich, *The Right to Useful Unemployment*, 30.

38. Cayley, *Conversations*, 124.

39. Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 293.

40. René Girard, *Literatura, Mímesis y Antropología*, trans. Alberto Bixio (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1984), 10, 203.

41. Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 204.

42. Sbert, *Epimeteo*, 38, 39.

43. René Girard and Gianni Vattimo, *Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith: A Dialogue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

44. Roberto Calasso, *La Ruina de Kasch*, trans. Joaquín Jordá (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2000), 158–60.

45. René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion* (London: Continuum, 2007), 60.

46. Sbert, *Epimeteo*, 98–99.

47. Girard, *Clausewitz*, 10, 113, 298.

48. René Girard (conversations with Pierpaolo Antonello and Joáo Cezar de Castro), *The Origins of Culture*, 23–32.

49. Marquez, *El otro titán*, 14–15.

50. David Cayley, *Ivan Illich in Conversation*, 106–08.

51. Cayley, *In Conversations*, 66.

52. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Haper & Row, 1971), 37.

53. Illich, *Deschooling Society*, 76.

54. Ivan Illich, *The Shadow that the Future Throws* (1989), copy of the original manuscript.

55. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 201.

56. David Cayley, *The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich as Told to David Cayley* (Toronto: Ansansi, 2005), 147.

57. Cayley, *The Rivers North of the Future*, 151.

58. Cayley, *The Rivers North of the Future*, 133.

59. Illich, *Shadow Work*, 45–46.

60. Illich, *Shadow Work,* 44.

61. Cayley, *The Rivers*, 54.

62. Cayley, *The Rivers*, 167.

63. Girard, *Clausewitz*, 10.

64. Keith Thomas, "Back to Utopia," *The New York Review of Books*, May 12, 1983, http://www.nyrb.com.

65. Illich, *Gender*, 108.

66. Ivan Illich, *H_2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Inst. Humanities & Culture, 1985), 13, 14.

67. Ivan Illich, *Guarding the Eye in the Age of Show*, speech at the International Inter-face Summit, Hamburg, January 19, 1993, copy of the original manuscript.

68. Illich, *Gender*, 132.

69. Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Adresses, 1978–1990* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1992), 18.

70. Illich and Rahnema, *Conversation*, copy of the original manuscript.

71. Jacques Attali, *El orden caníbal*, trans. Fernando Gutiérrez (Barcelona: Planeta, 1981), 18, 33.

72. René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 12.