

## At the edge of time\*

by Fabio Milana

I. The endeavour to systematically gather together all the writings by Ivan Illich (1926-2002) requires no justification since, at present, no such collection exists in any language. On the other hand, a few preliminary remarks on the present volume are in order.

The first of these concerns the chosen time frame. While such temporal subdivisions are essentially prompted by practical considerations, they necessarily rely on specific, defensible criteria. In the present case, boundaries are by no means clear-cut or compartmentalized. In terms of Illich's biography, for instance, one would be hard-put to deny the essential continuity of the portion of his life comprised between 1951 and 1976, i.e. between his ordination, his degree in philosophy, his resettlement to the US on the one hand, and the closing down of the *Centro Intercultural de Documentación* (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca on the other, when the texts developed and discussed in that exceptional laboratory had already been published and were known the world over. Those twenty-five years followed closely upon Illich's formative years, and may be understood as the period of *vita activa* in his life; a phase was followed in its turn by another one of approximately equal length in which he progressively withdrew from public life, both in terms of his lifestyle and the topics on which he focused his intellectual activity. Each of those phases was quite varied, sometimes deeply so; this is es-

\* Formerly 'Introduzione', in Milana, Fabio (ed.), (2020). *Ivan Illich. Celebrare la consapevolezza. Scritti 1951-1971*. Opere complete vol. I. Vicenza: Neri Pozza, pp. 13-90.

pecially true of the time span between 1951 and 1976, which marked the attainment of his maturity, and was consequently a period full of unexpected experiences, defining changes, and unwavering commitments. Disrupting its underlying continuity, however, would mean, among other things, to lose sight of the “quality of the times”, which even a superficial examination shows to be fairly similar to everybody else’s history, or at least to the history of the Western world in the second half of the 20th century.

The selection of 1971 as the present collection’s end-year has therefore less to do with Ivan Illich's existence as a human being than with his activity as a writer. The inception of the latter may be clearly identified in the year 1970, when *Celebration of Awareness*, an anthology of his own writings edited and commented by himself, was published as the expression of a patent desire to present the public with an eloquent, if not exemplary, self-portrait. However, the same purpose may not be ascribed, at least not as straightforwardly, to the two collections published in the same year: though issued shortly before *Celebration of Awareness*, they were less ambitious and focused on more specific topics (the first of them, *Bolivia y la revolución cultural*, was a small volume on radical education reform, directly sponsored by the local “revolutionary” government; the other one, *The Church, Change and Development*, was of a religious, or one should perhaps rather say ecclesiological nature, and was also sponsored by a third party, namely an Episcopalian institution). His original purpose, nonetheless, did to some extent occasion the 1971 *Ensayos sobre la trascendencia*, also a self-edited anthology that documented his academic endeavours which had been left out of previous collections.

The year 1971 that marks the present collection’s time limit also witnessed the publication of *Deschooling Society*; its content, however, had been prepared the previous year and

the essays that were included in it had been widely anticipated in the writings which Illich completed in those same months, including in *Celebration of Awareness* itself. It is nonetheless telling that despite its fundamental importance the latter was translated into foreign languages – and indeed Italian – only on the strength of the former’s success, which somehow also overshadowed it; in some cases, *Celebration of Awareness* even had to wait until after the publication of *Tools for Conviviality* (1973). In other words, *Deschooling Society* paved the way for an altogether different cycle in Illich’s production: the themes and the target audience he addressed in it and the international acclaim he eventually enjoyed ushered in a new phase in his writing, as has been attempted to outline here. It is for these reasons that his best-known works issued between 1971 and 1976 are to be published in a subsequent volume. This notwithstanding, it is quite evident that each of them had been anticipated in his earlier works, and that the very cycle encompassing them had been devised at an early stage: indeed, hints in this sense are to be found also in the writings contained in this volume.

The aspect which has been intentionally foregrounded here is different and unprecedented: a kind of prehistory of Illich’s writing, presented just as he summarised it himself, either in person or through third parties, between 1970 and 1971. It essentially concerns his activity in the twenty years that preceded that critical turning point —by no means obligatory and perhaps also painful—after which he became a “writer of books”, to use the expression which Father Lorenzo Milani at once coined and disavowed in those very years. Before he published his first book in 1970, Illich was already a well-known personality of international standing: indeed, a Latin-American government had formally requested his patronage, Yale University had entrusted him their century-old Beecher Lectures, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had

asked him to contribute to its annual issue of *Great Ideas Today*, *Der Spiegel* had devoted a long interview to him, and a well-informed biographical essay on his life that is of paramount importance to this day was already in circulation.<sup>1</sup> All of this happened at the height of an active engagement which, while intellectual, was not strictly-speaking typical of an intellectual, be it a scholar, a professor or a prophet: indeed, his commitment revolved at first around his hands-on pastoral approach as a Catholic parish priest (1951-1956) and then focussed on the promotion of culture and development on a tropical island (1956-1960); it was later followed by his activity as cultural mediator between the three Americas (1961-1965) and as spiritual and political agitator in the dizzying turmoil of the early Post-Conciliar Era (1966-1968).<sup>2</sup>

1 It is Francine Du Plessix Gray's 'The rules of the game', published on *The New Yorker* on 25th April 1970; it was subsequently also published as part of a book (see Du Plessix Gray, Francine, (1970). *Divine Disobedience. Profiles in Catholic Radicalism*. New York: Knopf, pp. 229-322). For the other events and texts quoted here, see below.

2 Illich first served as deputy parish priest at the Church of the Incarnation in New York (in the Washington Heights neighbourhood, part of the Manhattan Community District). He stood out for his commitment to Puerto Rican immigrants, and he eventually managed to engage Cardinal Spellman's whole archdiocese in a reflection on the newly acquired parishioners as well as in pastoral action in their favour. As a result of this endeavour, and thanks to the skills Illich acquired in it, the Bishop of Ponce requested Illich's Ordinary to allow him to become the deputy rector of the Catholic University in Puerto Rico; this came about in the autumn of 1956, when Illich moved to the island. Among other things, he set up there a training centre for the clergy, religious orders and laity from the dioceses of Boston and New York, who were also actively involved in the material and spiritual assistance of incoming immigrants; he then became rapidly integrated in the island's academic and political milieu and was also appointed to the board of organisations active in the planning of Puerto Rico's economic and social development. In 1961 he established in Cuernavaca, in Mexico, the *Centre for Intercultural Formation* (Cif) aimed at Latin America's aspiring missionaries; it quickly evolved into a place of contact and cultural development for intellectuals and religious leaders from the two Continents. In 1963 and 1964 he took part in the Second Vatican Council as *peritus* for Cardinal Suenens, one of the assembly's four moderators. In 1966 he was appointed head of the *Centro Intercultural de Documentación* (Cidoc), which had previously been a department of Cif. Thereafter he gradually turned into a point of reference for those who voiced the harshest criticism on the US's role in world affairs, and especially on the US Churches' missionary activity; in consequence of this he came into conflict with the Vatican between 1968 and 1969.

While his ideological collocation increasingly came to be on the fringes of the Catholic Church, he constantly preserved links to the latter through a network of personal and institutional relationships that reached up to the highest levels, as well as through a strong bond of deep and unquestioned faith. His was the life of a Christian who was acutely aware of and indefatigably active in the world he inhabited, albeit neither exclusively nor indiscriminately; a man whose extraordinary working resilience, organisational competence, social and relational savvy, and uncommon intelligence were readily acknowledged by all those who had dealings with him. It was undoubtedly the crisis in his relationship with the Church, which gained dramatic momentum between the latter's inquest at the end of 1967 and his decision to irrevocably give up his priestly ministry in March 1969, that put an end to this state of affairs and brought about (one can hardly say accelerate, if the timing is carefully examined) his "conversion" to a quite different *status perfectionis*.

In September 1970, at 44 years of age, Ivan D. Illich began a new life as a "writer of books" (Father Lorenzo Milani, who had passed away a few years before at exactly the same age, was fully convinced that by dying he was going to be spared the humiliation of a similar fate).<sup>3</sup> This new beginning

3 As was the case above, there is here a reference to the letter Father Milani sent to Giorgio Pecorini on 7th April 1967, in which he begged his friend to claim the authorship of *Letter to a Teacher*, which at the time was about to be published, on behalf of the 'children from the school of Barbiana': 'It is only right it should be theirs because, first of all, it is the truth [...] and secondly, because I do not wish to die an accomplished man, that is, as the author of a book' (see Melloni, Alberto (ed.), (2017). *Tutte le opere*. Volume II. Milan: Mondadori, p. 1363; and Scuola di Barbiana (1970). *Letter to a Teacher*. London: Penguin Books. These two peers (Father Milani was born in Florence in 1923), were both of Jewish extraction, and both freely decided to become priests to answer their calling; they were both subversive *within* the tradition, and while their respective positions on educational matters appeared to be diametrically opposite, they could not in fact have been closer to one another. A comparison between them obviously cannot be drawn here; it is nonetheless to be recommended as one of the most fascinating chapters of a possible future research on religious psychology and priestly spirituality in the 20th century.

was, however, also a continuation, if it is true that this new public role allowed the revolutionary spirit he had brought to maturity within CIDOC to find an outlet and a receptive audience. Discriminating between these two extremes – of continuation or of a new phase – would require a fine balance, which is not possible to achieve if the perspective involved is that of the *auctor*, as in the present case. Indeed, such balance was not achieved in the *Celebration of Awareness* either, since only two of the twelve texts included in it dated back to before 1967; the largest portion of them was constituted by the writings from that decisive year or from the ones immediately following it, the ones which directly anticipated the approach adopted by Illich in editing the 1970 collection of his own writings.

The four collections which appeared between 1970 and 1971 admittedly also contained all the most significant writings from the period before 1967. The careful perusing of the present volume's index, however, will reveal that about half of them were added to Illich's bibliography only recently, and some even as late as the present publication: this is especially true of the earliest writings which Illich issued under a pseudonym, and which he never openly claimed as his own as long as he lived.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, their overall number only accounts for a third of the sixty titles gathered here, a clear sign that they were rare instances occasioned by the circumstances, even though some of those circumstances may have suited Illich's work in progress and its objectives rather well. Indeed, those writings were in fact mere working tools, the revealing

4 These were first mentioned by Joseph P. Fitzpatrick S.J. in his 'Ivan Illich as We Knew Him in the 1950s', which appeared in Hoinacki and Mitcham (see Hoinacki, Lee, & Mitcham, Carl (eds.), (2002). *The Challenges of Ivan Illich. A Collective Reflection*. Albany (NY): State of New York University Press, pp. 35-42). They may now be found in Borremans, Valentina, & Samuel, Sajay (eds.), (2018). *The Powerless Church and Other Selected Writings, 1955-1985*. Penn State (PA): Penn State University Press; see also Part V and VI in the present volume.

outcome of a busy work schedule rather than of a scholar's peaceful environment; they also implied a context-driven urgency rather than the more relaxed pace of a long-term project. Some of them, including major ones, never reached the printing stage, and nothing would be known about them had they not been included — at times still in the cursive, draft-like condition of their originals — in some of the collections mentioned above (this would incidentally raise the whole issue of the possible existence of other unpublished material). A few of the features contained in them, of course, survived beyond the threshold of the year 1967, when Illich's writing became more explicitly militant and less discontinuous; indeed, they even cropped up in *Celebration of Awareness* and in *Deschooling Society*, since each of their constituent parts had a fairly troubled gestation before they finally managed to fit together as a whole. In the new season that followed 1967 none of the authorial seeds which Illich sowed fell beside the road or among thorns and brambles: in the preceding period, however, he was a rather careless and overwrought sower, who was later forced to either retrace his steps in his own writings or to resort to the researcher's doggedness to amend any shortcomings. The two periods are therefore at once the similar and distinct: in fact, one did not prefigure the other, as one may be inclined to assume by examining them from the standpoint of the present time. They should rather be seen as a human and Christian path pursued for its own reasons, which at a given moment abruptly changed its course and led Illich to become fully engaged as a writer, well beyond his previously limited, self-contained attempts.

In view of the above, a second necessary clarification concerns the sequence in which the texts are presented here. The volume begins with the four 1970-1971 collections mentioned above, and special emphasis has been placed on the one which is to be considered the most "authoritative", in the

widest sense of the word. The picture provided by them has been further integrated with texts that were first published in the anthology edited by Illich's literary heirs in 2018, *The Powerless Church and Other Selected Writings, 1955-1985*: this was notably the first to include some of the writings he penned under a pseudonym, the earliest ones, as has already been stated. A further group of texts which have hitherto remained dispersed, or which are in some cases just plainly unknown, rounds off the present overview; taken together, these account for a good third of the ones gathered here. At the end of the volume, Illich's 1951 doctoral dissertation — *Die philosophischen Grundlagen der Geschichtsschreibung bei Arnold J. Toynbee* [*The philosophical foundations of Arnold J. Toynbee's historiography*]—has also been included, and it is the only text to be published for the first time.<sup>5</sup>

A Table of Contents organised in such a fashion could give readers the impression that its chronological organisation is rather chaotic, and that it confusingly moves backwards from the later, more mature texts to the earlier, more personal ones. Such an impression would indeed be justified, and it has to be admitted that since most texts were originally issued as part of collections, the most sensible option would have seemingly been to arrange them here in a chronological order. Even if the issues raised by uncertain dating, by the discrepancy between the time of their composition and their publication, and by the existence of various versions of the same text had all been disregarded, however, such a decision would still have entailed the *a priori* elimination, by means of their deconstruction, of all previous collections, including the one which is now generally accepted as Illich's canon: that has been deemed to be too high a price to pay, and not just

5 Three interviews given by Illich between 1967 and 1970 have been added in the Appendix; they were selected for their significant contribution to a better understanding of his thought in that period.



by those of the general public who are already familiar with him and his work. It has therefore been preferred to introduce both the expert reader and the new recruit to how the editorial history of this *auctor* materially unfolded within a short, well-defined historical period: it has neither been reduced to a mere writing exercise that was homogeneous only in theory, but never in actual practice, nor has it been reconstructed only on the basis of a bibliographical taxonomy (the support of an up-to-date bibliography has nonetheless been provided, and all texts are accompanied by an apparatus of notes outlining their gestation, composition and editorial history).

It is quite evident that such an approach does not eliminate but actually highlights the need to provide a historical context for an activity which, in all of its phases undeniably hinged also on thinking and writing, and which at present must in fact rely on the written word as its only lingering witness. The following pages have been devoted, as far as possible, to this very end.

II. Illich's formative years will be dealt with more extensively elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> The present collection only concentrates on their

6 Illich was born in Vienna on 4th September 1926 from Ivan Peter 'Piero' (1890-1942), the first-born child of an Italian-speaking family from Split (Dalmatia) that was active in maritime trade, and from Ellen Rose 'Maexie' Regenstreif (1901- 1965), the daughter of Viennese Jewish parents who had converted to Protestantism, and who owned a large sawmill in Bosnia. He lived between Split and Vienna until he was six; after his parents' separation, he followed his mother to Vienna together with his two younger brothers, Sascha and Micha, who were born in 1928. There he lived in the Regenstreifs' villa in Pötzleinsdorf, where he was brought up in the Catholic faith, as his mother had in the meantime converted to that religion; he then attended secondary school at a local institute run by Piarists. After the death of both his father and his grandfather, Fritz Regenstreif (1868-1941), he relocated to Italy with his family in 1942; in 1944 he obtained his secondary school leaving certificate from a scientific lyceum in Florence, and he then enrolled on the course run by the Philosophy Department of the Gregorian University in Rome. In November 1945 he entered the seminary at Collegio Capranica in Rome. He was awarded a licentiate degree in philosophy in 1947, and one in theology in 1951. On 24th of March of the same year he was ordained priest; in September he graduated in philosophy at the Faculty of Theology at Salzburg university, and on 6th November he landed in the US, where he joined his family.

tail-end, which, after all, comprises almost everything that has survived from that period: to wit, the dissertation for the degree in philosophy which he discussed in Salzburg in September 1951, the same year in which he obtained his license in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University and was ordained priest in Rome. It will be rather easy for readers to pick their way through its unavoidable technical aspects, and to grasp the real meaning of what was, at the end of the day, Illich's farewell to Toynbee, the object of his study. It was a farewell inasmuch as it is quite evident that the graduand who claimed to have worked on just a dozen of Toynbee's theoretical pages (out of a huge production encompassing thousand), must have in fact become deeply familiar with his work, given the competence with which he was able to argue his criticism of it. It is not hard to conceive such familiarity on his part, despite the exclusion of Toynbee's work from the ecclesiastical courses which young Illich attended in Rome at the time. The years immediately following the Second World War witnessed the establishment of a new world order, which among other things entailed the geopolitical spread of socialism, formerly confined to one country alone. Even if the tragic personal and family circumstances that burdened young Illich's past are not taken into consideration, it should not come as a surprise that a lively spirit such as his still managed to take notice of the debate of the day within contemporary European circles, including Catholic ones: namely, what was then variously termed as a crisis of civilisation, a clash of cultures, the future of civilisation, the meaning of history, or the destiny of mankind. Toynbee's fortunes were at their zenith in this period, resting as they did on the first volumes of his monumental *Study of History*,<sup>7</sup> and on the international renown which the

7 Toynbee, Arnold J., (1934). *A Study of History*. Volume I. Introduction; Volume II. The Geneses of Civilizations; Volume III. The Growths of Civilizations. London - New York -Toronto: Oxford University Press.

perceptiveness of his 1947 *Civilisation on Trial* pamphlet had brought him;<sup>8</sup> the latter was in all likelihood what drew the young seminarist's attention to him, perhaps on the advice of his mentor Jacques Maritain (an advice which may possibly have been given in a public address in Rome in 1948).<sup>9</sup> What really matters in this setting, which was clearly far more varied and articulated than it is necessary to dwell on here, is not so much the fact that this young man, who was after all just about to reach his maturity, dissociated himself from the philosophical foundations of Toynbee's historiography: it is rather that his knowledge of a series of topics which Toynbee had handled with perhaps less depth, but with greater visibility and emphasis.

A review of those topics would identify the most important one in Toynbee's "historical pluralism", *i.e.* the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of subjects and perspectives (such as the twenty-odd civilisations which he isolated) which had determined, and to some extent continued to determine humanity's experience on the planet, where and when that same experience had become, in a discontinuous

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Toynbee, Arnold J., (1939). *A Study of History*. Volume IV. The Breakdowns of Civilizations; Volume V. The Disintegrations of Civilizations, part I; Volume VI. The Disintegrations of Civilizations, part II. London - New York - Toronto: Oxford University Press.

His work was later brought to completion in the following publications: Toynbee, Arnold J., (1954). *A Study of History*. Volume VII. Universal States, Universal Churches; Volume VIII. Heroic Ages, Contacts between Civilizations in Space; Volume IX. Contacts between Civilizations in Time, Renaissances etc.; Volume X. The Inspirations of Historians. London - New York - Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Toynbee, Arnold J., (1959). *A Study of History*. Volume XI. Historical Atlas and Gazetteer. London - New York - Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Toynbee, Arnold J., (1961). *A Study of History*. Volume XII. Reconsiderations. London - New York - Toronto: Oxford University Press.

The Italian public is well-acquainted with their condensed version contained in Somervell, David C., (1974). *Storia comparata delle civiltà*. Roma: Newton Compton.

8 Toynbee, A.J. (1943) *Civilisation on Trial*. London - New York: Oxford University Press.

9 Maritain, Jacques, (1948). 'Les civilisations humaines et le rôle des chrétiens'. In: Pax Romana, Mouvement international des intellectuels catholiques, *Les Intellectuels dans la Chrétienté*. Roma, pp. 85-105.

and polygenetic fashion, ‘history’. Thence Toynbee’s refusal to reduce universal history to a privileged course and discourse, which entailed a significant departure from the implicit premise of Eurocentric historicism, and an anticipation of sorts of what was later to become known as *World History*.<sup>10</sup> The second topic on the list would be the perceived need to order this plurality of historical experiences according to criteria other than their mere chronological sequence, namely by means of a systematic comparison among different cultures that could highlight their actual similarities: its purpose was ultimately the development of a science of human events that could isolate the regular occurrences deemed by Toynbee to be the “laws” inherent to the emergence, development and decline of human “civilisations”. The third topic would be the emphasis which Toynbee increasingly placed on the phenomenology of the exchanges and interactions between those civilisations; this approach marked out his work sharply against the organicist monism of Oswald Spengler’s cumbersome and celebrated earlier work, *The Decline of the West*. In particular, the dynamics of the contact and clash between civilisation were monitored by Toynbee with a heart-felt sense of apprehension that was further stoked by the world’s impending “Westernisation”: his anti-imperialism prompted him to fear the latter as detrimental to the achievement of world peace, which he

10 Cfr. Gozzini, Giovanni, (2016). ‘Toynbee padre della World History?’ In: Leonardi, Federico, & Maggioni, Luca (eds.), *Arnold J. Toynbee. Il mondo oltre le civiltà*. Milan: Unicopli, pp. 191-202. The other essays contained in this volume would also deserve to be mentioned in view of the extensive information and comments with which they documented Toynbee’s renewed popularity in the present global era. In Italy the philosopher Pietro Rossi has devoted relentless attention to the work of this British historian and scholar of the philosophy of history. His earliest work (Rossi, P., (1952). *Indagine storica e visione della storia in Arnold J. Toynbee*. Cuneo: Edizioni di “Filosofia”) was perhaps derived from a university dissertation that was contemporary with Illich’s work, and could therefore be usefully compared with it. It was later reworked and expanded (see Rossi, P. (1960). *Storia e storicismo nella filosofia contemporanea*. Milan: Lerici, and especially pp. 333-360), and had its most recent development in the essay ‘Storia, civiltà, religione nell’opera di Toynbee: un rapporto problematico’ which was included in the above-mentioned volume by Leonardi & Maggioni (2016: 51-61).

saw as the final goal of *the* history of civilisation.

It is quite obvious that the mere selection of these topics cannot possibly provide an accurate or thorough portrait of Toynbee's work, nor do they cover other aspects that are just as important to gain a proper understanding of young Illich's intellectual profile. Nonetheless, it may be pointed out that the earliest known *acta et verba* (deeds and words) by this young man already displayed a keen awareness of environmental and historical differences: at a diachronic level, for instance, he showed a timely perception of the "challenges" posed by the evolving social and cultural conditions, while at a synchronic one he had a deep understanding of the tensions that pervaded the contemporary material, mental and spiritual world, sometimes even within the same civilisation or religious denomination. It may be surmised, therefore, that the existence of a "plurality of worlds" and the dramatic circumstances surrounding their mutual interaction were self-evident to him almost right from the outset: not only was he the issue of a marriage that was mixed in more than one way, but he also grew up east of the Danzig-Trieste line, in that territory reaching as far as the Pacific Ocean in which, according to Toynbee's *The World and the West* (1953), 'the pattern of the linguistic map is not like a patchwork quilt; it is like a shot-silk robe. [...] The speakers of different languages are not neatly sorted out from one another, as they are in Western Europe; they are geographically intermingled in alternated houses on the same streets of the same towns and villages.'<sup>11</sup> At this early stage there is no need to bring into play Illich's estrangement from the 'nation state' construct, or his opposition to its homogenising devices, among which the "taught mother tongue" ranked first. Suffice it to recall here, even as a merely evocative suggestion, that between the age of twelve and

11 Toynbee, A.J. (1953) *The World and The West*. New York – London: Oxford University Press, p. 73.

thirty<sup>12</sup> he led in succession the life of a foreigner, a half-Aryan, a half-Jew, an illegal immigrant, a stateless person, and a refugee, and that he was for good measure also a member of the Catholic clergy: thus, he naturally perceived himself to be both a mixture of, and a departure from, pre-conceived identities, and used to identify (as may be inferred from the poems he wrote in his teen years) with the figure of The Wandering Jew. It is therefore hardly surprising that all these experiences should have informed his way of thinking.

However, the passion which Illich felt for diversity required, for its part, tools that could provide an adequate reading and classification of phenomena across eras and domains: if not outright ‘development laws’ as Toynbee understood them, with their dubious mixture of naturalism and providentialism, then at least morphological and typological inventories such as the ones that human sciences were developing in Illich’s formative decades. Indeed, there is little doubt that Illich had a keen and long-lasting interest in sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and religious sciences among other subjects, or that these disciplines contributed greatly to shape his approach to worldly and political matters, as well as to his later intellectual endeavours such as a historian. The detached, decentralised stance he adopted towards historicism in terms of *Typenlehre*, however, does not imply that young Illich was oblivious to the issue of defining the relationship between the one and the multiple in clear historical terms, and within history’s own perspective. Illich may not have been familiar with the relationship between the various historical civilisations and human civilisation understood as a single whole, which Toynbee had cautiously come to define in an increasingly religious perspective; nonetheless, he was most certainly acquainted with the analogical relationship between Christiani-

12 Illich became a naturalised US citizen in 1956, five years after his relocation to that country; thereafter the US passport was the only one he ever held.

ty and its various implementations throughout Christendom, between the Church and the various Christian dimensions, and between unchanging principles and their transitory refractions which Maritain had adopted as the founding rock of his *Humanisme intégral*. In that context, if the way to a 'new Christendom' was really to be paved, the extreme of *dissimilitudo* (i.e. the specific historical period represented by the contemporary world) could not help being especially emphasised and approached in a boldly innovative fashion;<sup>13</sup> though practical caution as well as theoretical needs also demanded a fairer degree of balance in favour of the opposite — trans-historical extreme of the analogy. It may be pointed out in passing that Father Albert Auer, Illich's supervisor in Salzburg for his *Dissertation*, had been looking for just such a balance in his courses and writings on political philosophy,<sup>14</sup> albeit with a different distribution of emphasis. Within the Catholic Church itself, moreover, a well-known document such as the pastoral letter issued by Cardinal Suhard in 1947 owed its reputation to the fact that it managed to express, within the venerable structures of traditional ecclesiology, the sense of unease conveyed by contemporary times, felt to be unprecedentedly alien to the Catholic Church's message.<sup>15</sup> In all of these instances it may be claimed that the balance which was being sought had a centre of gravity that was tilted forward, as it were, towards the challenges posed by the present time and the future looming ahead; it was almost as if the unifying principle, for instance the Gospel, was at once a principle of openness and of differentiation, and, by extension, of move-

13 Maritain, Jacques, (1936) *Humanisme intégral*. Paris: Aubier-Montaigne.

14 It was these which Father Auer expected to 'demonstrate how [natural law] [could] satisfy two distinct needs: being *absolute*, and enabling numerous *articulations*' at a historical level (see Auer, A. (1952). *Würde und Freiheit des Menschen*. Salzburg: Verlagsgemeinschaft "Stifterbibliothek", p. 25).

15 Suhard, Emmanuel C., (1947). *Essor ou déclin de l'Église. Lettre pastorale, Carême de l'an de grâce 1947*. Paris: Éditions du Vitrail.

ment within historical time. The fact remains, nonetheless, that Catholic thought – or at least the one inspired by Thomism – was, so to speak, new to the task of conceptualising the dynamism of human history *sua iuxta et propria principia*.

Toynbee identified a mechanism of action and reaction, or stimulus and response, as the foundation of such historical dynamism, and believed that it could mobilise life's dormant energy to force it to face its otherness, namely the material world (as well as the artificial world represented by a certain kind of crystallised institutional set-up) with its hampering, oppressive inertia. In his view, the predominance of the vital over the inanimate, that is, of freedom over necessity and of spirit over matter, embodied civilisation's ascending phase, in which individuals or small minorities still possessed sufficient creative energy to face the obstacles posed by their environment, in order to differentiate themselves from it and to reintegrate it within themselves at a higher organisational level. Although that theoretical model was ultimately suggested by Behaviourism, Toynbee derived it in fact from Bergson's *Deux sources*, or at least transcribed it with the same kind of wording; it was thus wrapped up in a vitalist approach meant to sublimate its underlying determinism by replacing *adjusting* to the environment with *transforming* it, and by exchanging the primacy of environmental '*pression*' with that of mystical '*aspiration*'. As is well known, both Bergson and his afore-mentioned work constituted an important point of reference also for Maritain, who worked on the latter to winnow the master's upright 'intentions' from his erroneous 'conceptualisations',<sup>16</sup> and it is worth noticing that Illich patently adopted the same approach with Toynbee's work.<sup>17</sup> In both cases it was a matter of delivering "life's movement" from the yoke

16 Maritain, Jacques, (1944). *De Bergson à Thomas d'Aquin. Essais de métaphysique et de morale*. New York: La Maison de France, especially Chapter 1 and 2.

17 See the *Introduzione* to the *Dissertation* in Part VII.



of an underlying (and perhaps even claimed) empiricism, in order to clarify the real nature of the process of becoming and the role which human freedom played in it. 'Existential Thomism' recovered from Thomas Aquinas 'the radical primacy of existence over essence'<sup>18</sup> by analogically applying the same relationship that exists between act and potency to those two levels of being, which are *per se* distinct and noncommunicating. Thus, it was all about reclaiming the primacy of actuality against the traditional imagery of a self-contained universe made up of intelligible essences, an actuality which through contingency partakes in the pure, absolute Act (not simply of thought, but mainly) of existence: the endlessly *Alive*.<sup>19</sup>

The philosophy of being was therefore recast on the basis of a concept that could not be conceptualised: namely, that which purely exists ('what has as its essence not being an essence', as Gilson was wont to say). It became vitally un-

18 Gilson, Étienne, (1945). *Le Thomisme*. Paris: Vrin, p. 50; Gilson, Étienne, (1948). *L'être et l'essence*. Paris: Vrin. As can be easily fathomed, this undeniably important episode has to be contextualised within the wider and far more complex events that affected Thomism after Pope Leo XIII's *restitutio* by means of his *Aeterni Patris* (1878). A useful overview is to be found in Ventimiglia (see Ventimiglia, Giovanni (2019). 'Il neo-tomismo e il dibattito sulla metafisica classica nel Novecento.' In: Berti, Enrico (ed.), *Storia della metafisica*. Roma: Carocci, Chapter XIII).

19 Illich discussed the notion of 'contingency' extensively in the last conversations he had with Cayley, (see Cayley, David, (2005). Contingency, part I: 'A World in the Hands of God.' In: Cayley, David, *The Rivers North of the Future*. Toronto: Anansi Press, pp. 64-70). He went back to the subject in the last year of his life, in the seminar that was held in May 2002 in the coenobium in Camaldoli, 'a house built at a time and in a world that were still ruled by the idea of contingency and of reliance on God, by the notion that we, just like everything else around us, are the outcome of a continuous creative act on the part of God. – Saint Thomas envisaged contingency as a part of Western learning, and identified it with the inner certainty that at any given moment we are not simply in God's presence, but that God adds his own being to the essence. – This is what Maritain used to teach in the only course he ever delivered during his stay at Princeton [...] (see Illich, Ivan, & Sermon, G. (2015). *La cospirazione cristiana, nella tirannia della scienza e della tecnica*. Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, p. 90). It may be noted that it is in this perspective that his argument against the transformation of life into an 'idol' at the hands of modern preachers, both Catholic and non-Catholic, is to be understood, as exemplified by his 'The Institutional Construction of a New Fetish: Human Life' (see Illich, Ivan, (1992). *In the Mirror of the Past. Lectures and Addresses 1978-1990*. London - New York: Marion Boyars, especially pp. 224-226).

balanced, and became the philosophy of a superabundance of being, or, to put it in other words, of its dynamism; it merely awaited the moment it could achieve its fulfilment as a philosophy of history (as Maritain explained in his commentary to an early work by Aquinas, on which Illich would deliver a seminar in his stead in Princeton in 1954).<sup>20</sup> In this fashion, however, the historicity of being and mankind's historical nature – or, to put it differently, God's freedom, which expresses and restrains itself in His creatures, and mankind's freedom, which is admittedly weighed down by its own past implementations – acquired a metaphysical definition and ethical connotations which were unknown to Bergson's and Toynbee's mysterious 'vital impulse': the latter was, in fact, suspended between a biological and a mystical level, and did not require any conscious mediation. Maritain, on the other hand, held that it was indeed conscience (or, to be more precise, the *prise de conscience*, which lay at the root of a good deal of *conscientização*, and of Illich's own *awareness*) that constituted the pivotal meeting point between essence (the 'historical ideal', in the present case) and existence (the sometimes slow and drawn-out 'instauration' process which introduces that ideal into history's body); it was indeed through this 'growth in awareness' that 'all the great advances in the modern age' had been, and were still being, originated.<sup>21</sup>

20 Maritain, Jacques, (1947). *Court traité de l'existence et de l'existant*. Paris: Hartmann; Aquinas, Thomas, *De ente et essentia* (1254-1256). As David Cayley related: 'I remember on my next trip to New York going to Princeton to see Jacques Maritain, the philosopher, who was then living there [...] I had seen him occasionally in the United States because when he had his heart attack, I was honoured to substitute for him in a seminar he directed of the *de ente et essentia* of St. Thomas' (see Cayley, David, (1992). *Ivan Illich in Conversation*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, p. 61).

21 Maritain discussed this aspect at length in Chapter VI, 'The Historic Possibilities of the Realisation of a New Christendom', of his *Humanisme Intégral*. A deeper analysis of the metaphysical topic of 'subsistence', an intermediate stage that acts as link between 'essence' and 'existence', is beyond the scope of this introduction; it suffices to say that in human history said intermediate function has been performed by the *prise de conscience*.

Once the *energy* of becoming was reclaimed in this way, it became available to Catholic thought to be mobilised in the latter's stand-off with modernity:<sup>22</sup> a modernity which history's dynamism had ushered in, only to have it later jeopardised at the hands of the aberrant, dehumanising outlook taken on by modern political institutions, technology, and science. Especially intense was the debate with Marxism, which in those years was felt to be the true and best heir to that modernity. Christian humanism acknowledged the important role which it ascribed to the human desire for emancipation and change but disagreed with Marxism's tendency to conflate it with history's immanent movement: the inevitable outcome was the loss of mankind's own freedom, of its indeterminacy, and ultimately of its transcendence.<sup>23</sup> On this matter, much could be added and much would have to be qualified. If the discussion is to be confined to the 1940s, however, it is important to at least mention (in an altogether different perspective and from a different critical standpoint) Erich Fromm's analysis of the ambiguous nature of the modern world as caught between the unprecedented possibilities of individual self-realisation afforded by the new times, and the equally unprecedented sense of powerlessness and isolation that weighed down on individuals, and pushed them to

22 This specific background to Illich's thought has been little-investigated in the relevant literature. Todd Hartch missed the point completely when he wrote: 'Maritain and Thomas Aquinas made Illich into [...] someone rooted not in the spirit of his own age, but in the thought of the past. Illich by no means neglected the great thinkers, Christian and secular, of the twentieth century [...] but he always did so from afar' (Hartch, T., (2015). *The Prophet of Cuernavaca. Ivan Illich and the Crisis of the West*. Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, p. 21). Exceedingly generic was also the reference to Maritain and his "neo-Thomism" made by Bruno-Jofré and Igelmo Zaldívar (see Bruno-Jofré, Rosa, & Igelmo Zaldívar, Jon, (2016). 'Monsignor Ivan Illich's Critique of the Institutional Church, 1960-1966.' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* LXVII, 3, pp. 571-572).

23 See for instance Journet, Charles, (1949). 'D'une philosophie chrétienne de l'histoire et de la culture.' In: *Jacques Maritain. Son oeuvre philosophique*, Bibliothèque de la Revue thomiste. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, pp. 33-61.

regress and flee.<sup>24</sup> Fromm identified in those two vectors, the free expression of the self (*i.e.* the free flow of life's energy) and the alienation of the self in the institutions of social conformity, the two fundamental polarities of psychic life, in accordance with the psychoanalytic theory and practice which he himself reformed;<sup>25</sup> this dialectical opposition was then transferred to the religious field, and expressed as the contrast between an 'authoritarian' religion and a 'humanistic' one,<sup>26</sup> a concept which was by no means foreign to Bergson's thought.

While young Illich may not have been aware of this specific part of Fromm's theoretical framework, he was most certainly familiar with much of neo-humanistic and *kulturkritisch* thought, both in the Old and in the New World (this was for instance undoubtedly true as far as Lewis Mumford's work was concerned).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, it could be argued that in Illich's eyes this kind of thinking might even have had a family air about it, as it were: a proper analysis of the intellectual life of his mother Ellen Rose could prove this beyond all reasonable doubt.<sup>28</sup> Be that as it may, many of the central tenets in Illich's preaching drew heavily on the thinking briefly summarised above. One could mention for instance Illich's later preoccupation with the processes that led to institutional

24 Fromm, Erich, (1941). *Escape from Freedom*. New York – Toronto: Rinehart & Co.

25 Fromm, Erich, (1947). *Man for Himself. An inquiry Into the Psychology of Ethics*. New York: Rinehart.

26 Fromm, Erich, (1950). *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

27 Mumford, Lewis, (1946). *Values for Survival. Essays, Addresses and Letters on Politics and Education*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. The author sent this book to Illich's mother in Florence in the early months of 1947.

28 An attempt at a short introduction to Ellen Rose 'Maexie' Regenstreif Illich (1901-1965) is to be found in Fabio Milana's 'Nota al testo' (see Illich, Ivan (2013). *Genere. Per una critica storica dell'uguaglianza*. Edited by Fabio Milana. Vicenza: Neri Pozza, pp. 239-243). The same text has also been published in English as 'Gender. Notes to the Text' in *The International Journal of Illich's Studies* (V, 1, 2016, pp. 79-84).

rigidity, and his very call for a necessary ‘institutional revolution’; at a different level, one could also add his ecclesiology divided between a Neuter and a Feminine Church, the latter of which he identified with a welcoming open attitude to surprise (the Surprising One, *i.e.* the Spirit). Finally, one could mention his re-reading of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which by his own account he began to develop as early as his Puerto Rican years,<sup>29</sup> in terms of the contrast between envisaging charity as the competence of specialised agencies and seeing it as an individual’s free choice dictated by the contingency at hand.

III. In Toynbee’s perspective, preventing Western-Christian civilisation from becoming too rigid was a necessary step: it had already entered its ‘imperial’ (and therefore pre-terminal) phase, and it was witnessing the inevitable polarisation between cosmopolitical elites on the one hand, and a proletariat that was both ‘internal’ and ‘external’ on the other. However, what made that need so urgent was the fact, among many others, that all those actors – especially *class* and *war*, which regularly brought about innovation cycles – were now operating on a world stage that was teeming with atomic arsenals, which was all set to perform the last, catastrophic act in the history of the whole of mankind. It was therefore indispensable to take advantage of the regular, nefarious occurrences which historiosophy had exposed, and to direct all developing processes into new channels leading to fresh forms of contact and interaction between cultures. Since the world’s progressive Westernization was seemingly driven by a blind,

29 He made a note to this effect in his ‘Commentary’ (see McMahon, Bea (ed.), (1989). *Fox-Sight. Telling the Vision of Robert J. Fox*. Huntington (IN): Our Sunday Visitor, pp. 154-160). It is now also available in the collection which was published after Illich’s death (see Borremans & Samuel, 2018: 168-174; see moreover Part V below). In Italy it was edited by Fabio Milana, and it was published as ‘Con gli occhi aperti sulla vita’ in the *Il Regno - Attualità* magazine (20/2012, pp. 675-680).

haphazard necessity that was utterly incapable of achieving any real kind of *integration*, it was indispensable for creative minorities on both sides (or on all five sides, if Toynbee's list of still-extant civilisations was taken into consideration) to develop converging avenues of cross-fertilisation on the basis of their authentic vital cores (which Toynbee believed to be religious in nature) and of mutual acknowledgement.<sup>30</sup> It has to be borne in mind that Father Illich's precocious sensitivity to interculturality did not only draw nourishment from his own biographical roots, but also blossomed on a ground made fertile by this kind of analysis. From his unplanned acquaintance with Puerto Rican immigrants in East Harlem less than two months after defending his dissertation, to his activities of many years' standing on the threshold of the Latin American continent, the main feature of his analysis was always the process of *change* which affected, and indeed could not help affecting, the universes that came in contact, but which should have rather done so *both ways*. The civilisation that suddenly began to undergo that process should take the future of its development in its own hands, and should evaluate the most suitable technical and political *alternativas* to the hegemonic model; the other one, the aggressor with a benign face, should give up all deception and deceit, take stock of its own non-universality, and rise up to the challenge posed by a seemingly "backward" or "inferior" interlocutor.<sup>31</sup> An exemplary laboratory in this sense, which both history and geography had made available, was the Catholic Church: in the

30 On these topics see Tagliaferri, Teodoro, (2002). *Storia ecumenica. Materiali per lo studio dell'opera di Toynbee*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino; and Maggioni, Luca, 'Commonwealth of Man o Civitas Dei? Toynbee e la ricerca della pace'. In: Leonardi, Federico, & Maggioni, Luca (eds.), *Arnold J. Toynbee. Il mondo oltre le civiltà*. Milan: Unicopli, pp. 125-143.

31 His 1969 essay 'Planned Poverty: The End Result of Technical Assistance', which he subsequently included in *Celebration of Awareness* (see also Part I below), provides the best overview of this specific aspect of his thought.

context of this dual process, it was called upon to rediscover the *missionary* nature of its role in history.

At the inception of Illich's ministry in New York when he first came across the "scandal" of the Puerto Rican Catholics left without adequate spiritual care, the relevant archdiocese was already trying to deal with the problem, as were the Churches affected by the same issue, or very similar ones, in other parts of the US:<sup>32</sup> there is consequently no need to lend credence to any far-fetched account on the matter. Of course, Illich's contribution to the improvement of pastoral practices, particularly at a linguistic and cultural level, must have been of the utmost importance, if it is considered that both he and his partner, Joseph Fitzpatrick S.J., have been justifiably seen (at least for heuristic purposes) as 'Gramsci's organic intellectuals', in consideration of their ability to take root in a subordinate community and to liaison with the dominant institution, in this case the Catholic Church in New York.<sup>33</sup> Yet what really made Father Illich stand out as opposed to his partner was his early awareness that those transitioning believers constituted a unique opportunity to renew the local Catholic Church as a whole. In a landscape that *Exsul familia* (1952) still envisaged as made up of national parishes and prelaties *nullius* to be regulated accordingly,<sup>34</sup> the proposal put forward by this re-

32 Even without taking into account the areas which were affected by immigration from Mexico, this point can be easily gleaned from the acts of the conference held in San Juan in April 1955, which Illich was instrumental in organising (see Ferree, William, & Fitzpatrick, Joseph P. S.J., & Illich, John D. (eds.), (1956). *Report on the First Conference on the Spiritual Care of Puerto Rican Migrants*. New York: Office of the Coordinator of Spanish-American Catholic Action; and also *Sondeos 74*, published by CIDOC in Cuernavaca in 1970).

33 See Diaz-Stevens, Ana Maria, (1993). *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue. The Impact of the Puerto Rican Migration upon the Archdiocese of New York*. Notre Dame (IN) – London: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 117-145. Indeed, after an in-depth analysis, the author of this excellent piece of research fell nonetheless short of labelling the two priests as 'organic intellectuals' (of course in a sociological perspective, rather than in a political one).

34 See Pope Pius XII's Apostolic Constitution *Exsul familia, De spirituali migrantium*

markable newcomer was to radically overhaul territorial parishes, in order to turn them into an integrated community of various people engaged in an open dialogue with one another. It was not just a matter of favouring the Catholic immigrants' Americanisation, a task traditionally fulfilled by the Catholic Church to which Cardinal Spellman was anxious to contribute: it was about de-ethnicising the Church, decentralising it from within, and rearranging its position within the framework of its own history. It was thus that Illich began to affect the process of that flight "from the ghetto" which was already being felt by the more mature brand of US Catholicism: the exodus from that kind of 'counterculture' or 'alternative society' which reproduced within the US Catholic Church, on a much larger scale, the defensive and extra-territorial configuration of the "national parish", including the conditioned reflex of the unnuanced patriotism that had emerged as a form of compensation. Already in one of his earliest texts, which he still published under a pseudonym, the concepts of 'parish' and 'territory' were portrayed as having a mutual relationship of ideal co-extensiveness and material distinctness, a situation which demanded the courage of 'razing the bastions' and of venturing out into a pluralistic landscape as a missionary minority;<sup>35</sup> in this sense, Illich's timely alertness to John Courtney Murray's considerations on these issues is rather telling.<sup>36</sup>

In a symmetrical perspective, it is remarkable that one of the first *Reports* issued between 1962 and 1967 by the *Center for Intercultural Formation* which Illich directed in Cuernavaca (its subtitle, 'Cultures, the Church and the Amer-

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*cura*, 1st August 1952, especially Title II.

35 For this text, 'The American Parish', see Part V below.

36 John Courtney Murray S.J. (1904-1967) was the courageous theologian of political democracy and religious pluralism; he was instrumental in the elaboration of the Second Vatican Council's *Dignitatis Humanae* Declaration on religious freedom, dated to 7th December 1965. On his relationship with Illich, see below.



icas, is worth noting) should revive Father Luis Segundo S.J.'s provocation, which predicted the sudden 'end of Christendom' in Latin America and its hypothetical replacement by a new form of *Cristianismo*.<sup>37</sup> If it is true that on the one hand the Church in the US was both locked up in the fortress of its charitable and financial institutions, and, at least politically, *disestablished* then, on the other hand its Latin American counterpart had, despite its lack of staff and resources, traditionally played a key role throughout the continent supporting regimes, compounding the various national identities, and perpetuating the various ruling classes thanks to the capillary presence of its educational system. Illich believed, as Segundo did, that the incipient process of modernisation would deliver the Latin American Church from the shackles of the role in which the continent's colonial past had cast it, thereby giving it the chance to go back to Gospel's original message. It was no longer a matter of profiting from political support or luring in financial resources from abroad (especially from North America and Europe) merely to preserve a position of power which was *de facto* already compromised; it was rather about giving up that position altogether, in order to bear witness to the Gospel from a position of weakness, for that was exactly the meaning of the theological concept 'a Church of the poor' which was then being debated by the Second Vatican Council. Right from his first journey to Puerto Rico, however, Illich also had the opportunity to take stock of the characteristic features of the Latin American Churches, such as their structural lack of priests and the autonomous wealth of people's religious life. These features, he maintained, could potentially act as a prophetic warning for the more "af-

37 Segundo, Luis S.J., (1962). 'The passage to pluralism in Latina America.' *CIF Reports* I, 7 (December), later also in *CIDOC Cuaderno* 36, pp. 1/8-15; Segundo, Luis S.J., (1963). 'The future of "Cristianismo" in Latin America.' *CIF Reports* II, 2 (May), later also in *CIDOC Cuaderno* 37, pp. 2/18-29.

fluent” US Churches: that virtuous exchange was exactly what was meant by the ‘wedding of contrasting cultures’ which the very first issues of the *CIF Reports* hoped would play in favour of the universal Church.<sup>38</sup> The fact that Illich conceived *The Vanishing Clergyman* in 1959, in the years when he was still in Puerto Rico, and right before the 1960 conflict with the island’s bishops over the patronage they granted to the *Partido de Acción Cristiana*, shows that at the end of the 1950s the theoretical and practical perspective outlined above – a movement of cross-fertilisation of the opposites that was ‘able to procreate a Church of the future’ – had already entered its mature phase, and was ready to be tested in the tumultuous scenarios which the new decade was to inaugurate.

IV. If it is agreed that the one outlined above was indeed the “grammar” underlying Illich’s thinking and actions in the period under consideration, and especially in the ten years between 1955 and 1965, it may be useful to examine those years more closely, in order to provide a more precise contextualisation of a few key-passages within them. Illich’s departure from Puerto Rico, for instance, was undoubtedly occasioned by the fact that he dared to disavow the local bishops’ actions<sup>39</sup>

38 ‘How many have come to realize that in the Americas, as well as in many other areas of the world and of life, the Church will be served best by an interaction of values and an exchange of ideas that reveal the purity of our Faith! Some non-essentials must be forfeited on both sides, but these times demand a wedding of the best aspects of contrasting cultures. Need it be pointed out here that this means sacrifice and that sacrifice hurts? In how many cases must we strip ourselves bare of all but essentials in order to build a new future?’ See *CIF Reports* 1, 1 (April 1962), later also in *CIDOC Cuaderno* 36, pp. 1/4-5. Rosa Bruno-Jofré e Jon Igelmo Zaldívar’s admittedly well-documented essay did however not perceive this dynamic aspect of interchange and reciprocity in Illich’s proposal. The same aspect was on the other hand properly understood and highlighted, albeit within a different contextualising framework and with references to slightly later texts, by Simon Ravenscroft (see Ravenscroft Simon, (2016). ‘Modernity and the economics of gift and charity: on Ivan Illich’s critique of abstract philanthropy.’ *Telos* 174 (Spring). especially pp. 158-162).

39 Whenever this episode is discussed, it is usually not taken into consideration that

even though he was a mere guest in the diocese; nonetheless, there were other circumstances which may have induced him to display less patience and prudence than usual. Indeed, although Illich had already established in Puerto Rico a training centre for all religious staff heading to South America on missionary duty, that island eventually turned out to be unsuited to a 'wedding of cultures,' as it was termed a few years later. 'We discovered that many Latin Americans saw Puerto Rico as a "mini-Gringo-land," since it was an American possession, and they were not disposed to seeing it as a bridge between the two areas,' Fitzpatrick stated as the privileged witness, albeit from the side-lines, of a joint project which convinced Illich to accept the position of prorector at the Catholic University in Ponce as early as 1956.<sup>40</sup> This realisation, which demanded a change of strategy, was in all likelihood the outcome of a 'study trip' which Illich took south of the Equator between February and April 1960 (therefore well before the crisis with

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the elections for Puerto Rico's governor on 8th November 1960 coincided with that year's US presidential elections, for which the Catholic John Fitzgerald Kennedy was running. The Church of Rome's potential interference was a hotly debated topic in the electoral campaign, to the extent that even US bishops had to disavow their Puerto Rican colleagues; Cardinal Spellman himself, the "American Pope", who was most certainly not a supporter of the Democrat Kennedy, had to publicly deny that failure to obey the Puerto Rican bishops' voting instructions constituted 'a sin of disobedience' (see Silk, Mark, (1989). *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 117 ff.). Illich's actions were not as calculated but were in fact prompted by his deep-seated aversion to the Church's direct meddling in political and electoral matters, which he had probably developed in Italy in the 1940s. In a letter he addressed to the rector of Collegio Capranica on 7th November 1961 he wrote: 'It was not easy for me to give up all my dreams and, together with them, an institute I had helped to set up: that university could already boast 6,000 students, and subsidiary centres had already been planned in seven countries. For the Church's own good I was forced to deny my cooperation to an enterprise which later went to the dogs – the Christian Action Party. Thank God I managed to keep out of politics.' (No further collocation references will be supplied in this essay on this archival document and on a few others quoted in the text: it is hoped it may be possible to provide a more comprehensive and thorough study of them in the future).

40 Fitzpatrick, Joseph P., (1996). *The Stranger is Our Own, Reflections on the journey of Puerto Rican Migrants*. Kansas City: Sheed & Wards, p. 23.

the Puerto Rican bishops).<sup>41</sup> That trip has become legendary, but very little is in fact known about it; what can be said with any certainty is that Illich managed to set up a first network of intellectual and ecclesiastical contacts (especially among the leaders that were most closely associated with the experience of the JOC, the *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne*)<sup>42</sup> that would soon provide the support he needed for his new adventure, also thanks to the mediation and the list of contacts provided by Maritain.<sup>43</sup> Both this sudden expansion of Illich's horizons and the reorganisation of his priorities, nonetheless, have also to be seen in light of the formidable acceleration which the local and global context experienced in the closing years of the 1950s, a decade which had already been marked by pronounced economic and political dynamism. To mention only two of many momentous turning points, it may be recalled that in January 1959 alone the Cuban revolution achieved its final victory and the newly appointed Pope John XXIII unexpectedly announced the Catholic Church's incoming Ecumenic Council. Things and consciences were entering an irrevocable state of mobilisation, and *change* was more than ever the order of the day. While the Jesuit sociologists at the *Centro Bel-larmino* (i.e. Renato Poblete and Luis Segundo) and at Desal (i.e. Roger Vekemans) in Santiago de Chile were beginning to grasp the imminence of a revolution which they tried to cast as Christian, the Churches in the Northern Hemisphere and the Roman Curia were preparing a "missionary crusade" for

41 'I was sent away on a study trip for almost three months' Illich informed Monsignor Cesare Federici, the rector of *Collegio Capranica*, in the same letter mentioned above. His "mission" probably concerned the planned 'subsidiary centres in 7 countries'. Since Illich related that trip in a letter he sent to Jacques Maritain on 19th May 1960, the chronological reconstruction proposed here appears to be a fairly reasonable inference.

42 Scatena, Silvia, (2008). *In populo pauperum. La Chiesa latinoamericana dal Concilio a Medellín (1962-1968)*. Bologna: Il Mulino, pp. 34-37, 40-42; Scatena, Silvia, (2008). *La teologia della liberazione in America Latina*. Rome: Carocci, pp. 10-13.

43 As stated in the above-mentioned letter to Jacques Maritain.

Latin America: indeed, both the first inter-American meeting of the bishops' representatives and the setting-up of a Latin American Bureau (LAB) within the US Church took place in November 1959, while the *Papal Volunteers for Latin America* (PAVLA), an initiative that called for the mobilisation of US Catholic laity, was launched in May 1960. Illich had already become familiar with the apostolic activity carried out by secular Catholics in his New York years, and possessed moreover excellent credentials thanks to the experience he had accumulated at the Centre in Ponce by training the clergy that operated among Puerto Rican immigrants: after a forced short spell in New York, he was appointed trainer for the recruits bound for Latin America by a delicate institutional network involving his own Archdiocese, Father Fitzpatrick's Fordham University, and LAB (which was then directed by Father John Considine M.M., the great director of the entire missionary operation). A journey through the Caribbean in October and November 1960 subsequently convinced Illich to choose as the main seat of his new activity Cuernavaca, a city in Central Mexico that was fairly well-known to elite tourism: this aspect potentially made it quite appealing to the prospective user base of Illich's centre, and at the same time it eliminated the risk of suddenly wreaking havoc on the area's traditional culture. An additional element may have also been the fact that, in a country marked by a strict separation between Church and State, the local episcopate was held by Bishop Sergio Méndez-Arceo, who was both aware of "change" and open to it.<sup>44</sup> In the summer of 1961, when the first training course for 62 aspiring missionaries was already underway at the recently-inaugurated CIE, the scenario then changed radically: on

44 See Hartch, 2015: 19-23. On Méndez Arceo and the Cuernavaca diocese in the 1960, as well as on Illich's presence there, Raniero La Valle shot an important documentary, *Cuernavaca, La sposa bella*, that was broadcast by the Italian state television on Holy Thursday, the 11th of April 1968; it was subsequently published in book form by Vicenza's La Locusta publishing house in 1969.

17th August, as the heads of state of both hemispheres signed the programme of Inter-American cooperation known as *Alliance for Progress* in Montevideo, the Papal Nuncio officially presented at the Catholic University of Notre Dame the Holy See's proposal to send a tenth of the staff of all male and female religious orders to Latin America within ten years.<sup>45</sup> Ten days later Washington saw off the first 55 volunteers from the *Peace Corps*, which had just been created by will of the newly-elected US President John F. Kennedy, and for which Father Considine acted as adviser himself. When the *CIF Reports* predicted the 'wedding of contrasting cultures' in their first issue in the spring of 1962, they could no longer overlook the fact that the wedding feast was going to be unusually crowded and rowdy.

V. As mentioned above, the *CIF Reports* were aimed at an English-speaking readership, and tried to spread reliable and up-to-date information on Latin America's political and religious context to the First World. In truth, however, *CIF*'s underlying *raison d'être* was in fact the transfer of clerical and secular people, programmes and resources in the opposite direction, along a North-South axis, in order to provide aspiring missionaries with a complete linguistic, cultural and spiritual training; it was precisely on that domain that Monsignor Illich's action immediately focused, in a fashion that stood out as original and disruptive right from the outset.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Illich

45 The concurrence of these events was remarked upon by Bruno-Jofré & Zaldivar (2016: 574).

46 *Time Magazine* vividly reported on this on 27th October 1961, at the time of the inauguration of a second training course at *CIF* (*Boot Camp for Urbanites*). Illich's reply was interesting: 'Your article on the Center of Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca [Oct. 27] captured much of the spirit of our endeavor. However, lest there be any confusion, I should like to point out that this is not an isolated, independent activity run as an ecclesiastical one-man show but is a project endorsed by the U.S. and Latin American hierarchies, supported by the Conference of Major Religious Superiors and directed by a board headed by the president of Fordham University.' / May I also, gently

believed missionaries to be the juncture between two worlds, each of which they knew from within, but from both of which they were excluded; experiencing such a condition thus demanded a spiritual and intellectual temperament that had to be well-nigh exceptional. If one examines his first statement on missions, which dates back to his years in Puerto Rico,<sup>47</sup> one may notice two features of his training proposal that were constantly at odds with one another. On the one hand there was the 'self-emptying' process, the kenosis which missionaries, in imitation of the *Logos*, were required to undergo in order to rise to their calling and become one with their new host population; on the other, the open-ended nature of that process, as missionaries could not, and should not, stop being who they were, namely people who were still firmly rooted in a well-defined culture of origin despite having given it up. That is why young Illich described missions not just as a process of inculturation (although this word was first coined in the same period, it would only gain currency twenty years later), but rather as one of *interculturation*, or, to be more precise, one in which a Church that was in its own way already incultured met 'a new world which now bec[ame] Christian or now return[ed] to Christ'. Everything about these early formulations is noteworthy. First, the mission's prototype was the Incarnation of the Word, that is to say, God himself was the first mission mobiliser (a principle which was first developed by Karl Barth and taken up by the International Missionary Council at the congress held in Willingen in 1952, but which

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but firmly, correct a few other items: I have never "spoken out" against any bishop of the church; my theology is much better than the condensed and out-of-context quotes at the end of the article would indicate; and never have I been a "Yankee-hater"—even though my mother's grandfather happens to have been a Texan' (see 'Gently but Firmly', *Time Magazine*, 24th November 1961).

47 It is *Missionary Poverty*, which has been reprinted many times; see also Part III below.

at the time was still essentially alien to Catholic theology).<sup>48</sup> Secondly, the Word did by no means stop being what it was once it was hollowed out: despite becoming human, it still preserved its ontological difference. Thirdly, the fact that the Word ‘became man, Jew, Roman subject’ was the *analogatum princeps*, so to speak, of every missionary endeavour, which was in itself unrepeatable; there could therefore be no missions to the Jews.<sup>49</sup> Fourthly, every mission to the Gentiles echoed St. Paul’s ‘I am made all things to all men’: it involved painful and endless self-denial, which Illich identified in part with St. Ignatius’s ‘indifference’, and in part with the beatitude of the ‘poor in spirit’,<sup>50</sup> and which could enable a portion of mankind to lend new flesh to the Word. Fifthly, historically sequenced incarnations, which were culturally determined, had nonetheless to remain accessible to new believers, and represented for them something akin to a right of citizenship in the “Catholic world”; missionaries, for their part, had to

48 Illich probably borrowed it from Father Thomas Ohm OSB, with whose texts he was very familiar, even though the latter’s missiological summary, *Machet zu Jüngern alle Völker* (issued by Freiburg i.B.’s Wewel publishing house) dated to 1962 (see Sievernich, Michael, (2012). *La missione cristiana, Storia e presente*. Brescia: Queriniana, pp. 208-209). Prompts in the same direction could have also been provided by other writers with whom Illich was acquainted, such as Jean Daniélou (see Daniélou, Jean, (1946). *Le mystère du salut des nations*. Paris: Seuil, Paris) and Charles Journet, (see Journet, Charles, (1951). *L’Église du Verbe incarné. Essai de théologie spéculative*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer; see also Colzani, Gianni, (2010). *Missiologia contemporanea. Il cammino evangelico delle Chiese, 1945-2007*. Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, pp. 43 and 57). Beyond these, one should also take into consideration Henri De Lubac’s pages on *adaptation*, among many others (see De Lubac, Henri, (1938). *Catholicisme, Les aspects sociaux du dogme*. Paris: Cerf, pp. 248-251).

49 One should however bear in mind Pope Benedict XVI’s partially opposite view: see the lecture *Faith, Reason and the University. Memories and reflections*, XIV, [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060912\\_university-regensburg.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html)

50 This was suggested by Albert Auer (see Auer, Albert, (1947). *Leidenstheologie des Mittelalters*. Salzburg: Jgonta Verlag). Illich was initiated to St. Ignatius’s spirituality as early as his first spiritual exercises in the autumn of 1945; his *partnership* with Father Fitzpatrick and the expressions of solidarity he regularly received from the weekly paper *America* owned by the US Society of Jesus, as well as from society at large, cannot possibly be considered a mere coincidence.



be able to identify the truly “universal” elements within the tradition, be it specific or shared, in order to make them available to the new members of the Church.

Those principles would come to a more mature enunciation in the years between 1961 and 1964, not by means of substantial corrections, but rather of a more precise and complex wording. A review of those later formulations shows first and foremost a convergence between ecclesiology and missionary. The latter was presented as ‘the theology of Church development’, ‘the humanly ever new Church’: in other words, right from its inception on the day of Pentecost, the intrinsic nature of the Church was a fundamentally missionary one, which enabled it to be one and multiple across time and space. For its part, the Church took centre stage in Illich’s “missionary ecclesiology”, thanks to the constant process of evolution that relentlessly turned it into a novelty and a *surprise* (the Church as She, as mentioned above). It was portrayed as a movement of endless translation and ‘intercultural’, ‘the social continuation of Incarnation’: the sacrament of Christ as the ‘ultimate sacrament of God’. Since the Revelation was aimed at mankind, it manifested itself to them (and hid from them) through signs that needed to be understood, accepted, transmitted, and reinvented throughout the historical existence of the Word of God. To the extent that the latter could split from the equally eternal Silence (even though it was exactly by listening to that Silence that missionary spirituality could be kindled),<sup>51</sup> it could be communicated through a plurality of cultures, and the ensuing multi-cultural concert constituted ‘the global divine liturgy’, ‘when all peoples will be able to say Amen and Alleluia in their own languages.’<sup>52</sup>

51 As explained in *Missionary Silence*, dating to the 1960-1961 period; see Part I below, under the title *The Eloquence of Silence*.

52 These passages were taken from *Mission and Midwifery*. Part 2. Selection and Formation of the Missioner. See also Part III below.

At the same time, it is in those texts that Illich distanced himself more clearly from the “Enlightenment paradigm” which had affected missionary culture in colonial times. This may of course be noticed in those passages which applied secular categories drawn from human sciences (such as psychology, sociology, political science) to the Church and the missions, with an alienating and desacralizing effect; or indeed in Illich’s list of counter-models for the aspiring missionary, which culminated with the figure of the US *conquistador*. Yet it becomes even more evident where he stressed the uniqueness and non-repeatability of the emergence of a local Church from a pre-existing culture that was either unaware of Christ or had forgotten Him: a new birth for the delivery of which missionaries were called upon to act as midwives. This process summarised and discarded codified tropes of the missiological tradition such as the *conversio animarum* (which was usually assessed in statistical terms) and the *plantatio Ecclesiae* (at least as far as its legal status was concerned) in favour of a deeper, more authentic entrenchment in the surrounding community on the Church’s part: ‘*die Errichtung der Kirche im Gemüt, in der Vorstellungswelt, in den Wünschen und Träumen einer Gemeinschaft, die dieser Errichtung mittels der ihr eigenen Worte und Gebärden Ausdruck verleiht*.’ (‘The establishment of the Church in the soul, in the imagery, in the wishes and the dreams of a community which by means of its own words and deeds gives expression to that same process’).<sup>53</sup> He saw that new birth as a uniquely creative event for which missionaries acted as catalysts, without being its “authors” and “owners” in any possible way: this interpretation moved far beyond the *accommodation* model for which the most self-aware Catholic missiologists had settled at the time. If one were to consult what was in many ways a rather canonical work on missionary anthropology at the

53 *Principles for the Training of Missionaries (Summary)*; see Part VI.

time, namely *The Church and Cultures* (1963) by Father Louis Luzbetak, one of Cif's associates in its initial phase (he was a Divine Word Missionary, as were the Viennese priests who initiated Illich to Christianity),<sup>54</sup> one would discover that every page displayed a sensitivity and preoccupations that were akin to Illich's, and even included direct quotes from him. At the same time, however, Luzbetak envisaged the "adaptation" process as essentially bestowed from above, or else as something that could at most be negotiated in a *quasi*-diplomatic fashion between two very distinct partners: they could possibly meet at half way, but under no circumstances could the Church and each of the cultures involved be reborn from one another, with all the intercultural and inter-ecclesial consequences that may be expected.<sup>55</sup> The complete change of perspectives initiated by Illich would find its way into Lutzbetak's work only in its second edition, published twenty five years after the first,<sup>56</sup> at a time when even the Magisterium had

54 The St. Gabriel seminary located in Mödling near Vienna was run by the *Societas Verbi Divini*, a missionary congregation that one of the seminary's residents, Father Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954), made renowned thanks to his studies on ethnology and the history of religion. The *Anthropos* magazine which he subsequently established there spread the research centre's reputation throughout Europe, and he also set up a museum of missionary ethnography that must have surely been known to the Illich-Regenstreif family. Moreover, it may be pointed out that the parish of St. Ulrich in which Illich received his first sacraments was also run by the same order; finally, Father Wilbert Wagner (1912-2006), who was one of Illich's closest collaborators, at least during Cif's initial period, and who was responsible for the training courses in Cuernavaca until the end of 1964, was also a Divine Word Missionary.

55 See Luzbetak, Louis J. SVD, (1963). *The Church and Cultures. An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker*, Techny (IL): Divine Word Publications. He proposed the following definition of *accommodation*: 'The Church's respectful, cautious, scientifically and theologically appropriate adjustment to the local culture as regards attitudes, behaviour, and the practical apostolic approach. 'Church' here designates the mission's religious staff, as well as the authorities to whom the apostolic work has been entrusted' (*ibid.*, p. 341). He also recalled Illich's conception of missionary spirituality, which his text from 1958 defined in terms of humility and poverty of spirit (*ibid.*, p. 8).

56 See Chapter 3 ('Mission Models') in Luzbetak, Louis J. SVD, (1988). *The Church and Cultures. New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*. Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Book, pp. 64 ff, especially where the author illustrated his 'contextual' model, which he variously termed 'incarnational' or 'inculturational' (pp. 68-83).

long accepted it.<sup>57</sup> According to Illich's premonitory intuition, missionaries had to become accustomed 'to growing respect for the uniqueness of each people, the mysterious complexity and otherness of each community', so that the latter might '[find] their way to Christ, [build] their roads to him, led by their own people in the direction they [chose]'. Furthermore, missionaries had to grow together with their '*apostolische Veranwortlichkeit gegenüber [ihrem] eigenen Herkunftslande*' ('their apostolic duty towards their own country of origin'), and relay back to it those 'missionary concepts'<sup>58</sup> that can only develop along the Church's frontiers: these were to eventually guide the Church to a new era in its history rather than to a new land of conquest, *i.e.* to a *reform*. As has been anticipated, these 'missionary concepts' included the necessary reassessment of the clergy's role in the Church and of the rules that regulated sacramental practice. It is an established fact that Illich addressed these issues once again in 1962 during his hospitalisation in Frankfurt; when they were formulated explicitly and in full in 1967, they caused a degree of alarm in the Catholic hierarchy like no other action or attitude of his had ever done before.

VI. It should nonetheless be noted that Illich's missiological thought in the years that acted as a watershed between the 1950s and the 1960s was in fundamental agreement with the Holy See's main concerns on the matter. It is a well-known fact that from Benedict XV's papacy onwards (1914-1922) the Vatican began to try to get rid of all the Eurocentric and (more or less) openly racist connotations that had previously defined missions as traditionally understood; the process

57 See Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, Rome, 1st October 1979, n. 53; see also his Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, Rome, 7th December 1990, nn. 52-54.

58 *Mission and Midwifery*. Part 1. Missionary Formation.

gained even greater momentum during Pope Pius XII's pontificate (1939-1958), at a time when decolonisation was in full sway. The focus now switched to the urgency of establishing, in the territories that were still targeted by the missions, local Churches under the direction of the area's clergy and hierarchy, to overcome the growing hostility caused by the presence of Western agents in recently independent countries. Of course, such a policy was a source of puzzlement and even bewilderment among those orders and congregations that had traditionally been involved in missionary activities, and which had their very *raison d'être* in their presence, work, and ecclesiastical leadership on the ground. Even the appeal in favour of Africa made by Pope Pius XII in his 1957 *Fidei donum*, which encouraged the temporary loan of members of the secular clergy to accelerate the pace of the local Churches' empowerment, could be read as a sort of marginalisation of the missionary calling itself.<sup>59</sup> Whether due to factors that were either external or internal to the Church, or to a combination of both, the missionary movement was now forced to take a step back to meditate (sometimes in harsh, self-critical terms) on its past acquiescence with the imperialist mentality; it consequently entered a period of impasse, which the turbulent 1960s eventually radicalised even further. The Protestant world became aware of this trend earlier thanks to its characteristic ecclesiastical and geopolitical dynamism, and already in 1964 there were books in circulation sporting telling titles such as John Carden's *The Ugly Missionary* or James Scherer's *Missionary, Go Home!*, among other similar ones. The crisis soon came to affect also the Church's role in the world and the way in which it was pursued, as the conferences held by the

59 Italy has been accounted for in the excellent documentation gathered by Mauro Forno (see Forno, Mauro, (2017). *Le culture degli altri. Il mondo delle missioni e la decolonizzazione*. Roma: Carocci).

Ecumenical Council in Geneva (1966), Uppsala (1968), and Bangkok (1973) clearly showed; it eventually led to the shocking proposal of a “moratorium on missions” put forward by African and Asian Church leaders.<sup>60</sup> Despite the changes introduced by the Vatican Council, or perhaps just because of them, the realisation of this state of affairs was even more sudden and traumatic on the Catholic side. The provocative speech which Illich delivered at the CICOP meeting in January 1967 has often been mentioned;<sup>61</sup> much less remembered is the one given by Father Ronan Hoffman OFM in April 1967, in which the only academically accredited missiologist still active in the US disconcerted the Catholic students’ Mission Crusade by declaring that the missions’ era had providentially been brought to a conclusion.<sup>62</sup> In 1969 thirty missionary congregations met in Rome to discuss *Perché le missioni?* (‘Why missions?’) for the first time;<sup>63</sup> the synod held by Catholic Germans in Würzburg between 1971 and 1975 also addressed the same question, starting from the premise that it was surrounded by a widely acknowledged feeling of *Unbehagen* (unease). The 1975 Papal document which introduced a new approach to the whole subject, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, did away with a long-codified vocabulary right from its very title: the nouns ‘missions’ and ‘missionaries’ were employed not more than twice in the text’s 82 paragraphs, and a simple comparison with the *Evangelii praecones* issued by Pope Pius XII twenty-five years earlier is enough to convey the full ex-

60 Bevens, Stephen B., & Schroeder, Roger P., (2004). *Constants in Context. Theology of Missions for Today*. Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, pp. 251-253.

61 It is the well-known *Seamy Side of Charity*, which may be found in Part I.

62 Endres, David J. (2010). *American Crusade. Catholic Youth on the World Mission Movement from World War I through Vatican II*. Eugene (OR): Pickwick, pp. 137-138.

63 SEDOS (Service of Documentation and Study on the Global Mission), (1970). *Perché le missioni? Teologia della missione: studi e dibattiti*. Bologna - Milano - Torino: Nigrizia - PIM E - EMC. Available in English as SEDOS, (1972). *Foundations of Mission Theology*. Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Book.

tent of the changes involved. Although Illich's voice had not directly interfered in this debate for years, it is still remarkable that the missiology which he developed in his youth should make a comeback in the mid-1970s, right at the time when missionary thought was being radically renovated: indeed, in 1974 the historical magazine of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions published his 1958 *Missionary Poverty* in Italian for the first time. Even more peculiar is the fact that a Rhodesian Catholic publisher<sup>64</sup> should resume the publication of his *Mission and Midwifery* (1962-1964) in the same year: thanks to this, the text enjoyed a reasonably wide circulation in Africa (and hence also in Europe and the US), and fifteen years later it was included as exemplary in the South-African theologian David Bosch's study on the evolution of the missionary paradigm, a standard reference on the subject to this day.<sup>65</sup>

The case of Latin America was clearly a special one: there the 'missionary crusade' was supposed to operate in what was still the Catholic continent *par excellence*, despite a succession of threats from liberal-masonic infiltrations, Protestant activism, and more recently the people's fascination with Fidel Castro. Strictly speaking, it was not a matter of converting souls or establishing a Church there; it was rather about stabilizing the extant one and guaranteeing adequate pastoral care for the faithful, since the main "issue" in Latin America was, as mentioned above, the dearth of priests, and by extension of the structures and the "services" on the

64 It was Mambo Press, based in Gwelo (modern-day Gweru, Zimbabwe) directed at the time by Father Albert Plangger from the Bethlehem Mission Society. It is not known which channels or intermediaries may have led to this edition, which bore the subheading *Essays on Missionary Formation*.

65 See Bosch, David J., (1991). *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Book, p. 505, especially where the author illustrates the intertwined nature of ecclesiology and missiology, on the basis of the Second Vatican Council's principle that 'The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature'.

territory. In truth, however, this state of affairs did not really change much about the Holy See's approach. If one carefully examines the already-mentioned speech given by Monsignor Casaroli at the conference held by the Superiors General of the religious orders at the Catholic University of Notre Dame in 1961, it will be noticed that Pope John XXIII's *long-term program* to solve Latin America's 'basic problems' envisaged the Church's self-sufficiency as its ultimate goal; the subsidiary '*ten-year plan*' devised for its implementation by Cardinal Samorè, the President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, proposed the extraordinary effort of temporarily transferring there, ideally, 10 per cent of all religious staff.<sup>66</sup> Of course, they were expected to be non-specialised and without either a missionary calling or training, and were to be added to the general mobilisation of an even less trained laity; the latter was moreover supposed to be involved only for short periods (three years was the longest spell one could expect to serve at PAVLA, while the period of engagement in the various students' crusades lasted much less), and the *ten-per-cent* watchword was to be unofficially spread among the diocesan clergy. All this was meant to be spurred on by apostolic and patriotic zeal (the "Two Johns", the Pope and the US President, were alleged to hold the world's destiny in their hands at the time), with no real coordination whatsoever, no previous knowledge of the areas, however minimal, and no trace of even remotely critical insight into the stake-

66 See the *Appeal of the Pontifical Commission to North American Superiors. Address of Monsignor Agostino Casaroli, August 17, 1961*. In: Costello, Gerald M., (1979). *Mission to Latin America. The Successes and Failures of a Twentieth Century Crusade*. Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, pp. 273-282, especially pp. 279 e 281. See also Pope John XXIII's two speeches, *Ai Cardinali, Arcivescovi e Vescovi partecipanti alla III riunione del "Consiglio episcopale latino-americano"*, 15th November 1958 («Acta Apostolicae Sedis L, 1958, pp. 997-1005), and *Ai Superiori e Superiore generali di ordini, congregazioni e istituti religiosi, che partecipano alle riunioni indette dalla Pontificia commissione per l'America Latina* 25th March 1960 («Acta Apostolicae Sedis» LII, 1960, pp. 344-349).



holders or the processes involved. Illich was fully aware that the conquest and colonisation of Latin America had cast long, persistent shadows on the path of its evangelisation; his keen observation of the continent's religious life from the Napoleonic period onwards, when each national state became independent and the Iberian monarchs' patronage of the Church vanished without being effectively replaced by the Vatican's (for this is exactly what was at stake at the time),<sup>67</sup> convinced him that throughout Latin American history, 'Faith had interpreted itself in a milieu that is incomparable to any other where it had to be lived.'<sup>68</sup> He feared that the new missionary activity could strengthen old imbalances, instead of adapting itself '*einem bestehenden Christentum, um danach dieses Christentum von innen heraus auch mit seiner Hilfe weiter zu entwickeln*.' ('to a pre-existing Christianity, which it would later develop from the inside thanks to its own contribution').<sup>69</sup> The task at hand was further complicated by the rapid social changes affecting those areas, also thanks to the *Alliance for Progress* itself: if the Church wanted to avoid relegating itself to the fringes of those unstoppable processes,<sup>70</sup> it necessarily had to partake in them, but in a way that would not

67 La Bella, 2006. La Bella, Gianni, (2006). 'Santa Sede e America Latina nell'attività del cardinale Casaroli.' In: Melloni Alberto, & Scatena, Silvia (eds.), *L'America Latina fra Pio XII e Paolo VI. Il Cardinale Casaroli e le politiche vaticane in una Chiesa che cambia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, pp. 181-183.

68 As stated in a letter to Father Fitzpatrick dating to April 1993. This intuition of his was to initiate the quest for documents which Valentina Borremans carried out over many years; these were later gathered together in the three series issued as *CIDOC Collection: The History of Religiosity in Latin America ca 1830-1970 on microfiche*, IDC, Zug 1985-1987.

69 *Principles for the Training of Missionaries (Summary)*; see Part VI.

70 'Wherever we look the choice is between economic development and death'; Everett Reimer explained to the Superiors General of the religious orders who convened at CIF in Washington in January 1962, in reference to demographic growth (see *Education and Economic Development*, «Data for Decision in Latina America», May/June/July 1962, p. AB/3). See also the speech that Illich gave at that meeting, 'Education and Economic Development', in Part VI.

increase those people's alienation from their own traditions, and which would not deprive individuals of their dignity. Illich felt future missionaries should be prepared to tackle just this level of complexity, and to accommodate this spectrum of contrasting tendencies and needs; he also believed that the occasion required him to clearly outline, once again, the specific aspects and limitations of the seculars' apostolate on the one hand, and of the engagement of the consecrated on the other.<sup>71</sup> It was only after completing this series of writings, which was then discontinued rather abruptly around 1964, that he came to the realisation that medium-term intervention was in fact going to jeopardise the Holy See's *long-term programme*: instead of hastening the local Churches' attainment of self-sufficiency, it ran the risk of prolonging their dependence on foreign funds *sine die*, and of actually making it even worse. When he made his convictions public in 1967 they caused a major scandal; nonetheless, many authoritative ecclesiastical voices<sup>72</sup> and many of those who were active on the ground (who may have known Illich only by hearsay, or may even have actively opposed him) reached the same

71 See 'The Lay Missioner in Latin America'. In: *Perspectives. A Magazine Relating Religion to Our Times*, VII, 3, May-June 1962, pp. 81-83, and *Principles for the Training of Missionaries (Summary)*, op. cit., respectively. Both are available in Part VI.

72 Just to mention one episode among many possible ones, these were the conclusions reached by the 82 delegates from the US and Latin American congregations who convened in Mexico City in 1971, as summarised by Angelyn Dries: 'In the enthusiasm of the time, persons were chosen too hastily to serve in Latin America, without proper screening or adequate formation. Many religious were sent without a suitable understanding of the needs of the local Church. The consequence was that missionaries applied familiar strategies or improvised approaches to situations. Quantity rather than quality of personnel sometimes reinforced ecclesial structures which were not life-giving. The concentration of personnel and U.S. Church money in some locations made the local churches dependent and slowed the process of their "liberation". This centralization of North American missionaries created a ghetto mentality and fostered attitudes of superiority. The result was not enculturation into the area but the transplantation of American-style parish structural patterns'(see Dries, Angelyn, (1998). *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History*. Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Book, p. 239).

conclusions on countless occasions in the following years. ‘That sonovabitch Illich was right’:<sup>73</sup> this remark could well be the most balanced summary of the debate on Illich’s statements, and perhaps also of a whole missionary season of the US Church. It is indeed no coincidence that the indications and preoccupations which Illich voiced at the time have today been accepted, with no exception, as normative instructions within common missiological practice.<sup>74</sup>

It is remarkable that the only work which has seriously documented these years of the *Prophet of Cuernavaca*’s activity completely neglected to mention the historical context outlined above.<sup>75</sup> That is not the only gap in the literature available on the subject, however: there is no study, for instance, of Illich’s far from short-lasting presence at the Second Vatican Council,<sup>76</sup> during the Second and Third Sessions of which

73 The whole episode has been retold in Costello (1979: 141-142). Although that volume is dotted with other accounts of a similar tone, it still cannot be accused of partiality.

74 Even Hartch (2015: 164-166) could not help noticing it, as he remarked on the essential convergence between Illich’s evolution and what he deemed to be the “paradigmatic” experience of men such as Father Vincent Donovan and Father Leslie Newbegin. After all, Hartch’s multi-faceted criticism of Illich can essentially be narrowed down to one point: namely, that he ‘denied this same experience [which he had so adroitly understood] to many Americans’ (p. 166). A significant renewal of interest in Illich’s missiology in more recent times may be found in Samuel E. Ewell, III, (2019). *Faith Seeking Conviviality. Reflections on Ivan Illich, Christian Mission, and the Promise of Life Together*. Eugen (OR): Cascade Books.

75 Besides a copious amount of secondary literature, the above-mentioned volume by Todd Hartch relied on unpublished sources such as, among others, Father Fitzpatrick’s papers at Fordham University, the Latin American Bureau’s archive at the Catholic University of America, and Father Considine’s diary held in Maryknoll. The above-mentioned contributions from Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Jon Igelmo Zaldívar availed themselves of CIDOC’s archive at Colegio de México, while Silvia Scatena consulted Celam’s archives (see Scatena, Silvia, (2006). ‘Uomini e strumenti dell’aggiornamento latino-americano: il Celam di Manuel Larrain.’ In: Melloni Alberto, & Scatena, Silvia (eds.), *L’America Latina fra Pio XII e Paolo VI. Il Cardinale Casaroli e le politiche vaticane in una Chiesa che cambia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, pp. 129-148. In the same collection see also Scatena’s *In populo pauperum* (pp. 270-292). On the other hand, the existence of a personal archive belonging to Illich has never been reported.

76 This deficiency is however made up for by the “snapshots” of him included in the

this atypical monsignor acted as *peritus* for one of the four moderators of the assembly, the Belgian cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens (it may indeed be asked whose good offices recommended him, since no previous contact between the two has ever been reported.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps it was those of Father François Houtard, an influential priest and a sociologist from Leuven who belonged to the same diocese of Malines-Brussels as Suenens, and who had also been one of CIF's first and closest collaborators. Or maybe through the intercession of Giuseppe Dossetti, a *peritus* for another moderator, Cardinal Lercaro, who had been a friend and an admirer of Illich's ever since the years of his Roman studies. Or yet still thanks to the influence of an old and prestigious acquaintance of Illich's, Giovanni Battista Montini, who had just been elected to the papacy). The Council's debate and the long elaboration of its documents, including the decree *Ad gentes* on the 'Church's missionary activity', must surely have set a term of compari-

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diary which Angelina Alberigo wrote during the Second Vatican Council, a selection of which was included in the volume edited by Alberto Melloni, Marinella Perrone, and Serena Noceti (see Melloni, Alberto, (2012). *Vivere il Concilio. Il diario del Vaticano II di Angelina Alberigo*. In: Melloni, Alberto, & Perrone, Marinella, & Noceti, Serena (eds.), (2012). *Tantum aurora est: donne e Concilio Vaticano II*. Zürich – Berlin: LIT Verlag). The following is just a sample: 'These days we are following Father Ivan Illich with great interest. Of Slavic extraction, he has worked in New York with Puerto Ricans; he used to be the rector of the Catholic University [in Puerto Rico], but when he was asked to support the local Catholic party he refused, and was subsequently removed from that post. He is presently leading a secular organisation that effectively controls most of the funds sent by Europe's Catholics to their Latin American co-religionists. He is an avowed opponent of Samorè's, who would much prefer to end up setting up the usual Roman congregation for Latin America, but who has so far been strongly opposed by local bishops. Illich has come to Rome to organise the Latin American Episcopal Council's conference, to ensure that all future decisions will be taken by that institution. He is ready to purchase for his bishops all the technical support we can offer him, for his bishops, unlike the Italian ones, are aware of their ignorance. He is just as sharp as Pippo [Giuseppe Dossetti] is: he undeniably has less of a scientific background, but he also has more business sense, and fewer monastic inhibitions' (p. 122).

77 David Cayley (1992: 100) was once told by Illich that 'much earlier, Suenens had known me pretty well through a variety of circumstances'; unfortunately, no further details are known.

son for Illich's thought: the unprecedented formulation of a theological principle such as the one which dictated that 'the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature' cannot have failed to consolidate his reflections even before the decree's official promulgation at the end of 1965, since Illich, as an author, had focused right from the outset on the dual figures of the Church As a Nomad Tent and the Church As Leaven.

It may also be added that one of the members of the Second Vatican Council's commission involved in the development of that document was the Bishop of Orléans, Guy Riobé, the man who from its very inception was responsible for the *Union Sacerdotale Jesus Caritas* to which Illich was also affiliated:<sup>78</sup> it is indeed remarkable that the pre-eminence of Charles de Foucauld's teaching among the inspiring sources of Illich's missiological thought has so far not been acknowledged. From a biographical point of view, there was a network of personal relationships that indirectly linked Illich with this specific figure. The one he had with Maritain, for instance, or with René Voillaume, the founder of the Little Brothers of Jesus congregation who was demonstrably his guest in Puerto Rico as early as 1958 (even though he also spent long spells with Maritain in Rome in the same months as young Illich

78 In May 1969 the Bishop of Orléans wrote to Cardinal Šeper, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: '*Je le connais depuis dix ans, à l'époque où j'étais responsable des Fraternités sacerdotales Charles de Foucauld dont il faisait partie*' ['I first met him ten years ago, when I was responsible for the Sacerdotal Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld of which he was a member']. This authoritative statement, reported by Jean-François Six (see Six, Jean-François, (1982). *Guy-Marie Riobé évêque et prophète*. Paris: Seuil, p. 281), demonstrates that Illich must have joined the *Union* in 1959, when he went to a retreat in Tamanrasset for five weeks, i.e. the exact period of time which the *Union* required all of its prospective new members to spend there; alternatively, he may have done so a year before, when, as he confirmed himself (see his *Commentary*, in McMahon, 1989: 155), he was visited by René Voillaume in Puerto Rico (indeed, it may be asked who acted as mediator between them on that occasion: was it still Maritain?). At any rate, Six's enjoyable book (which is highly recommended for the large number of unpublished documents it contains as regards the 'affaire Illich'; see pp. 268-288) provides documentary evidence on how Riobé and Illich 'met the first time in 1962 in Issy les Moulineaux, and immediately clicked together [...] Ivan Illich's influence on [Riobé] was soon to become of paramount importance' (*ibid.*, p. 271).

did), as well as with Brother Carlo Carretto, who became a very close friend of his during the five weeks he spent in Tamarasset in the autumn 1959;<sup>79</sup> or with the Chilean bishop Manuel Larraín, who promoted the Spanish version of *Au coeur des masses* and wrote the foreword to it<sup>80</sup> (Illich informed Maritain, after his 1960 trip to Latin America, that ‘Bishop Larraín came to pick me up at the Fraternity in Lima (built straight on the refuse heap of the city) and we drove together to Talca’),<sup>81</sup> and the one with Father Segundo Galilea, the coordinator of the *Union Sacerdotale*’s Latin American branch and a close collaborator of CIF. Even more important was the covert influence which Foucauld exerted through Godin and Daniel’s book *France, pays de mission?* (1943), which subsequently inspired the *Mission de France* and its worker-priests.<sup>82</sup> All these elements were too important for a young European priest going through his training to allow himself to underestimate them, let alone ignore them. Indeed, they all contributed to express the traumatic perception of a world that had once been Christian, but which was now rapidly detaching itself from that faith. A world which had to be addressed once again by means of one’s supportive presence and silent testimony, just as Foucauld had done: a “Life of Nazareth”, as it were, in preparation for a subsequent explicit announcement. Much later, *i.e.* in 1975, that spirit was condensed in *Evangelii nuntiandi* in full awareness of the ‘split between the Gospel and culture [as] the drama of our time’,

79 Illich talked extensively about this episode in the *Foreword* he wrote for the English edition of Carretto’s *Letters from the Desert* (1972, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Book); see Part VI.

80 Voillaume, René, (1956). *En el corazón de las masas*. Madrid - Buenos Aires: Studium. The French first edition dated to three years before (see Voillaume, René, (1953). *Au coeur des masses*. Paris: Cerf).

81 Thus in the above-mentioned letter he sent to Maritain; the Fraternity he referred to was in all likelihood not the one in Lima, but actually the one in Santiago de Chile.

82 Bevans & Schroeder, 2004: 395-397.

thus leading to a text that emphasised the “primordial” nature of the ‘wordless witness’ aimed at evangelisation.<sup>83</sup>

At the end of the 1950s however, such an approach was clearly not the order of the day for Latin America; nonetheless, since Illich was developing his thought in a pluralised, secularised outpost, even at that early stage he drew no distinction between ‘the Irishman among the Zulus [and] the bourgeois among the totally different culture of the French proletariat, or [between] the urban northerner in the rural South [and] the New York “boy” in a Puerto Rican neighborhood.’<sup>84</sup> All those people were in his view ‘men who [had] left their own milieu to preach the Gospel in an area not their own from birth’; he therefore suggested they should adapt themselves to the permanent condition of the ‘foreigner with us’, to their destiny as *Ersatz*, and to being the temporary substitute for ‘one whom the community he [was] building yearn[ed] to come from its own womb’<sup>85</sup> – in short, to an extreme form of self-sacrifice that could not possibly receive any form of human compensation. In this attitude one may easily perceive an echo of that ‘substitute’ spirituality which Foucauld elected to practice among the Tuareg people in the desert, with no intention of converting them or of establishing a Church there. One might even go as far as surmising a similar inclination to *badaliya*<sup>86</sup> behind the practice of ‘apophysis’ which Illich later claimed to have implemented in his life and in his “secular” preaching, and which some commentators have greatly emphasised. Of course, the risk is that of mistaking “apophysis”

83 Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation, 8th December 1975, 20-21.

84 Thus in *Missionary Poverty* (1958); see Part III.

85 Thus in *Mission and Midwifery*. Part 2. Selection and Formation of the Missioner. See Part III below.

86 On this point see the work by Louis Massignon, one of De Foucauld’s disciples, which has now been documented by Borrman, Maurice, & Jacquin, Françoise (eds.), (2011). *Badaliya: au nom de l’autre* (1947-1962). Paris: Cerf).

for a form of reticence, or, worse still, for a kind of coded communication.<sup>87</sup> In the case in question, one should rather think of the type of silence that accompanies forsaking and sharing one's self,<sup>88</sup> akin to the one surrounding the 'freely-willed powerlessness, through which the world was saved.'<sup>89</sup> It is the silence of Eucharistic adoration: the form of life and devotion which Foucauld made his own, and the practice of worship that was favoured in Cuernavaca.

VII. The backdrop outlined above may provide a suitable reading of the exchange that took place between Illich and Larraín on their trip to Talca. Illich himself recounted it eight years later in the Jesuits' magazine, and recalled that on that occasion he had told his friend he was 'prepared if necessary to dedicate [his] efforts to stop the coming of missionaries to Latin America'; in that dialogue what really mattered was of course the interlocutor's reply.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, the statement Illich gave Wayne Cowan in August 1969, according to which the creation of CIF had been prompted by the conviction that 'something had to be done under all circumstances to avoid this transfer of personnel' to Latin America,<sup>91</sup> had an altogether different context, one that obtained after the rift between Illich and the Catholic Church. The process of

87 As pointed out by David Cayley in his *Ivan Illich As an Esoteric Writer* ([www.davidcayley.com/blog/category/Illich%2Fesoteric](http://www.davidcayley.com/blog/category/Illich%2Fesoteric)).

88 As Jim Morton perceptively understood in his *Introduction* to Illich's volume *The Church, Change and Development*; see Part III.

89 Thus in *The Eloquence of Silence*, op. cit. (Part I).

90 'They may be useless to us in Latin America, but they are the only North Americans whom we will have the opportunity to educate. We owe them that much.' See *Violence: A Mirror for Americans* in Part I.

91 See the interview which Illich gave to *Christianity and Crisis* in the summer of 1969, in the Appendix.

See the interview which Illich gave to *Christianity and Crisis* in the summer of 1969, in the Appendix.



self-understanding which Illich may have gone through in his stormy experience of the 1960s is not in question here; it is rather a matter of handling this and similar evidence with caution, as it could be so easily subjected to an anachronistic reading by both his apologists and his detractors. The point of the matter is that no *primary* source has so far emerged to support the notion that Illich had always planned, right from the beginning, an “anti-missionary project”, or even a risky “*sabotage*” operation to the Church’s detriment.<sup>92</sup> Proof against this interpretation is provided by his missiological writings discussed so far (which are admittedly little-known outside specialised circles), as well as by a series of factual circumstances which, at the risk of appearing somewhat pedantic, it is perhaps best to summarise here.

Firstly, the existence in Puerto Rico of an *‘Institute of spiritual missionary formation for priests and sisters from the United States going to South America’* since the spring of 1960, as Illich reported to Maritain:<sup>93</sup> something which he, as a well-respected trainer of priests and members of the clergy destined to minister to immigrants, cannot possibly have initiated of his own volition and under his own responsibility, only to attract candidates that were then to be discouraged or redirected elsewhere. Secondly, the development, founding, and inauguration of CIF in Cuernavaca between the autumn of 1960 and the spring of 1961, which, though concomitant with PAVLA’s first steps, preceded the formulation of the Vatican’s *ten-year plan* in August 1961, and can in no way be in-

92 These were actually Hartch’s accusations against Illich. Hartch’s theories tended to push Illich’s opposition to the ‘missionary crusade’ as far back in time as possible, thereby presenting him as inherently *the ‘wrong man for the job’* of trainer right from the start (2015: 12-29), as a man harbouring a premeditated ‘anti-missionary project’ (2015: 74, and *passim*), and as a saboteur of his superiors’ plans (2015: 163, 172). Those plans, conversely, were never discussed or questioned by Hartch, who on the basis of the principle of authority uncritically accepted them as correct and forward-looking by definition.

93 See the above-mentioned letter of 19th May 1960.

terpreted as opposition to the latter. Thirdly, the close working relationship which Illich immediately established with the Conference of the US Major Superiors. Their bulletin, *Data for Decision in Latin America*, was an information service aimed at bringing about an improved identification of Latin America's new religious houses and a more effective planning of the pastoral work to be carried out in them; Illich began to edit it at least from June 1961 onwards, namely two months before the watershed date of the Vatican intervention, and actually continued to do so for at least another whole year after it.

It is of course undeniable that Father Illich's "methods" and his psychagogy of estrangement were seen as unconventional, and at times even as disturbing; it is also true that once the features which had become part of his personal "myth" in the Archdiocese of New York were transferred to the whole of the North American Continent, they occasioned disquiet and perplexity. This notwithstanding, the training on offer in Cuernavaca was often seen as an essential experience, especially by the members of the religious orders.<sup>94</sup> In the spring of 1967 (*i.e.* right before the storm that wiped out his ecclesial activity as a whole, and which later turned him into a "writer of books" for good) Illich was still able to state to a prestigious publication in the field such as *Jesuit Mission* that 'in the last five years some 1,180 people have passed through the Center; all but 80 are now assigned to Latin America';<sup>95</sup> indeed,

94 In the neighbouring areas there was no dearth of missionary training facilities modelled on Cuernavaca, as was the case with Chicago's *Urban Training Center*; see the relevant information attached to Illich's short text *The Church, Change and Development* in Part III below.

95 See the interview 'The Meaning of Cuernavaca' in the Appendix, which Illich gave to *Jesuit Mission* in April 1967. The '1200 priests' who had passed through Cuernavaca were also mentioned, in a totally unrelated context, by Renato Poblete in the account he gave to Christian Smith in 1988 for his then forthcoming book (see, Smith, Christian (1991). *The Emergence of Liberation Theology. Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory*, Chicago - London: The University of Chicago, p. 119). Hartch, for his part,

one may wonder why history researchers have never verified those figures or honeycombed the relevant biographical data, before they acquiesced to a scripted version of the events that borders on low-quality fiction.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, there is in fact even evidence *e silentio* on this matter: the Roman “Inquisition”, despite its gauche attempts to put Monsignor Illich on trial by widely dredging the murky waters of the basest denunciation, never even attempted to file the slightest accusation of “betrayal” or “sabotage” of the missionary activity against him.<sup>97</sup> It follows that one must yield before the evidence of the facts, and accept that Illich’s project was for all intents and purposes a missionary one: it fed on theological thought and spiritual discipline, and was ready to ally itself, compete, and, if necessary, clash with those put forth by others. The fact that conflict ultimately prevailed is an outcome that should be unravelled patiently, rather than be treated as a postulate to be pushed back in time *ad libitum*. Sadly, no methodical study of the sources, and hence no reliable reconstruction, is yet available to fulfil such a task; one can therefore only rely on the texts Illich published himself, and on the scant information which may be gleaned from research carried out on collateral topics.

VIII. It has been suggested that what motivated the editorial changes made to the *CIF Reports* in April 1964, at the begin-

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reported the figure for those who had been ‘hosted’ at CIF as ‘830 priests and 500 religious sisters’ (2015: 74). It is rather evident that the figure given by Illich referred to the number of people effectively active on the field.

96 Ironically, Hartch wondered ‘who knows what would have happened if the priests, sisters, and lay missionaries discouraged by Illich had poured into Latin America? [...] It is not possible that some of them would have seen what Illich saw? [...] Imagine if there were a thousand more such people active in American life today’ (2015: 166-167). Apart from the ironic similarity of the figures invoked by Hartch to the ones quoted by Illich, it is striking to note how arbitrary Hartch’s method and criteria of judgement were.

97 See the note to the letter addressed *To the Prefect of the Holy Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Franjo Šeper*, in Part VI.

ning of their third year of existence, was a shift in Illich's attitude towards the great missionary mobilisation.<sup>98</sup> The new editorial outlook of the *Reports* became more streamlined; they were issued at shorter intervals (*i.e.* every two weeks); their former caption '*Cultures, the Church and the Americas*' was dropped, and so was the rich metatextual apparatus through which their editors had, until then, developed an intense "educational" dialogue with their readership. Since that preparatory phase had ultimately been a form of communication between elites, it could at that point be seen as concluded; moreover, the activity of intercultural training for aspiring missionaries was by then well underway at the Centre, and the relevant progression of Illich's written musings on the missions was completed, or at any rate interrupted, by the end of the same year. At the same time, the development of a Documentation Centre within CIF (inspired by the similar one which Giuseppe Dossetti set up in Bologna)<sup>99</sup> with a sizeable library and other forms of research support, including the increasingly frequent opportunities for militant researchers to hold meetings and debates,<sup>100</sup> paved the way for a new dimension of scientific contact and exchange throughout Latin America. As a result of that, Cuernavaca soon became the intellectual conscience of an entire continent and a critical interface with the North, a role which it played for a short yet crucial period. All these developments pointed to a pondered reaction to other processes that were also underway in the dealings between the American Churches. The Vatican Council's long sessions in Rome favoured the contact and

98 This is the thesis advanced by Bruno-Jofré and Zaldívar in their essay (2016: 578 ff).

99 On this point, see Paolo Prodi (Prodi, Paolo, (2016). 'Cuernavaca 1966.' In: Prodi, Paolo, *Giuseppe Dossetti e le officine bolognesi*. Bologna: Il Mulino, pp. 205-218). The volume also contains the letter which Illich wrote on 23rd June 1969 to summarise (and give a new boost to) the two Centres' joint history (see pp. 264-267).

100 See the *Notes on CIF* in Part VI.

exchange between bishops from the two hemispheres; at the beginning of 1964 Chicago hosted the first annual meeting of the Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program (CICOP), LAB's *radical* arm led by Father Louis Colonnese (a former collaborator of CIF), which brought the leaders of the Latin American clergy together with their US counterparts in the presence of a large public made up of insiders, activists, and observers.<sup>101</sup> Such gatherings aroused Illich's distrust and annoyed him, and indeed he would later criticise them, going even so far as resorting to provocation in order to do so: their underlying approach, no matter how well-meaning, or perhaps just because it was so, was in his eyes hopelessly hampered by a "US-centric" perspective, and he was also alert to the exceptional stress they brought to bear on the LAB's financial resources on which CIF itself drew. Illich had a different attitude to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, and in April 1964 he decided to convene a number of Latin American theologians at Cenfi in Petropolis (CIF's equivalent in a Portuguese-speaking environment) in order to lay the foundations of an approach meant to be firmly rooted in the Continent's history and tradition: that meeting is now regarded as the origin of what would later come to be known as 'the theology of liberation'.<sup>102</sup> It involved a complete overhaul of perspectives, a shift in *focus* that actually marginalised the missionary mobilisation, rather than attempting to redirect it or to oppose it head-on. Unfortunately, the material which the new *CIF Reports* spread along a South-North axis offers no great contribution to the discovery of more precise information on these new ferments and does not even settle the question of whether the impression of a new polemic stance towards the US Church on Illich's part may be justified.

101 Costello (1979: 111-121) reported extensively on these events.

102 See Smith, 1991: 120; and Scatena, 2006: 58-61.

It is therefore best to confine oneself to the proven fact that the hostilities against PAVLA, one of the organisations of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Latin America Bureau were initiated only in April 1965, when Illich addressed a letter to its director, Father Raymond Kevane. In truth, PAVLA had always been the weak link in the "crusade" and was a frequent source of embarrassment for LAB, which would eventually decree its untimely termination; moreover, Illich's letter was not a public document (it would only be printed in 1970), and its overall tone and content were equally prudent. It reasserted well-established principles, such as for instance the urgency of supporting the local Churches' endeavours to reach their self-sufficiency, or the need to base the lay apostolate on specific secular competences, given that the stated ultimate goal was to imbue the secular environments surrounding them with a Christian spirit. It stressed the need for the duration of missionary activities not to be too short and confirmed that CIF's doors were in any case wide open to PAVLA candidates.<sup>103</sup> The episode was essentially a minor one, but the sender's frankness in pointing out the disagreements on the table and in depicting the years to come in harsh, almost "apocalyptic" terms betrayed the unusual pressure which his surrounding circumstances exerted on him. It could be posited, for instance, that Illich's early (and polemic) abandonment of the Vatican Council at the end of the Third Session the previous autumn may have been suggested by his feeling that the Church was in no way ready to adopt radical measures, even without taking into consideration the issue of nuclear armament,<sup>104</sup> and that it was consequently necessary to fight against that constraint by taking a courageous, and even provocative, stance. It could also be added that only a month before penning the letter to

103 See *Dear Father Kevane* in Part III.

104 See Cayley, 1992: 100-101.

Father Kevane he lost his mother Ellen Rose, who may have taken away with her some of his lingering qualms about starting a controversy within the Church. An equally relevant factor, nonetheless, could also have been the historical context of the time, which was rapidly moving away from President Kennedy's New Frontier.<sup>105</sup> February 1965 witnessed the beginning of the escalation of the US military presence in Vietnam, and in April of the same year the first contingent of US Marines landed in Da-Nang, thus starting what was going to be the worst reputational crisis, both internally and abroad, for the 'Leader of the Free World'. On 28th April, the day after Illich sent his letter, US troops landed in the Dominican Republic to prevent the *Partido Revolucionario* from regaining power, and on 2nd May the related 'Johnson Doctrine' was publicly enunciated as the US's unilateral "right" to intervene militarily in areas considered to be of immediate strategic interest to them (a doctrine which authoritative members of the Latin American clergy would later deem '*antichristiana y antihumana*').<sup>106</sup> A military coup had taken place in Brazil the previous year (on that occasion Illich had to intercede to save his friends Paulo Freire and Francisco Julião from prison) as it had in Bolivia, and in 1965 Father Camilo Torres, one of CIF's collaborators, joined the ranks of the armed opposition to the regime installed by the *Frente Nacional* in Colombia. More could of course be added here: the *Alliance for Progress* was a political and symbolic fiasco even before it became an economic one, while in many Latin American societies, structural contradictions were worsening and political enmities were becoming radicalised. The 'theory of interdependency' (*i.e.* the notion according to which the conditions of devel-

105 On the changes affecting the political and ecclesiastical climate in the mid-1960s, see Smith, 1991: 89-121, and Scatena, 2006: 68-77.

106 As stated by the Dominican priest Alberto de Ezcurdia, professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (*CIDOC Informa* II, 20, 15th October 1965).

opment and underdevelopment in the two hemispheres were systemically interlinked, and one hemisphere could therefore not be expected to sort the other one out) was becoming increasingly popular among men of culture, and even within the Church itself; criticism of the US-inspired power system and development model was also making headway.<sup>107</sup> It goes without saying that all these elements thoroughly affected missionaries, first and foremost in their relationship with the land of their birth and their personal set of inner beliefs and prospects: these aspects were expressly mentioned by Illich in the speeches he gave at the time, which bore witness to the severity and harshness of the “identity crisis” in question.<sup>108</sup> The issue went beyond the individual difficulties of those who kept flocking to Cuernavaca in their droves, however. It was the missionary endeavour as a whole that the world’s changing context was beginning to question: the imperialistic slant taken on by the economic and military relationship between *cultures and the Americas* openly reproduced the old colonial imbalances, and actively prevented the adoption of a different approach. ‘In 1965-66 you had to be an intelligent person to understand this’, Illich remarked a few years later; ‘by 1969 I don’t think that there are many intelligent missionaries who believe that as missionaries they have any business there.’<sup>109</sup> Within those few years, missions had to face the deepest crisis ever recorded in the Church’s history.

At the same time, the internal dynamics of the Catholic world were also becoming increasingly complicated. The end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 led to a period of enthusiasm and uncertainty, in which the presence of contrasting forces hinted at the possibility of greater tensions and

107 Scatena, 2006: 92-96.

108 See for instance the interview ‘The Meaning of Cuernavaca’ in the Appendix.

109 As stated in the interview he gave to *Christianity & Crisis*; see the Appendix.



rifts in the future. Already on the eve of the Council's conclusion Illich warned US Catholics that the 'improvement' efforts promoted by the Council were going to be swept away by the very spirit of 'renewal' instilled by the Council itself.<sup>110</sup> Of course, he could not foresee what shape this renewal would take, and actually thought it was best to leave that aspect to the Holy Spirit's care; he had no hesitation, however, in condemning the delays with which the US Churches had acted, both in terms of structures (e.g. the territorial parishes) and activities (such as sending staff to the Latin American missions). His interpretation of the clues concerning the Church's future shape was undoubtedly informed by the pastoral experimentations undertaken in Latin America: Cuernavaca, still an obvious point of reference, and especially the institute run by Father Segundo Galilea and his team of travelling clergy trainers, which was in fact less of an institute and more of a 'movement at the service of vernacular pastoral program in a poor and prophetic Church at the service of mankind'.<sup>111</sup> The emergence of a theological approach tailored on the Latin America context has already been mentioned; it should be added here, however, that after its swift elaboration in the conferences held in Bogota, La Havana, and Cuernavaca in the summer of 1965, it soon developed in unforeseen directions which at times perplexed Illich himself.<sup>112</sup> Caught be-

110 Smith, Lane, 'U.S. Church Is Backward, Priest From Mexico Hints', *The Seattle Times*, 20th November, 1965. Considering the period in question (the early 1960s), this article stands out as a rare account of Illich's involvement in a public event (the reporter still saw him as a mere 'priest from Mexico', even though he was already 'regarded as controversial') which saw the presence of a Catholic audience mainly drawn from Seattle University, at the time run by the Jesuits. It is furthermore remarkable that Illich should present as early as 1965 his proposal for the abolition of the professional clergy, whom he deemed to be just as obsolete as the "geographical parish".

111 *Latin America Pastoral Institute in operation*, dated 'Cuernavaca, 1st November 1965'; issued in *CIF Reports* IV, 20 (1st November 1965), and later also in *CIDOC Cuaderno* 39, 1970, p. 11/15.

112 Illich provided hints in this sense in his commentary on Bob Fox, with a likely reference to the meeting that took place in Cuernavaca in July 1965 (see McMahon, 1989: 159).

tween these contrasting tensions, CELAM (the coordinating Council of the Latin American bishops) prepared for its second conference to be held in Medellín in 1968 by adopting a Vatican II-inspired policy that was courageous yet prudent, since they could obviously not afford to opt for the *renewal's* most daring alternatives. Not only did they worry about the activities of Father Galilea's Ispla, which would later be first marginalised and then normalised, but they were also concerned about the trip which Illich had taken to Colombia in quest of documents on Father Camilo Torres, who had been killed in combat in February 1966; that visit greatly alarmed President Larraín, and led him to demand that CIF should enforce stricter adherence to the Church's discipline, or else ensure a clearer allocation of responsibilities.<sup>113</sup>

Faced by that alternative and spurred by the sudden need to vacate the Centre's original premises, in April 1966 Illich chose the second option and decided to concentrate on the *Centro intercultural de documentación* (CIDOC), which became the distinguishing trademark of all the activities subsequently carried out by him and his main collaborators. The renovated institute's secular nature and its new work programme ('the documentation and the analysis of the ideologies' influence on social change in Latin America, as *directora* Valentina Borremans explained to CELAM's inspectors in 1967) indicated that CIF's legacy had been inherited and then marginalised, thereby allowing it to fade in importance; indeed, both the institute and its programme became associated with a kind of community life that was no longer tied to a pre-established institutional framework or built around daily liturgy, but was rather brought into being and fed by the mere intensity of personal participation, shared commitment,

113 See Scatena, 2006: 270-274, and 111-113.

mutual openness, and hospitality.<sup>114</sup> While trying to protect Mendez Arceó's diocese from any potential consequence, this *ekklesia* based on sheer friendship now enjoyed a freedom of analysis, judgement and action that was no longer subjected to external constraints; it could therefore radicalise its views on Latin America's actors and processes, such as the US's growing interferences, the Catholic forces' ideological and political collocation, and the hierarchies' attitude. In August 1966, shortly after Larrain's sudden death, Illich wrote to Pope Paul VI to ask for a private audience in order to 'portare la Sua attenzione su certi aspetti dell'invio di ecclesiastici all'America Latina [...] i quali facilmente Le devono sfuggire' ('...bring to Your attention some of the aspects involved in sending the clergy to Latin America [...] which may have easily escaped You').<sup>115</sup> He placed his plea under the patronage of Father René Voillaume and Bishop Hélder Câmara; shortly afterwards he also asked them to support with the Pope, Erich Fromm's proposal to hold a world conference in Rome under the Pope's aegis, to counter the threat of extinction which the ongoing technical and military escalation posed for humanity. In the autumn of 1966, after both attempts had failed, Illich must have felt that he was left with no choice other than appealing directly to God's people in the US, to let them at last

114 Illich explicitly mentioned this in the above-mentioned interview which he gave to the *Jesuit Mission* (see the Appendix). One may also be referred to the account provided by Paolo Prodi (2016: 211-212): 'It really was a beautiful mass, on account of both the natural simplicity of the ceremony (a wicker basket for the holy hosts, a table, etc.), and the high degree of religious participation...I was thus able to observe a dimension which had escaped me in the past days. And it had escaped me exactly because here they try to be as little institutionalised as possible. I believe Father Ivan felt ready to celebrate mass only at 5, after we had been conversing for half an hour, and one could tell he almost had a physical urge to do so. I do not think this system could have much scope for application in daily life, but it certainly opens up new possibilities for freedom and humanity to which our mentality makes us altogether blind. Above all, it was a deeply religious experience, one that I found unsettling inasmuch as it left me thoroughly shaken.'

115 See Ocampo Villaseñor, T., (1969). 'Mexico: "Entredicho" del Vaticano a CIDOC, 1966-1969. Documentos y reacciones de prensa.' *CIDOC Dossier* 37, p. 4/28.

become fully aware of the actual ecclesiastical and political importance of his missionary efforts. The text he prepared to this end was however rejected by the *National Catholic Reporter* for its exceedingly argumentative nature, and was published in the Jesuits' weekly magazine only at the beginning of 1967; it went off like a bomb right half-way through the fourth CICOP meeting in Boston. That was exactly the sort of effect its author had hoped for: there was now nothing left to do but fight that good battle to the very end.

IX. If one re-examines the best-known and most explicit texts of the 1967 campaign, it is not hard to come across some of the permanent features of Illich's thought and action that began to emerge after the above-mentioned turning point at the end of the 1950s. *The Seamy Side of Charity* reminded everybody of the patent fact that 'men and money sent with missionary motivation carry a foreign Christian image, a foreign pastoral approach, and a foreign political message':<sup>116</sup> this was of course the exact opposite of a correct missionary attitude, and by extension of healthy ecclesial dynamism and of a vital interaction between cultures. On the strength of 'the most radically traditional theology', *The Vanishing Clergyman* did altogether away with the originally postulated need of 'men and money' and prefigured the abolition of that professional clergy, the defining institution of the second Christian millennium, the one at the core of both the 'Tridentine paradigm' and of canon law.<sup>117</sup> As for the missions' ultimate goal, *The Powerless Church* questioned the very purpose of 'men and money', and suggested that the Church's historical task had very little to do with the exercise of any kind of power, be it the management of social services, the conditioning of politi-

116 *The Seamy Side of Charity*; see Part I.

117 *The Vanishing Clergyman*, *ibidem*.

cal choices, or the moral direction of humanity's *progressio*.<sup>118</sup>

A careful reading of these texts also reveals the presence of a range of historical and theological motives that pushed their way through them, forces which only the 1960s could have evoked and brought to maturity. Unequivocal proof in this sense is supplied by the conference on religious experience which Illich gave in Mexico City in the autumn of 1966, that is, immediately before the appearance of the texts under examination.<sup>119</sup> It provides a clear record of Illich's transition through something not too dissimilar to a Weber-Barth constellation: on the one hand "the world's disenchantment" (*i.e.* the elimination of any supranatural element from a world now fully given to rationality), and on the other the reassignment of transcendental elements to a domain of pure transcendency (that is *wholly Other*, as is common knowledge). This means that if these "astral" influences were to be updated by skipping one generation, one would come across Alfred Schütz's sociological research on non-rational action driven by the "dictates" of common sense, and Dietrich Bonhöffer's prophesy of a non-religious interpretation of the Bible's tenets that could at last suit mankind's coming of age; if a further generation were to be skipped, thus reaching Illich's own ('the seventh after Bacon's'),<sup>120</sup> one would come across Illich's peers and fellow countrymen Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger, the sociologists of religion, or Bishop John Robinson and Reverend Harvey Cox, the theologians of "secularisation". In short, it may be claimed that that theological line, with a clear imprint from the Reformation, encouraged Illich to establish an opposition between *fides* and *religio*, or, to express it more adroitly, to re-read in contrastive terms a distinction with

118 *A Church Without Power, ibidem.*

119 See *Aesthetic and Religious Experience* in Part IV.

120 *Ibid.*

which he had already become acquainted by other means; the sociologists, conversely, inspired him to conceive *religio* as a “social construct”, namely something that was at once the shared anthropological feature and the sacred canopy of the institutionalisation process that is intrinsically associated with every form of human socialisation.<sup>121</sup>

One of Illich’s distinguishing traits was his “dialectical” use of these two interpretative keyboards. He turned the danger of “reification”, which constantly lurked behind the objectifying processes that bring about ‘the social construction of reality’, into a springboard for an all-encompassing criticism of the ideologies, idolatries, delusions and sublimations that were at work in the contemporary world, regardless of whether they were Christian, pseudo-Christian, or anti-Christian. By subsuming all of them under the ‘mythology’ category, he endeavoured to separate them from a ‘mystical’ dimension that was completely unrelated to them: a mysticism which in its turn impelled mankind to take a disenchanting look at themselves, to become more consciously and intensely realistic, and to ‘personalise’ their actions and relationships more thoroughly. It is not hard to recognise in this dialectic approach the same scientific-existential slant that was at the core of CIDOC’s community experience; perhaps Cuernavaca’s powers of inspiration were not just confined to Rancho Tetela, after all. Illich may have also owed a dialogical debt to Erich Fromm’s most recent discussion of the ‘X-experience’, as well as to the ‘non-theistic mysticism’ that guided his re-reading of the biblical and rabbinical traditions;<sup>122</sup> Fromm’s work

121 See Berger, Peter L., & Luckmann, Thomas. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City (NY): Doubleday.

122 See Fromm, Eric, (1966). *You Shall Be as Gods. A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and its Tradition*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. It is important to bear in mind who the instigators and the prospective audience of this conference were, since there were many “humanist” psychiatrists from the Mexican Psychoanalytic Association founded by Fromm among them.

may have also acted as his introduction to Freud's "Enlightenment" and other "teachers of suspicion", albeit in the opposite direction. Illich's friendship and exchanges with Fromm still await a thorough, source-based scholarly study;<sup>123</sup> regardless of how one may judge them, however, what needs to be stressed here is that, contrary to Fromm's position, and similarly to the Kerygmatic theology of the mid-20th century, the mystical dimension to which Illich referred was unquestionably to be identified with the core of the New Testament's message, namely the proclamation of the kingdom. This point is of vital importance, and will have to be examined more closely at a later stage. For the time being it suffices to say that the scenario conjured up by the texts examined in the present analysis clearly shows that Illich's action was first and foremost aimed at raising the Catholic public's awareness, in a quasi-therapeutic fashion, of the interests and power relations which propaganda regularly kept hidden from view, and which the passiveness typical of seculars kept in a condition of ecclesiastical "minority" also contributed to suppress from the collective consciousness. Secondly, it demonstrates that Illich endeavoured to promote a radical "demythologisation" (and deinstitutionalisation) of the Church's own ranks by

123 A special emphasis on the role played by Fromm in the evolution of Illich's thought throughout the 1960s may be found in the works by Bruno-Jofré and Zaldivar; this is especially true of the already-mentioned *Monsignor Ivan Illich's Critique of the Institutional Church, 1960-1966* (see pp. 575-576 and 580-581), which nonetheless tended to treat Fromm's influence as a given, rather than as an aspect in need of further investigation. However, the authors did not take into consideration a text such as *Missionary Poverty*, which was published in 1958 (in Europe it was issued under the title *A Psychological Study*) and unquestionably preceded Illich's 1961 meeting with Fromm: it displayed a profound knowledge of psychology, and even the use of rather specialised Freudian vocabulary, which Illich must have acquired in his capacity as spiritual director of aspiring missionaries. The authors also overestimated Illich's closeness to Abbot Grégoire Lemerrier, who introduced psychoanalysis to the Benedictine monastery of *Santa María de la Resurrección* located near Cuernavaca: while it is true that journalists associated the two men in the (rather infelicitous) sobriquet 'the two volcanoes of Cuernavaca', and that Bishop Méndez Arceo always showed benevolence towards both of them, there is no record of any significant interaction between them.

questioning the fundamental distinction between the clergy and the laity at its core. Finally, it proves that he demanded the acknowledgement of the role which “secular religions” and their relevant structures were playing in the modern process of ‘the social construction of reality’; he consequently advocated the Church’s necessary withdrawal from all civic and political strife, not only to safeguard the “mystery of the unity” of its faithful, but also to help it become the guardian of a far more sensitive and decisive aspect of those same processes, *i.e.* their *meaning*. The definition which Illich gave of that task summarised in his eyes the experience of the kingdom: he cast it as a ‘Christian celebration of change’.

The use of ‘kingdom’, ‘celebration’, ‘of change’, marked a turning point in the terminology employed by this priest who was now forty years of age. Of course, when one considers his writings on the Church and the missions, it is immediately apparent that the dialectical approach mentioned above was firmly rooted in his intellectual and spiritual personality. The need to wear interpretative bifocals becomes particularly pressing when faced with a man and a writer who, while addressing *Integrity’s* secular readership on the subjects of parishes and migrants, explained the biblical meaning of consecrated virginity, and recommended the reading of a synthesis of Carmelite mysticism as a guiding model; a man who, while introducing himself to the teaching staff of the Catholic University in Ponce as the new deputy rector, chose to speak of the eschatological ‘last four things’, and explained the primacy of silence to aspiring missionaries busy acquiring the language spoken in their prospective mission. The fact that in 1967, ‘at the time of the March on the Pentagon’, such a man should issue *A Call to Celebration* is only partially surprising; what was really unprecedented was the sudden combination of an active dimension with a contemplative one, which the public and the “political” nature of that remarkable ‘mani-



festos' clearly highlighted. This innovation was obviously allowed and supported by exceptional circumstances, including a whole generation which in that social climate endeavoured to cultivate what Walter Benjamin had once termed the 'weak Messianic power' accorded to each generation.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, it is also true that Illich's *A Call for Celebration* began to circulate in an anonymous, informal shape two years before its publication; it was addressed to individuals rather than masses, and displayed a language that was much more suggestive than cogitative or inflammatory; the choice of this specific communicative approach testifies to the unique nature of his initiative. Illich subsequently included that text at the beginning of his first book, and elected to incorporate a reference to it also in the latter's title; those choices would therefore seem to indicate that *A Call for Celebration* constituted a privileged access to the hidden core of his now mature thought, an encouragement to his readership, as it were, to venture in the same direction.<sup>125</sup>

X. It is impossible to establish whether young Illich was *au fait* with the debate on the theology of history that pervaded the Catholic world – and France in particular – in the wake of the Second World War, even though it may easily be assumed that he was. What can be said with any certainty is that said debate, which would go down in history as the clash between "Incarnationists" and "Eschatologists", was summarised by Murray in an essay with which Illich was very familiar: in-

124 The predictions to be found in *A Call for Celebration* concerned mainly the various strands of the youth culture of the time, starting with the *Port Huron Statement* (see the relevant documentation in Bloom, Alexander, & Breines, Wini, (2003). *"Takin' it to the Streets". A Sixties Reader*. Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press). A more in-depth discussion on the relevant historical context may be found in the *Editorial Note* to *A Call for Celebration* in Part I. The quotation by Walter Benjamin may be found in the second of his renowned *Theses on the Concept of History*.

125 See Part I.

deed, he considered it so important that he attempted to have it translated and circulated in Italy as early as 1954.<sup>126</sup> It essentially posited the issue of the relationship between *res sacra* and *res humana*, between historical (and of course technical, economic, and political) progress and the kingdom of God. In other words, after having taken their infinite qualitative difference as a given, it asked if history could pave the way for the kingdom, or at least prefigure it, or whether the latter was simply meant to be the former's *krisis*, nemesis, and downfall. The humanism which Illich professed and shared with Maritain, Murray, and later Fromm – not to mention the emphasis he placed on the subject of Incarnation at a later stage – would seemingly suggest that he should be included among the supporters of the first school of thought; even a remotely attentive reader of Illich knows, however, that such a solution is far from being satisfactory. It is eminently possible that in the present case, the terms of the dispute and the religious culture which originated them may in fact exceed their usefulness as premise, and ultimately become misleading.

Luckily, the text in which Illich directly tackled the relationship between time and eternity, and between this world and the next, has survived. It is the same text drawn up in two versions for two separate kinds of audience (a *meditatio* for devout lay people, and an academic *lectio*): both of them

126 It was J.C. Murray S.J.'s *Christian Humanism in America* (see Social Order III, 1953, pp. 233-244), which was later re-edited and published as 'Is it Basket Weaving?' (in: Murray, J. C. S.J., (1960). *We hold these truths*. New York: Sheed and Ward, pp. 175-191). In June 1954 Illich was granted permission by both Murray and the text's translator (the Jesuit Father Giorgio Flick from Bologna, an old acquaintance of Illich's) to circulate the essay 'among a group of friends belonging to the Graduates' Movement of Italy's Catholic Action' (it was probably the group run by Domenico Farias and Maria Mariotti in Reggio Calabria; indeed, at the time in question Farias was staying at the Documentation Centre which Giuseppe Dossetti had recently set up in Bologna). No further details are known as to the initiative's outcome, but it seems quite likely that the veto which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (then directed by Cardinal Ottaviani) passed on Murray in 1954 may have put a stop to it. On the related debate, see Besret (Besret, Bernard, (1964). *Incarnation ou Eschatologie? Contribution à l'histoire du vocabulaire religieux contemporain, 1935-1955*. Paris: Cerf).

were self-inspired, non-*ad hoc* pieces, and both were conceived when Illich was thirty and about to transition from a pseudonym-based anonymity to a full claim of ownership of his writings. All these elements concur to suggest that their theme was somehow one of the central pillars of his thought: death, or rather the moment of death, or, to be even more precise, the very *act* of dying (the intransitivity of dying, as something that does not allow for a passive conjugation, was a subject with which Illich dealt repeatedly over the decades; it can thus be seen as the longest-lasting motif in his reflection, and in a way even as the foundation of his Christian existentialism). He described it as ‘that one human act which begins in time and ends with eternity and yet belongs to neither, in which life in its fullness comes to a man all at once and what was a process becomes a state’. It was the one act that summed up a whole life’s countless others in a single ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to reality, that is to say, ultimately to oneself, to one’s ontological limitations, and to one’s indignity in the face of God; that act became consequently fixed for eternity in that very ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (indeed, it was in that perspective that Illich re-elaborated the traditional doctrine on the eschatological ‘last four things’). On this threshold between two dimensions, right in ‘the timeless point at which the decision is made’, mankind reached their full, free maturity as human beings, but also suffered the ultimate loss of their own selves, and the abandonment ‘into the unfamiliar nakedness of eternity’. Since ‘in its existential reality [...] every act of man is a preview of death’, however, it could be surmised that every *hic et nunc* experienced with equal intensity would equally present itself at the end of time as a definitive assent to the reality of things, to the human condition, and to the self caught in that very *hic et nunc*; as such, it would constitute the final waiver of all further projections of life, as well as of any desire to control the future and

own the material world.<sup>127</sup> Under all circumstances, human actions could become a rehearsal and a training exercise for the kind of anticipated death which Illich, as a young man, identified with the attainment of the poverty of spirit that was so dear to his teacher and mentor Auer.<sup>128</sup>

In those texts, Illich portrayed praying as the action that, more than any other, could prepare an individual for death, understood as human life's ultimate and supreme action. A life of prayer, *i.e.* a consecrated life, was in fact a condition which Illich defined in *The Vanishing Clergyman* as the choice 'to live *now* the absolute poverty every Christian

127 The excerpts quoted above are from *Rehearsal for Death and The End of Human Life* (see Part V and VI respectively). Illich's thought was of course developed within a wide philosophical and theological framework, which ranged from Heidegger and Bultmann's emphasis on the theme of existential decision, to Guardini and von Balthasar's notion of an involvement of the whole of man's historical existence in the last things. The only explicit contemporary reference to be found in Illich's text, nonetheless, is in fact to Palémon Glorieux, a medievalist from the *Institut catholique* in Lille who was extremely sensitive to Father Chénu and Saulchoir's Thomist *ressourcement*, as well as to the teachings of Abbé Godin, to the experiences made by the *Mission de France*, and to the spirituality displayed by *Jeunesse Ouvrière* and its founder Cardijn. The theme of an individual's *activity* at the time of death, on which Glorieux placed special emphasis, was later expanded by Ladislaus Boros (*Mysterium mortis*, 1964) and Karl Rahner (*Zur Theologie des Todes*, 1958); both authors were quoted by Illich on this same subject in his *Medical Nemesis* (1976). For a general overview of the matter, see Colzani (Colzani, Gianni. (2003). *Escatologia e teologia della storia*. In: Canobbio, Giacomo, & Coda, Piero (eds.). *La teologia del XX secolo. Un bilancio*. Vol. II. Prospettive sistematiche. Roma: Città nuova, pp. 483-560).

128 This theme has enjoyed a rich tradition within Christianity, and it is consequently not possible to determine which of its many strands may have influenced Illich's spirituality as a (possibly extremely) young man. It may nonetheless be useful to compare his position with the contemporary one held by Giuseppe Dossetti, which ran as follows: 'It is intrinsic to the Spirit [...] to progressively replace the created personality with the uncreated one that is necessary for the wedding: *i.e.* the person of the Word. / Henceforth, therefore, *I shall increasingly have to live to die* (in order to be reborn for the eternal wedding); that is to say, to allow for the most extended and fruitful chance to love charitably, namely giving glory to eternity, in order to support the preparations which the Spirit is making within me to lead me to the *act par excellence*, the act of my death' (Dossetti, Giuseppe. (2010). 'Esercizi della Trinità e della morte, 20 ottobre 1953'. In: Dossetti, Giuseppe, *La coscienza del fine. Appunti spirituali 1939-1955*. Milano: ed. Paoline, p. 202).

hopes to experience at the hour of death’;<sup>129</sup> a similar choice of words may be encountered, for comparison purposes, in the grammar of the missionary *silence* that Illich preached around 1960. It seems possible to venture that in the years between 1966 and 1968 the word which he adopted to define the experience of finding oneself at the *end* of time and *beyond* it was rather *celebration*. That choice was undoubtedly dictated by commitments that had become very different from a priest or a spiritual director’s usual ones, as well as by the unique community experience provided by CIDOC; nevertheless, it could perhaps also owe something to the inspiration provided by an extraordinary interlocutor such as Father Robert Fox. The most conspicuous instance of its use was indeed in the text of *A Call for Celebration*, which he developed with Father Fox himself in 1967. What catches the eye in that text, even after a superficial perusal, is that it pitched ‘celebration’ directly against ‘planning’: it evoked the future in the present and dismissed all kinds of “social engineering”, it liquidated the tyranny of usefulness and productivity while extolling human perfection in poetry and in playing, and it retained historical time to introduce in it the image of fulfilment. After all, Illich explicitly mentioned this “messianic” quality of the celebratory act also in other texts, such as for instance *How Will We Pass on Christianity?*, the essay that concludes the present collection. Dating to the late 1971, it stated that ‘the density of the Incarnation, the only time the Lord is present to us is at the present moment which we celebrate together’; it followed that ‘to live as a Christian means to live in the spirit of *Maran atha* – the Lord is coming at this moment. It means to live and to enjoy living at the edge of time, at the end moment of

129 In *The Vanishing Clergyman* (see Part I) this expression specifically referred to the vow of chastity; elsewhere, such as for instance in *How Will We Pass on Christianity?* (see Part V), a similar consideration was made in connection with the vow of poverty. As regards what follows below, see the above-mentioned *The Eloquence of Silence* in Part I.

time.<sup>130</sup> Living as a Christian entailed living in a state of *celebration*: every contingency had to be accepted for what it was, had to be elevated to the status of *ultimate* contingency, and had to be consigned to a different dimension in which concepts such as before and after, 'already' and 'not yet', ceased to be mutually exclusive. It was through such a process that temporality itself became sublimated and suspended, and came to lean directly towards its opposite. 'Just as the Messiah is always at the door, the kingdom is ever "already" present: in this moment, at death, at parousia', as was taught by the 1966 conference. The important term that needs to be highlighted in that triad is the middle one, the one that structures the series itself, and leads back to the starting point.

Indeed, the kingdom 'lies under the sign of the cross,' and 'between its arrival and its fulfilment there is the cross': it was only by means of that *intermediary* that the two opposite poles could meet. The 'celebration' was always the celebration of the Lord's death: it was its memory ('[the] memory of a last meal, the sort they give a condemned prisoner before execution'), its acceptance ('[the] painful submission to the Will of God, demanded by man's sin which mankind's original sin demands'), and the partaking in it ('the gift of His own [life] that Jesus, the Christ, makes to the believer').<sup>131</sup> Only by passing through that narrow door, together with Christ through nothingness, could the human condition be glorified, and could the *hic et nunc* stretch into timelessness. If a background to such a concept, or rather to such an experience of 'celebration', were to be provided, insofar as it is possible to understand it, one ought to invoke the precedent of the Liturgical Movement, which Illich must undoubtedly have come

130 See Part V.

131 The relevant passages were developed within a 15-year timespan, between *The End of Human Life* (1956, see Part IV), *Aesthetic and Religious Experience* (1966, *ibid.*) and *How Will We Pass on Christianity?* (1971, see Part V).

across in the years of his adolescence in Vienna. Particularly relevant to this context was its belief in the paramount role which worship played in the establishment of the Church, as well as in the real presence of an actual redeeming event within worship itself. The significant influence which a personality such as Romano Guardini may have exerted on Illich as he grew from an adolescent into a young man, for which there is indirect evidence, should also be added here. It may be surmised that the dramatic description of the Lord's story in Guardini's major work, which Illich demonstrably admired,<sup>132</sup> deeply affected Illich's understanding of faith. 'To be a Christian means to participate in the life of Christ,' Guardini wrote in developing what is in all likelihood his most original spiritual intuition; as mentioned above, Illich for his part wrote that 'Faith [is] the acceptance of a gift of His own experience of living (*vivencia*) that Jesus, the Christ, makes to the believer. Faith is not the acceptance of a doctrine; it is the commitment to searching, with dedication and risk, the personal, intimate identification with the intimacy of another person. Rabbi Yeshua ben Josef, as the object of this faith, is my brother and friend Jesus, the Lord, the Son of God.' An extreme consequence of this, according to Guardini, was that 'the movement towards the evil nothingness stemming from sin must be brought to completion. One way or another we must brush the depths of annihilation Christ divinely plumbed and fulfilled.' In a similar spirit, in his commemoration of Bob Fox Illich wrote: '[the] joint celebration of the cross we accept as ours is the beginning of real life – and the presence of just one among the celebrants who knows that that cross is the Cross of Christ, bring the Church into being.'<sup>133</sup>

132 As reported by Domenico Farias in his *In the Shadow of Jerome* (in Hoinacki & Mitcham, 2002: 69).

133 The quotations by Guardini were taken from Guardini, Romano, (2005 [1937]). *Il Signore. Riflessioni sulla persona e sulla vita di Gesù Cristo*. Milano - Brescia: Vita e

In light of these considerations, one may now take a fresh look at *The Powerless Church*, especially where it says the following: 'the reaction to transition is very ambiguous. It can allow for new insights, can open new perspectives and therefore confront the person with new awareness of choice. In other words, development can be a setting for salvation which leads to resurrection. But also transition can reduce a bewildered individual to a defensive self-centeredness, to dependence and aggression; it can lead into the agony of a lived destruction of life, straight into hell.' What emerges here is the way in which 'the Christian celebration of the experience of change' is essentially adapted to the *act of dying* (as confirmed by this passage: 'What happens to the intimacy of a person when his familiar surroundings suddenly disappear, and with them the symbols he reveres?', with all that follows); just as was the case with that action, moreover, it ended up being confronted with a radical dilemma, which Illich had no hesitation in defining as either hell or resurrection. It was 'the reaction of the human heart', 'this heart' that set 'the objective value' of that experience; the Christians' ability to partake in its "drama", in the same way and at the same time as they partook in the Lord's death, that was ultimately the real object of its 'Christian celebration.' In this context, only change (*i.e.* death) and change alone could become a redeeming experience, provided it was seen in light of the cross. That experience was to be con-celebrated in the time segment in which time stands still, the one commonly known as 'creative leisure', and was encouraged by Illich's *Call to Celebration*; it implicitly referred back to liturgical time, more specifically to the liturgy of the Eucharist.

Indeed, 'change' was now a 'sign of the times,' the mark

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Pensiero - Morcelliana, pp. 482-483; those by Illich were drawn from *Aesthetic and Religious Experience* (in Part IV) and from his *Commentary* (in McMahon, 1989: 158).



of an era from which no existence, whether individual or collective, was able to escape any longer. In that new context, mankind's *coming of age* became a real possibility, and was actually fulfilled. The "sacred canopy"<sup>134</sup> that used to paralyse the traditional view of the cosmos had come crumbling down: although some might still have use for a "stopgap God", the enlightened acknowledgement that an irreversible rift had occurred in human history, and that such a rift had to be seen in light of God's and mankind's freedom, necessarily had to make the Church realise that its role was no longer to support or fix that "canopy", or to manage and direct the changes that sporadically took place in its shadow. Rather, 'the church interprets to modern man development as a growth into Christ': that meant into His cross, given that the experiences of transition, uprooting, self-loss, and position-taking had become universal, that 'interculturality' had become the mark of an era, and that every individual was a missionary of sorts for themselves and the others ('the future has already broken into the present. We each live in many times. The present of one is the past of the another, and the future of yet another', as may be read in *A Call for Celebration* and other similar texts).<sup>135</sup> Only the Church could evangelise that experience so that in the distress of the transition 'a non-thematic awareness of the significance of the incarnation emerge[d]: an ability to say one great "Yes" to the experience of life'. That 'Yes' to the movement's divine and human principle itself, the removal of hereditary necessity, the 'new awareness of choice', one's readiness for the adventure of the unforeseen and for 'the wondrous surprise of [its] coming, [its] advent', all ultimately bore

134 See Berger, Peter L., (1967). *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City (NY): Doubleday, 1967.

135 The most explicit text in this sense was *The Secular City and the Structure of Religious Life* (see Part VI). Notice however the clarity of thought with which Jim Morton analysed this aspect in his *Introduction to The Church, Change and Development* (see Part III).

the name of *love*. It was in that sense that ‘the development of humanity tends toward the realization of the kingdom, which is Christ already present in the church’: it was only on that condition that it did not head for perdition instead (‘growing dependence, solitude, and cravings which result from our self-alienation in things and systems and heroes’), an ever-present, concrete risk throughout history.<sup>136</sup> It may be noted here that there is nothing to support the contention that such a conceptual framework was sensibly altered in the following decades. In his old age Illich owned up to having suffered the temptation ‘of cursing God’s Incarnation’,<sup>137</sup> and also accused human freedom of a radical deviation (*i.e.* of having given itself up, and of having handed itself over to those demonic powers that are always ready to break loose whenever that decision has to be taken). That still does not belie the fact that both crisis and change possessed a categorically positive value, as it were: they corresponded to the ontological (and therefore also axiological) primacy of existence over essence, despite the ambiguity of their implementation as deliverance or enslavement, and as the kingdom of God or its perversion. To interpret this underlying premise as *a priori* “progressiveness” would, of course, be ludicrous, and it would be at least just as absurd, if not more, to mistake Illich’s preaching for programmatic anti-modernism. If the “typological” link which Illich envisaged between Incarnation (the Surprise *par excellence*) and Secularisation (the era *par excellence* which started ‘the experience of life’ all over again) is not taken into account, one cannot possibly understand the link of *simultaneous* realisation and perversion which he painfully investigated in his later years in the relationship between the Gospel

136 These excerpts are also from *The Powerless Church* (see Part I).

137 See Cayley, 2005: 61.

and Modernity.<sup>138</sup>

The relationship between the ‘celebration of change’ and the kingdom of God also requires a special effort to be fully comprehended. The kingdom of God, always ‘already present’ as something ‘always about to come’ (‘in this moment, at death, at parousia’, with no noticeable qualitative difference between these various events), was apparently nothing more than the mere process of becoming as seen from the point of view of God, that same God who was alive and an endless source of life; ‘celebration’ thus meant welcoming that same process with praise, or perhaps one ought to say with faith, since Life had manifested itself to mankind. A consequence of this was that Illich did not believe in the existence of two separate histories, one sacred and one secular, driven by two separate agents, such as for instance the Church and mankind. Echoing one of his literary influences, namely Joseph Scheeben and his *Mysterien*, and in the same vein also Solovëv,<sup>139</sup> with whom he became acquainted early on, he envisaged only one kind of history that was at once divine and human, and which stretched between God’s incarnation and Man’s divinisation, with no separate or privileged place reserved for the Church. ‘Men form Church, [...] they form community, even *before* the Gospel has been announced to them’, he once stated;<sup>140</sup> ‘what the Church contributes through evangelization is

138 This is the underlying theme in Cayley (2005). In his writings on Illich Charles Taylor did not quite manage to properly bring to the fore the ambivalence highlighted above (see Taylor, Charles, (2007). *The Secular Age*. Cambridge (MA) – London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 737-744; however, see a different approach to this on p. 158).

139 The progressive development of this line of thought would find its fairly natural conclusion with Teilhard de Chardin: although Illich never mentioned him, in 1966 the *CIF Reports* published the enthusiastic homage paid to him by Dom Helder Câmara (see ‘Teilhard de Chardin, man of love.’ *CIF Reports* V, 1, January 1966, later also in *CIDOC Cuaderno* 40, 1969, pp. 1/26-29).

140 See the interview *The Meaning of Cuernavaca* in the Appendix. For the similarities with Rahner’s thought displayed by these and other comparable statements, see the notes to *The Powerless Church*.

like the laughter in the joke. Two hear the same story – but one gets the point.’ The Gospel, in other words, safeguarded a further, more intimate dimension of the only extant reality, to which it also provided access: its *meaning* (it is rather telling that the leap from reality to such a dimension was said to be triggered by *laughter*).<sup>141</sup> Faith, for its part, revealed itself to be a special kind of intensity within that life, an intensity called *awareness*. ‘I am continually aware of the fact that the Christian message, at least for me in my personal life, is mostly a call to a deeper awareness, a deeper and more full taste of the social reality within which I live’,<sup>142</sup> Illich stated in an outline of his activity at CIDOC. The fact that that centre had a civil statute and a secular work programme, as has been shown, was not especially important: even the secular domain, as such, was not allocated any specific “space”. This is further confirmed by *A Call for Celebration*, which did not display any religious connotations, nor did suggest tasks that were sensibly different from the ones which *The Powerless Church* had envisaged for the Church. Although it was called upon to discard the power it had historically exercised, given that history had now changed its course, ‘the church understood as our celebration of our shared awareness that the kingdom is now about to come right here among us’ was still actively present wherever there were human beings who loved and lived genuinely.<sup>143</sup> This, of course, despite the fact that only believers were granted ‘an awareness of the God-

141 On this point, as well as on most of what has been discussed above, see also the comments made by Giorgio Agamben in his foreword ‘Laughter and the Kingdom’ to the volume by Borremans and Samuel (2018: vi-xii).

142 As stated in the interview given to *Christianity & Crisis* (see the Appendix).

143 ‘The Church, very rightly claims about herself what is true of humanity as a whole. She knows that those who are saved are saved because, in a way, they belong to her. The Kingdom among us is the Church. There is no question that the best, the truly loving and living members of humanity are a sign of a love beyond, a sign of revelation. In other words, men who really love are, for the believer, a sign of God’s love.’ In *The Meaning of Cuernavaca* (see the Appendix).

man or the man-God', and also 'of the lack of limit in love and in betrayal':<sup>144</sup> that is, of the endless and unfathomable character of the alternative involved.

In consideration of the above, one may easily understand why the debate recounted by Murray remained fairly peripheral to the elaboration of Illich's thought. Since the celebration envisaged the coincidence of the 'density of the Incarnation' with the eschatological event itself – or, to be more precise, the two bordered and trespassed on each other at the same time – there could be no relationship of prefiguration or falsification between them, as the agenda of that debate conversely dictated; instead, there was intrinsic reciprocity. With the proviso that the kingdom was not to be a human project based on social planning and the engineering of the future, it already came into being as soon as someone said yes to change, was ready to welcome what was surprising, harboured love towards life, and acted as a neighbour to a stranger, regardless of what adversities one might come up against. With the proviso that the kingdom was not seen as a vertical interruption and a violent intrusion in human history, on the other hand, the density of the flesh, of the senses, of the relationships, of the decisions taken at every turn – in a word, of the redeemed nature – could all, in fact, come to awareness. It thus becomes easier to understand how Illich managed to interpret the 'Weber-Barth constellation' in a Catholic perspective. He saw it rise above the horizon of the end of Christendom, over a landscape marked by mankind's definitive emancipation from religion's tutelage and by the ensuing purification of all transcendence-related notions and imagery: despite this, his dialectics did not become tragic. What the mediation of religion could no longer achieve – it is quite likely that on the Catholic side nobody has ever attempted to pursue Bonhoeffer's programme for 'irreligious Christianity'

144 Thus in the interview given to *Christianity & Crisis* (see the Appendix).

with as much rigour – could still be achieved by mysticism. In Illich's view, however, mysticism as based on one's identification with Jesus's experience of living was exactly the kingdom's collective experience and celebration. 'The Gospel's description of the kingdom includes essential elements that are used when describing the mystical experience. It adds and makes some elements explicit. It adds the social dimension: the kingdom is among us; it adds a para-temporal dimension: fulfilled but not yet accomplished – this means, under the sign of the cross. It makes realism explicit: the kingdom already exists among us in a social sense, and it consists in the progress of love. Hence, it is profoundly *social* and *personal*' (emphasis added).<sup>145</sup> It is probably this nuance that marked out Illich's thought more clearly against the ones formulated by other contemporary theologians, with whom he otherwise tended to be in agreement.<sup>145</sup>

XI. As may be gleaned from the patchwork of references included here (most of which are excerpts from Illich's speeches and interviews, and quite often from some enigmatic passages in his writings), this long excursus has been made necessary by the fact that Illich seldom dealt with theological or phil-

145 This passage may be found in *Aesthetic and Religious Experience*, op. cit. Illich's convergence of ideas with Harvey Cox (see Cox, Harvey, (1965). *The Secular City. Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*. New York: McMillan) was especially significant and far-reaching, particularly if it is considered that before 1968 they basically worked independently of one another. This notwithstanding, it is worth noting that Cox showed no interest in mysticism even when he touched upon it, as was the case with his *The Feast of Fools* (1969). *A theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1969); nonetheless, in the *Preface* to that book he still acknowledged 'Ivan Illich and the students at the Center for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, [for having] provided a festive input to [his] thinking during the Summer 1968: Illich probably owed this characteristic feature of his thought to Guardini and Maritain's influence. Illich's theme of the 'kingdom' and his interpretation of it ('social and personal'), on the other hand, differentiated his thought from that strand within the "theology of secularisation" which identified "God" with the "the depth of being" (see Robinson, John A.T. (1963). *Honest to God*. London: SCM Press LTD, who followed Tillich, Paul, (1948). *The Shaking of the Foundations*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), or with the "the sum of the highest values" (see Fromm).

osophical issues directly, and never hid his embarrassment when confronted with concepts and formulations that might end up being accepted as normative and universally valid. His statements were usually taken to refer to a given situation with which he was directly familiar; they appeared to be more akin to acts, almost gestures made in a context that allowed for them and could benefit from them. Of course, they did not happen in a vacuum: they were in fact supported and bolstered by a philosophical framework, such as the one that has been at least partially reconstructed here. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Illich displayed towards speculative thinking a reserve, or one may even say an estrangement, that did not stem so much from “intellectual psychology” as from “religious” conviction. There were many preconditions that may have contributed to this inclination of his; a fairly important one among them could have been for instance his adherence, whether spontaneous, pondered, or both, to a biblical view of the “world”. For once, his Jewish extraction could be included as a potentially contributing factor; that being the case, it would then become possible to draw what could undoubtedly be a very rewarding parallel with Father Lorenzo Milani. For the time being, it may suffice to borrow the words written by Guardini, the master whom Illich revered: ‘We tend to see Christianity proper as a kind of system or world structure. The New Testament and the early Christian writers saw it as God’s acting. [Our usual] way of seeing things, which is ultimately rather static, may lead us to forget that the true shape of our existence is God’s activity. It is that shape that gives everything its meaning and its characteristics. [...] Inasmuch as Christianity ceases to be taken for granted, and becomes once again a debated subject, the biblical view of Christian existence, according to which human beings are included in God’s activity, will also be able to make its presence felt once

again.<sup>146</sup> Considering oneself to be part of God's activity as well as an anticipating interpretation of it could be advanced as the historical and existential clue to Illich's personality, at least as far as his public life is concerned. After all, it would be the equivalent of what his own religious thought exalted as the primacy of liturgical *actio* (the commemoration of God's actions) over all other juridical and dogmatic frameworks.

In this perspective, the texts that have been examined so far should also be seen as linked to a specific context: since their author conceived them as such, they cannot be readily generalised, or even systematised, as comments passed after some length of time inevitably tend to do. More to the point, it will come as no surprise that the writings associated with the 1967 campaign, the first to be fully "exoteric", could be considered a false start of sorts. That would count as his third false start, after the batch of "pastoral" writings from 1955 and 1956, which were in any case published under a pseudonym, and after the missiological ones from the period between 1958 and 1964; the publication of this third group, which dealt with ecclesiological topics, was suddenly discontinued half-way through the year, and was never resumed even though it meant discarding a piece of work that had already been concluded.<sup>147</sup> The fact that an informal veto from the Pope was enough to put a stop to them<sup>148</sup> sufficiently proves that they were intrinsically conceived for a specific community at a well-defined moment in time: their surrounding context was clear-cut, and

146 See Guardini, Romano. (1997) *Glaubenserkenntnis. Versuche zur Unterscheidung und Vertiefung*. Mainz – Paderborn: Matthias-Gruenewald Verlag - Verlag Ferdinand Schoeningh, pp. 98-99. This text, which dates to 1944, was undoubtedly known to Illich as a young man. Cfr. Guardini, Romano. (1953) *The Faith and Modern Man*. New York: Pantheon Books, pp. 80-81.

147 Thus in *How Will We Pass on Christianity?*, op. cit.

148 As Illich clarified in a letter dated February 1974 which he sent to Franco Gualdrini, a former fellow student at *Collegio Capranica* who had by then become its rector.



once they were disjointed and removed from it they simply lost their *raison d'être*. It further shows that Illich did not see himself as the spokesman of internal “dissent” within the post-conciliar Church, even though many in Europe may have considered him to be as such; finally, it demonstrates that he had no wish to be an ‘author of books’, never mind a dissident one (it was never his intention to cause either scandal or controversy; indeed, the re-publication of those writings as part of *Celebration of Awareness* took place in a discreet, almost documentary fashion, if it is considered that in that volume they were accompanied, and in a way neutralised, by a number of texts of an altogether different nature and spirit). Of course, Illich’s attitude at the time was perhaps also determined by a measure of prudence, since 1967 was the year in which reactionary conservatives, in Mexico and elsewhere, in the clergy and in other ranks, began to display growing signs of impatience with him; what is more, the canonical investigations concerning him, which CELAM had not been able to prevent, were proceeding apace in the background with CAL’s full support.<sup>149</sup> Nonetheless and despite everything, the 1968 “trial” contributed, in fact, to shed further light on the defendant’s underlying attitude in both his actions and his writings. Indeed, he had already borne witness to what was at stake well before the proceedings against him were even initiated. If it is considered that at the time of his “prosecution” he had already spent twelve years living off his own work, in a secular legal framework, in a condition of extraterritoriality, and on the fringes of ecclesiastical control, it may become clear why he came to harbour hopes such as the ones he described in *The Vanishing Clergyman*: ‘May we pray for an increase of priests who choose “radical” secularization? For priests who leave the Church in order to pioneer the church of the future? For priests who, faithfully dedicated to and lov-

149 As Scatena thoroughly documented (see 2006: 270-322).

ing the Church, risk misunderstanding and suspension? For priests full of hope, capable of such actions without becoming hard and embittered? For extraordinary priests, willing to live today the ordinary life of tomorrow's priests?' This lived-through "prophetic" dimension, which was in agreement with the practice of the "celebration of change" outlined above, was what informed Illich's choices in the difficult circumstances at the end of the 1960s; there is therefore no point in counter-arguing that after fifty years his prophecy has apparently still remained unfulfilled – or perhaps it has merely not even started being fulfilled yet. Indeed, a more or less successful prediction does not amount to a real prophecy: what really constitutes one is the risk of taking decisions on history's stage, on behalf of God's actions, in the conflict of human will. In this specific instance, withdrawing from conflict was the only way to radicalise it, and by extension to clarify the positions involved in it. Since Illich did not want to 'stay in the structure in order to subvert it [but rather to] leave in order to *live* the model of the future',<sup>150</sup> he had no reason to disobey the Pope's desires, or to exacerbate a controversy which the Catholic Church appeared to have every intention of settling in court. Moreover, there was no point in stubbornly pursuing an abstract debate, now that its proponent was about to implement its thesis and its corollaries in his own life as a priest without clergy. If no lay people were going to be authorised to celebrate the sacred mysteries, then there would be at least one clergyman who would refuse to do it in their stead.

These considerations, which come rather easily to the comprehensive view afforded by hindsight, should however not lead one to believe that Illich's transition was either fast or painless, or even voluntarily guided by him. There are two kinds of factors that conclusively exclude this possibility. The first is the slow and painful succession of events that occupied

150 These excerpts were taken from *The Vanishing Clergyman* (Part I).

the whole of 1968, which began to gain momentum only at the beginning of 1969, and only after the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith instructed Papal nuncios to organise the “boycotting” of CIDOC’s courses. This “interdict”, which the press made public despite its lack of official motivation, forced Illich to react by defending the reputation of the centre and its collaborators. He was left with no alternative other than counterattacking by making public the proceedings’ documentation, thereby exposing just how arbitrary the Congregation was in the fulfilment of its functions; as everybody knows, the ensuing “scandal” spread throughout the Catholic world like wildfire and caused quite a sensation. In consequence of this, the Congregation was eventually forced to go back on its decisions; for his part, Illich had inevitably become, in the meantime, a universal symbol of controversy, and was forced to make permanent the suspension *a divinis* which he had freely imposed on himself a year before.<sup>151</sup> In fact, his progressive withdrawal from the public exercise of his priestly duties had already started in Puerto Rico, firmly convinced as he was that the performance of public tasks (such as his participation in governmental planning organisations), while perfectly legitimate for secular believers, could be dangerous for the Church if it involved a member of its hierarchy.<sup>152</sup> These forms of self-restraint became even more necessary after 1966 in order to protect CIDOC’s secular nature and independence, which as has been shown were that institute’s defining features. In 1970, well after the controversy examined above,

151 The relevant documentation may be found in Ocampo (1969); a summary of it has been included in a note attached to the letter addressed *To the Prefect of the Holy Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Franjo Šeper* (see Part VI).

152 See Cayley, 1992: 98-99. Seen in these terms, this approach was in perfect line with canonical norms; Illich, however, wanted to apply it not only to all public technical and administrative activities, but also to every kind of interference in a country’s political life on the Church’s part, unless it was explicitly aimed at denouncing patent injustices.

he still felt inclined to give a statement to *Der Spiegel* to the effect that 'his involvement in Latin America's problems' did not allow him 'to remain in the Church's service'.<sup>153</sup> It is almost odd to notice that while he did not attach any particular importance to *conflict* as a political thinker, he was conversely extremely self-conscious about it when it came to the opposite of politics: the Church as a mystery and a miracle of unity, the representatives of which had to refrain from taking part in intrinsically *dissociating* activities such as political engagement. Having said this, the point is that Illich had wanted to become a priest and remained one, that he had envisaged his abstention from the divine mysteries as limited in scope (the public domain) and duration,<sup>154</sup> and that when he finally had to accept it as definitive he must have looked upon it as a necessary, but extreme and painful step. His proposal to de-clericalize the Church had in his view only historical, juridical and (within these terms) ecclesiological relevance: it had no bearing whatsoever on the sacramental and spiritual side of the matter. One should therefore see his refusal to ask for a reduction to the lay state and his desire to continue to fulfil his obligations towards celibacy and the recitation of the breviary not only in an ecclesial light, as a challenge to the articulation in clergy and laity itself, but also in a spiritual and existential perspective, indeed, as a kind of daily, endless *memento mori*.

The material which he wrote in those months also reveals, upon examination, a tormented transition. The three texts that have survived from 1968 were affected by the veto issued after *The Vanishing Clergyman*, and were consequently his first to be of an exclusively secular character. They concentrated on fairly diverse topics, and mainly confined themselves to delving into, or expanding on, some of his speeches

153 See 'Can violence be Christian?' in the Appendix.

154 See the letter addressed *To don Sergio, Bishop of Cuernavaca* in Part VI.

and writings from 1967: a clear sign that in the troubled year of 1968 Illich had not managed to refocus his thinking on a new organic project yet, either because he did not have one, or else because the one he had was not a priority compared to safeguarding CIDOC's work and existence. Of those writings it was especially the first one, the article entitled *The Futility of Schooling*,<sup>155</sup> that marked a clean break with its most direct antecedent, the speech given by Illich in Puerto Rico on the need to reorganise the island's educational system.<sup>156</sup> It may be pointed out, however, that its original title specified in *Latin America*, thereby confining the disquieting diagnosis it contained to that fairly exotic place. Secondly, it should be clarified that although that text was well-researched and cleverly argued, there was nothing in it that could suggest at the time (April 1968) that the diagnosis would later be extended to the children of the *Saturday Review*'s readership to whom the text was originally addressed, or that shortly afterwards, between 1970 and 1972, the 'deschooling' project would become of the utmost importance for Illich. After all, *Violence: A Mirror for Americans* appeared on the *America* magazine only a week later,<sup>157</sup> and was soon compounded by the memorable *Yankee, Go Home* speech that Illich delivered to CIASP students:<sup>158</sup> they were far more critical of "US ideology" than the previous article, and actually openly accused it of being the real instigator behind "missionary" neo-colonialism just as *The Seamy Side of Charity* had done (only in much harsher tones). As for Illich's essay on birth control in Latin America, the 1967 palimpsest to which the author made reference possibly in an effort to allay all suspicions of any undue encroach-

155 See *The Futility of Schooling* in Part I.

156 See *The Redistribution of Educational Tasks Between Schools and Other Organs of Society* in Part VI.

157 See Part I.

158 See Part III.

ment by him on the Pope's magisterium (see *Humanae Vitae*, July 1968), has not survived;<sup>159</sup> what is certain is that that text introduced yet another scenario, in which Illich's concern for that continent's destiny and the nature of his humanistic approach took on positive overtones for the first time.

An underlying continuity between these works and the season that had just come to an end is moreover to be found, unsurprisingly, in Illich's conceptual framework: even without the factor represented by the Catholic Church, lingering central themes of interest to him were still the contact between cultures, contact-related changes, and the role which religion, understood as ideology and idolatry, played in the whole process. In the above-mentioned *Violence: A Mirror for Americans* Illich drew on Toynbee's model of 'war and class', and portrayed the convergence between the US's 'internal proletariat' (*i.e.* racial minorities) and the 'external' one (*i.e.* the large majority of the earth's inhabitants, who live outside the handful of developed countries) as a violent reaction to the 'challenge' posed by a 'universal State': a civilisation in its imperial phase, in fact, which according to Toynbee's own model should really have been in a condition of decadence. Illich did not specify which 'new religion' would eventually destroy that declining civilisation, but he did identify the "idol" to which it had calamitously entrusted itself in its ongoing phase of spiritual crystallisation, namely the demonic face of its own good intentions. The real problem was not so much the naïve subordination of that civilisation's 'do-gooderism' to arms and money, or the equally naïve promotion of its *way of life* as a universal standard of human dignity: it was in fact that said way of life was to be protected, rather than questioned in view of the abysmal inequality it occasioned, but it could not 'be protected without being expanded.' Behind and

159 See *Sexual Power and Political Potency* in Part I.

within that spectacular waste of human generosity skulked a systematic process of corruption of the human heart that coaxed it to cooperate to its own destruction, all in the interest of a minority that ‘[would] not tire until the superiority of their quasi-religious persuasion [was] accepted by the underdogs’; once this was achieved, the less-privileged would then become permanently and irrevocably nailed to the fate of their condition. It was just for that reason that the rejection of the idol, which was pushing its way – either stealthily or explosively – through slums, *favelas*, and the Asian jungle, confronted the dominant civilisation with a matter of life and death, and by extension of further violence. Was there any chance of overcoming it, possibly with a positive, creative solution? Illich, who disagreed with the “Zealots” in favour of armed struggle as much as he did with the “Herodians” within Latin America’s ruling class (these categories are also Toynbee’s),<sup>160</sup> believed that both parties to the conflict could in fact reach a higher degree of awareness, responsibility, and social creativity, and it was to that end that he (re-) envisaged CIDOC’s role: ‘A critical examination of the effect that intense social change has on the intimacy of the human heart in Latin America – he wrote – is a fruitful way to insight into the intimacy of the human heart in the United States.’<sup>161</sup>

A rather similar pattern informed Illich’s two other works from 1968. His denunciation of *schooling* as futile, which was not primarily addressed to a US readership, urged the most developed countries, including the dominant US, not to impose on everybody else a model of compulsory universal education: while it might have worked in their transition to industrialisation, it had no hope of doing so in those areas where the systemic “underdevelopment” that regularly

160 These may be found in Toynbee, 1943, Chapter 10.

161 These excerpts are from *Violence: A Mirror for Americans*, op. cit.

followed industrialisation had already set in. Exporting such a model not only entailed costs poor economies could hardly afford, but also led to an actual polarisation of the huge sums invested in favour of tiny minorities of already privileged people; in consequence of this, the majority became intoxicated with the poison of a frustration that had no possible redemption – except, of course, through violence, to which ‘the establishment of *any* religion [had] always led.’<sup>162</sup> It was therefore necessary to find *alternativas* to the present order, and that text was Illich’s first attempt to contribute new important ideas in this sense. In the same vein, Illich’s *Sexual Power and Political Potency* did not so much target the variously motivated, traditionalist views on birth control as a gauche attempt at “modernising” Latin America on the basis of values and attitudes that belonged to the international bourgeoisie, and which had no hope of being plausibly implemented in that continent. Regardless of what was at stake, be it the Catholic doctrine’s “human nature” or the liberal model’s greedy anthropology, Illich still believed that ‘the use of ideology to push or oppose family planning [was] always a call to idolatry and, therefore, anti-human.’ It was something, in other words, meant to either interrupt change, or to “normalise” it as expedient to immobility or repetition (for these are indeed the idol’s functions), with the resulting exhaustion of the creative energy that can only arise from the adult *awareness* of a given context, a given problem, and a horizon of potential freedom. The dilemma posed by Illich concerning ‘this child’ in today’s society was whether they would plan their families in the name of ‘fewer babies and more things’ or of ‘the joy of life’ once they grew up to become urbanised proletarian adults.<sup>163</sup> He proposed a massive campaign in accordance with the prin-

162 *The Futility of Schooling*, op. cit.

163 See *Sexual Power and Political Potency*, op. cit.



ciples of Freire's political pedagogy to educate adults on birth control, as a stepping stone to enable both individuals and communities to become more deeply aware of the potential at their disposal in determining every other contemporary social process; he believed this to be the only realistic solution, as well as the only truly revolutionary one. Although there is no real supporting evidence, it is something of this kind that is meant whenever Illich's "humanism" is mentioned: 'a revolution inside each person's head', as he explained himself, 'that can only be construed as a social process.'<sup>164</sup>

XII. It was only in the late spring of 1969, *after* he gave up his ministry for good, that his range of interests was gradually narrowed down to adopt a more clearly defined direction. Once the mediatic fuss raised by the "interdict" began to subside, it became evident that the educational issue had turned into a veritable campaign against schools, as first witnessed by the impassioned speech Illich delivered in June to the new graduates from Puerto Rico.<sup>165</sup> That address, together with the solemn one he delivered to Bolivian teachers six months later (*i.e.* in January 1970),<sup>166</sup> did not just make it patent that his deschooling plan now concerned Latin America and the poorest countries in general, but also that it had ceased to be a cheap diversion for New York intellectuals. He was now entrusting it directly and exclusively to (well-educated, it goes without saying) Latin American elites, so that they could embrace its heretical spirit, experiment with its practical suggestions, and develop new original solutions. Those speeches witnessed, in other words, the resumption of his active militancy two years

164 Thus in the exchange contained in the interview to *Der Spiegel* 'Can violence be Christian?', *op. cit.* (see the Appendix).

165 See 'School: the sacred cow', see Part I.

166 See *I maestri boliviani a capo della rivoluzione culturale in America Latina* in Part III.

after *The Vanishing Clergyman*: it was almost as if the energy expressed within the Church, which an unexpected obstacle had compressed, had found an outlet through which it could now burst free. Although the deschooling issue began to recur in his writings from the second half of 1969 onwards, Illich's militancy was not confined to it. Indeed, his criticism of the educational institution became part – albeit as a major, almost paradigmatic example – of a more comprehensive criticism of all the institutions within the world's "system" (based on the unavoidable joint occurrence of development and underdevelopment); those institutions existed in his eyes exclusively in order to uphold that very system (*i.e.* expand it). This new approach emerged clearly in *Planned Poverty*, a text which had to be mentioned early on in the present discussion, since its importance in Illich's work can hardly be underestimated:<sup>167</sup> suffice to say that he included it at the beginning of the Spanish language version of *Celebration of Awareness* for the Latin American market, and he later republished it in 1978 as part of *Toward a History of Needs*.<sup>168</sup> It summarised his experiences in the previous decade, and outlined his projects for the oncoming one: first of all, his call for a 'counter-research' on alternative solutions for Latin America's development (which was indeed to become CIDOC's new "trademark") and secondly, the parallel goal of 'revolutionising the institutions'. In agreement with Berger-Luckmann's sociology, he held that institutions were social and mental before they were political; on the other hand, in disagreement with Berger-Luckmann he was also convinced that their revolutionization should not be understood as the replacement of the old 'sacred canopy'

167 'Planned Poverty: The End Result of Technical Assistance' (see note 31 above, and Part I). The text was also included in *Bolivia y la revolución cultural*, published in February 1970, with the title 'Alternativas a la escuela' (see Part II). On its long editorial history, which continues into the 21st century, see the *References*.

168 *Toward a History of Needs*.

with a new one, but rather as the definitive relegation of that kind of function to a past historical stage in human history.

The ‘cultural revolution’ which was proclaimed both in *Planned Poverty* and in the related *A Constitution for a Cultural Revolution*,<sup>169</sup> —the “manifesto” dating to 1969 that concluded *Celebration of Awareness* — was inspired by a kind of visionary disenchantment, as it were: the notion that mankind could indeed be delivered from its myths.<sup>170</sup> A clear indication in this sense was his ostentatiously realistic approach: it seemed as if he intended to counter the trafficking of illusions with the coarseness of a given area’s socio-economic conditions, as well as with the interests of a large majority of its relevant population that were seemingly the only factor capable of making a real difference in that area’s transformation. A further indication was provided by his call to let the social imagination run free: it was an essential step in his ‘counterfoil research’ on institutions such as the school system, the national health service, and the transport network, the future agenda of which was already outlined in the text in question. Indeed, he believed that also those institutions ‘[could not] be protected without being expanded’, and that they could in turn do so only by strengthening the monopoly they already had on the planning, packaging, and distribution of the products that reify human needs, in which process the latter were reduced to mere subordinate variables of those same products, and mankind’s very ability to conceive different possibilities was annihilated. The much-needed fresh start consequently lay in the secession, self-emanicipation, and creative mobilisation of new intellectuals and social actors, who might be ready to launch on an adventure

169 See Part I.

170 An ‘ongoing cultural revolution’, which ‘was bound to be betrayed by both Roosevelt’s and Lenin’s followers’, was mentioned by Illich in the interview he gave to *Der Spiegel* (see the Appendix).

without precedents (with the sole partial exception, perhaps, of Gandhi's enterprise). Potential participants were expected to be allured by the prospect, which Illich soberly evoked at the end of his text, of 'outwitting the "developed" countries', thereby becoming the unexpected leaders of human development; the solutions adopted in the process would be 'poor', but would nonetheless arouse the 'envy' of technologically advanced societies, and would eventually also end up acting as a model for them. Although the 'cultural revolution' could only really begin where underdevelopment had not got a hold of people's minds and hearts yet, it also had to be pursued in those very areas where underdevelopment had originated, and the challenge mounted by the most impoverished regions had to become generalised as a global alternative. Proof of the correctness of this interpretation is supplied by the three *Beecher Lectures* in Yale dating to February 1970, which first introduced the goal of also deschooling the First World as his own priority. In sum, Illich also underwent a verifiable evolutionary line in the educational domain: from an initial, mainly ecclesiastical environment (on which his earliest writings concentrated, as demonstrated by the present collection) his interest shifted to a strictly Latin American agenda, and later developed into a more generalised approach. In this process, he first questioned the universality and universalism of Western values and then proceeded to place their very origin and motivation on trial.

XIII. The year 1970 witnessed the full development of the intellectual workshop that would originate *Deschooling Society*, on which there is little need to linger (also in consideration of the fact that the texts which would eventually become part of that book in more or less unaltered form have not been included here). When *Celebration of Awareness* first became available for sale in September 1970, *Deschooling Society* was

essentially ready, and it was only due to a shrewd editorial strategy that its publication was delayed until the late spring of 1971.<sup>171</sup> Compared to that book, the publication of *Celebration of Awareness* was almost a necessary act: it constituted the unavoidable presentation of an “author of books” at the inception of his career, it summarised his past, especially its most recent part, and provided the most appropriate transition to what was seemingly becoming Illich’s real goal, namely the de-schooling campaign that acted as the active paradigm of the ‘cultural revolution’ he had invoked. In this sense that book marked a threshold between an end and a beginning, even though one may perhaps speak of a new beginning only inasmuch as it brought to a conclusion a course that had already turned to new horizons. There are in fact some clues that justify this interpretation. As early as 1969, Illich authorised the preparation and publication of a very detailed file on the Vatican’s “interdict”, which contained extensive documentation on the whole crisis with the Holy See starting from 1966.<sup>172</sup> Between November 1969 and July 1970 he re-edited six of the yearly *CIF Reports* from the 1962-1967 period as six *CIDOC Cuadernos*,<sup>173</sup> and proceeded to salvage his missiological writings by packing them in a short book (*The Church, Change and Development*, published in June 1970);<sup>174</sup> this was entrusted to Jim Morton, a friend and an extraordinary interlocutor of his, in the same spirit in which Illich had handed him his own chalice when he renounced the exercise of priesthood. The *Presentación* of the *Ensayos*

171 Indeed, ‘The Dawn of Epimethean Man and Other Essays’, *CIDOC Cuaderno* 54, began to circulate in the autumn of 1970; it contained all the essays which would later be included in *Deschooling Society* (see Cayley, 1992: 73).

172 See Ocampo 1969.

173 *CIDOC Cuaderno* 36-41.

174 See Part III.

*sobre la transcendencia*,<sup>175</sup> another collection of Illich's writings that CIDOC would include a year later in its *Sondeos* series, also took place in September 1970, the same month in which *Celebration of Awareness* was published; a month later even the dated *Report on The Spiritual Care of Puerto Rican Migrants*, which had emerged from the 1955 conference and which Illich had edited together with Father Fitzpatrick and Father William Ferree, was reprinted as part of the same *Sondeos* series.<sup>176</sup> Within a few months, say, between June and October 1970, a comparatively exhaustive documentation on Illich's last fifteen years was assembled: this should of course be seen as Illich's way of 'gently but firmly' reclaiming a whole *curriculum vitae* for himself, but also as the sign of his inner inclination to let 'bygones be bygones' and move on. It is probably in this light that his first book should be seen, and its preparation, which dated to the end of 1969, may possibly be interpreted as signalling the beginning of the previous season's end. Furthermore, the open letter which Illich sent to Pope Paul VI to harshly condemn the Church's silence on the systematic use of torture made by Brazil's military dictatorship was published in *Commonweal* on 4th September 1970, the day of his 44th birthday, and marked yet another turning point:<sup>177</sup> the establishment of a new, free and painful relationship with the Catholic Church.

If Illich's evolution outlined above has been reported correctly, it would seem appropriate to also include a careful examination of the Americas' specific historical context and their cultural and political debates in the reconstruction of his "militant" engagement's motivation and configuration. However, such an effort would, first of all, require detailed knowl-

175 See Part IV.

176 In volume 77 and 70 respectively.

177 See Part V.

edge of CIDOC's activity between 1968 and 1970, namely its scientific activities and their main participants, the courses it offered and the kind of students who usually attended them, the alliances it had across the two hemispheres and the surviving links, if any, to the Catholic Church. The answers to these points will unfortunately have to await better times. In the meantime, one may perhaps ask a few more questions: one could for instance wonder if all of Illich's writings should not (also) be seen as a critical contribution to the theology of liberation, which was already at an advanced stage of development after the Medellín conference held in August and September 1968. Illich agreed with many of the premises of the "liberationist" approach, but in all likelihood did not believe that the latter's developments were sufficiently radical; he most certainly did not appreciate the emphasis it placed on the Church's role, however modified, and he probably was not too fond of its theologising either, especially when it concerned issues that had already become eminently secular, and which now needed to be urgently tackled in a purely practical fashion. He was in favour of 'radical socialism', as he once told *Der Spiegel*, and he looked equally favourably upon the 'attempts to create a humanist front uniting Latin America's Christians and Marxists';<sup>178</sup> indeed, it is quite possible that the theologoumenon 'A Powerless Church' was formulated to support the development of just such attempts. On the other hand, his approach to that potential dialogue was rather more competitive than mimetic, as he would demonstrate during *Unidad Popular's* experiment in Chile between 1970 and 1973. On an altogether different front, his Yale lectures, which initiated agitations to deschool the US, were, in all likelihood, intended for a young audience that had received their baptism by fire at the hands of the student movement of the early 1960s, had become radicalised thanks to anti-war protest, and had

178 'Can violence be Christian?', op. cit. (in the Appendix).

been instructed on anti-system positions by the apostles of “counterculture”. Were there any real interlocutors for Illich in a movement that involved so many different generations, and which was not yet looking up to him as a guiding teacher, as it was to do only a few years later? Among the possible candidates it is hard to overlook the readership, not to mention the collaborators, of California’s *Whole Earth Catalog* magazine, issued between 1968 and 1972.<sup>179</sup> In a more marginal position one could perhaps also include Europe’s magazines (such as *Hochland*, *Temps modernes*, *Esprit* and *Testimonianze*) and research centres: the fact that at the beginning of 1970 Illich advocated (even though it would probably be more correct to say that he bemoaned the missed opportunity of) the wholesale transfer of Bologna’s Centre of Documentation to ‘*alguna ciudad de América Latina*’, which would have allowed that continent to have at last its own institute of general ecclesiastical and religious history as an indispensable precondition to develop a truly local theology, demonstrates that at the time he was still ready to encompass an extremely wide spectrum of interests within the scope of his ‘counterfoil research.’<sup>180</sup>

XIV. There is at least one text that stands out, also from a theological point of view, as anomalous in what appears to be Illich’s evolution towards a “consistent secularisation”. It is a speech he gave in Lima in 1971 to an international Christian audience (there were however no Catholics, or at any rate they were not in the majority) that was engaged in Latin America’s

179 Joe Shea’s account of the trip he took to Cuernavaca in his quest for Ivan Illich, published by *The Village Voice* in August 1970, actually appears to prove that the New York circles’ perception of Illich as ‘a genuine scholar, mystic and revolutionary’ was at the time still deeply influenced by the portrait of him which Francine du Plessix Gray had supplied in her work (see above; see also Joe Shea, (1970), ‘In Quest of the Keys. The Life of Ivan Illich’ *The Village Voice*, August 13, pp. 14, 56, 58).

180 See the correspondence published as an Annex in Prodi (2016: 251-273), including the proposal Illich made to his correspondents in Bologna ‘para un acto radicalmente significativo’ (see p. 266).



educational field.<sup>181</sup> Its intended recipients and its religious slant should not come as a surprise, since that “pedal point”, as it were, was somehow always present in Illich’s thought on educational matters. What prompted his considerations on them (though perhaps not according to a strictly chronological order) was arguably his questioning of the link between knowledge and salvation as embedded in the catechisms at the time of the “confessionalisation” process and of the faith’s missionary exportation. That original kernel of necessary truths, separate from experience and locked up in exemplary formulations, had arguably given rise, at a later stage, to the core of what is now known as a school curriculum: a repertory of intelligible, yet unimplemented essences, which were perhaps useful in the later stages of a mundane kind of life but which, for the time being, were merely functional to an unchangeable state of things. ‘Deschooling the Church’, as the Spanish translation of *The Lima Speech* read,<sup>182</sup> did not simply entail relieving that institution from the colonial burden of its educational system, nor did it strive to accelerate the demise of Christendom in Latin America through that process. It actually meant encouraging the Church to relinquish its doctrinaire transmission of the faith, rather than its doctrine, and especially to modify its understanding of faith (and salvation) as acquiescence to the catalogue of approved truths that were certified as such by the institution itself. Illich’s immediate consonance with Freire’s literacy method, which was based on community experience and aimed at the attainment of self-awareness and the necessary revolutionary change, may be better understood in this perspective. That method ultimately represented only a fragment of the overall

181 See Part V.

182 *La desescolarización de la Iglesia*, now also in Ivan Illich, (2006). *Obras reunidas*. Edited by Valentina Borremans and Javier Sicilia. Mexico: Fondo de cultura económica, pp. 116-124.

process which, by disestablishing Catholic schools, was expected to eventually eliminate the identification of formal education with secular salvation (*i.e.* social privilege) which the Church's monopoly on education had forged. Once education was liberalised, it would open up plenty of opportunities for meaningful experiences of 'celebration' and 'humanisation' which would neither be separated from "the world of life" nor be condemned to replicate its given order.<sup>183</sup>

As early as the speech given in Puerto Rico in June 1969, nonetheless, Illich demonstrably believed that 'the school [had] become the established church of secular times',<sup>184</sup> which merely preserved and replicated, under the veneer of technical rationality, a legacy of functions and characteristics that belonged in fact to the past. The new religion it instilled (based on obedient consumerism and the sin of underconsumption) consequently had to undergo a process of demythification similar to the one experienced by Christianity in the "secular era"; as for the schools themselves, the new institution in charge of saving individuals (even though it was in fact leading them to greater alienation), had also to be 'disestablished' through an analogous process. Illich's regular employment in this context of the technical term designating the separation between Church and State was meant to signal that the institution of compulsory education had to be abolished, and that the schools' functions had to be redistributed among a variety of bodies, spaces, and educational practices within society, while preserving at the same time the individual's freedom to gain access to them at will. Thus, the end of the Age of Schooling had its *exemplum* in the end of Christendom,<sup>185</sup> as it were; this historical analogy between the

183 On this and other aspects of Illich's thought, see the *Introduzione* by Angelo Gaudio (Gaudio, Angelo, (2012). *Illich. Un profeta postmoderno*, Brescia: La Scuola, pp. 5-22).

184 'School: the sacred cow' (in Part I).

185 See the first of the *Beecher Lectures*.

Church and state schools as established institutions, however, was further compounded by a structural one. In the speech he gave at Yale university, Illich refined his analysis, and instead of concentrating on what schools manifestly did he chose to focus on what they actually were, or what they had at any rate become, in the hidden depths of common sense-perception in which they stealthily and undisturbedly sowed their (de-humanising) dogmas: that was exactly the same 'religious' function which the most recent theories on the sociology 'of knowledge' have ascribed to 'primary institutions'. In September 1970, while speaking to an audience of experts in that discipline in Salzburg, Illich claimed that 'bad religion' (*böse Religion*) could be successfully fought off and weeded out: all it took was the involvement of an inherently "non-religious" factor that was, by its very nature, not amenable to that system. He identified that factor as the anti-idolatrous inspiration stemming from the Bible and the Gospel, which was already present in the Church in the shape of the Holy Spirit's activity that constantly regenerated it; which could also nonetheless be found outside the Church, in the creative disenchantment of a mankind which had now become adult enough to relentlessly get rid of its myths.<sup>186</sup>

The most important element in Illich's speech in Lima, however, was the fact that he seemed to have already moved a step beyond his own *Deschooling Society*, which had just been published. He dropped the distinction between education and schooling, together with all related hypotheses of a 'redistribution'; instead, he proceeded to put on trial the concept of education as a whole, the imposed "need" for it, and the relevant postulate – on the verge of being enshrined as

186 See *Die Schule als neue Weltreligion. Zum Phänomen der mythogenetischen Ritualstruktur in der sogenannten säkularisierten Gesellschaft*. In: Schatz, Oskar (ed.), (1971). *Hat die Religion Zukunft?*. Graz – Wien – Köln: Styria, pp. 206-216. See Part VI below.

indisputable – which dictated that every human being had to be “educated” in order to be able to live, and even before they began to do so. Illich chose a Christian audience to denounce not so much an institution or a number of them, as that new creed which was far more pervasive and dangerous than the one officiated within school precincts: indeed, he believed it to be part of a larger plan to make the World and Mankind all over again from scratch, and to establish ‘*el Reino del Consumo universal*’ on earth as a kind of parallel, paranoid reality made up of perfectly engineered goods, services, subjects and relationships. It was for this reason that he begged the Churches ‘in the name of God [to] denounce the idolatry of Progress,’ and to ‘remind men that God [had] created a good world, and [had] given us the power to know and cherish it without the need of an intermediary’; he also asked them to ‘refuse to cooperate in any attempt to create a manmade environment in which the life of all persons would depend on their having been clients of a service organization.’ The alarm he raised no longer concerned (only) a change of religion, but rather a possible “anthropological mutation”: an evolution of thought which, in an Italian context, was closely mirrored by the transition within a few years from Father Milani’s criticism of compulsory education to Pier Paolo Pasolini’s proposal to abolish it altogether (indeed, Italy could well offer a privileged vantage point as far as the analysis of this specific aspect is concerned). ‘*Ha llegado la hora de hacer saber el mensaje que nos ha sido revelado*,’<sup>187</sup> Illich announced in apocalyptic terms, almost as if the point of no return had already been reached. It was once again to Christians and the world’s poor, to those who voluntary chose to lead a life of sacrifice and marginalisation, and who ‘worship[ped] their nameless and living God in the desert,’ that Illich attributed, with unprecedented-

187 “It is time to make known the message that has been revealed to us.” *La desescolarización de la Iglesia*, op cit., p. 123.

ed words, ‘a crucial responsibility [...] in the liberation of the world from idols of progress, development, efficiency, Gross National Product.’<sup>188</sup> What was being questioned, perhaps for the first time, was modernity *per se*: an unusual, uncommonly critical outcome for any theology of secularisation.

XV. Illich’s short writings from the end of 1971, which already foreshadowed the developments of subsequent years, displayed a clearly identifiable new determination at work, set on delving deeper into his ‘counter-research’. Rather than concentrating on these still unripe developments, it is perhaps best to linger a while longer on yet another speech he gave in that period. He delivered it to an audience of believers, this time Catholic, in a temporary (and, as far as is known, long isolated) breach of his self-imposed silence *in ecclesia*, the reasons of which he explained then for the first time.<sup>189</sup> Illich’s words summarised twenty years’ worth of collective, religious and cultural history, rather than his own intellectual or spiritual biography. The change he had foreseen, prepared, and “celebrated” had actually taken place, and had done so in a rapid and disruptive fashion; the forty-five-year-old Illich let his eyes gaze both on the present and the past, aware of the rift that had occurred between them, and of the contemporary difficulties involved in ‘pass[ing] on Christianity’ to the younger generations. That text was in fact pervaded by a concern, indeed almost a feeling of *pietas*, for tradition which had not been as explicitly present in his writings from the decade spent in Cuernavaca, at least insofar as it is possible to judge from the little that is known about that experience; that too was perhaps a symptom of the “crisis” mentioned above. In-

188 Unless otherwise specified, the excerpts quoted in this paragraph were taken from *Lima discourse* as edited by Borremans & Samuel (2018), pp. 146-156; see Part V below.

189 *How Will We Pass on Christianity?*, op. cit. (ibid.).

deed, no real “change” was possible if there was no experience of the transition, namely, a memory of the past, full awareness of the options available, and the ability to take a decision about them. Neither could the present have any meaning and dignity if it was only a function of a planned future, to which one entrusted the task of preserving a faith that could in fact only be transmitted in the present, ‘at the edge of time’; indeed, it was only if believers became aware of living ‘at the end moment of time’, that the future could still be a surprise and a gift. It was necessary to redress a vital balance, which modernity had upset and made meaningless, between events and institutions, permanence and innovation, potential and implementation; a possible model in this sense could be offered by the experience of the liturgy, which now had to be reinvented, or possibly even by a universal prayer map that still had to be devised.

It was in the context of his reconsideration of both meanings of the word tradition that Illich interrogated himself on how it was possible to give a testimony of faith in the modern age, ‘at the end moment of time’. Rather surprisingly, Illich proceeded to denounce the ‘apparent divorce between social criticism and the Christian message’ that had taken place: a dual, mutual jeopardy that in his view compromised the faith’s visibility on the one hand, thereby preventing all communication, and limited the impact of all social intervention on the other, thus defusing or even redirecting the charge of its criticism. *The Powerless Church* had, in a way, expressed the hope that such a “divorce” would actually take place; *A Call for Celebration* mended the rift by transferring it to an altogether different domain, *in actu exercito*, as it were, with no further need for explanations. It may nonetheless be pointed out that *A Call for Celebration* had actually been preceded by a wide-reaching debate on universal basic income, whereas the political climate at the end of 1971 was the one that occa-

sioned the *Meadows Report on Limits to Growth*; moreover, that “manifesto” was developed in the context of the theology of secularisation, whereas in 1971 Illich was seemingly inclined to a theology of ‘liberation of the world from its idols of progress’. In the murkiness of that scenario Illich was still able to predict unprecedented convergences, for instance between the “time of the end” typical of Christian worship and the ‘the mood of the end of time’ which was now rampant throughout contemporary society: a convergence for which only the Church possessed the necessary tools to evangelise (in the sense of ‘disclosing its meaning’, as explained above). As for the two parties involved in the divorce which he had denounced, Illich proposed to *radicalise* both of them: that solution would eventually drive them to a mutual encroachment on their spheres of influence, which would be largely determined by their respective degree of *intensity*. As far as the Christian message was concerned, all it had to do was to go back to its authentic core, the Sermon on the Mount; social criticism, for its part, was to do nothing short of reaching a consensus on the upper limit, both qualitative and quantitative, of technological development and goods consumption.<sup>190</sup> All of the trajectories involved in his solution were independent of one another, and in a way even oriented in opposite directions (towards the future on the one hand, and towards the point of origin on the other, *via* rational calculation and prophetic paradoxes); once they had reached the farthest end of their respective domains, nonetheless, they also had the potential, *per connaturalitatem quandam*, to interact in order to achieve the biggest surprise of all: ‘Because for the first time in history, [...] one will be able to give scientific proof that “blessed are the poor” who voluntary set community limits

190 The first extensive formulation of this principle was in *La necessità di un limite massimo condiviso*; see Part VI.

to what shall be enough, and therefore good enough for our society.' 'Blessed are the poor, because theirs is the earth,'<sup>191</sup> as Illich concluded.

Regardless of whether this project managed to gain 'scientific proof' or not, that was Illich's Gospel. While spiritual poverty was the prerequisite and the essence of missionary exile, and existential poverty was the necessary precondition for both change and its celebration, the "political" poverty derived from self-imposed restraints was the starting point of an unprecedented journey: the one leading to the unwritten future of a liberated mankind.

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191 These excerpts are from *How Will We Pass on Christianity?*, op. cit.



I dedicate this effort of mine to the dear memory of my friends Michele Ranchetti and Paolo Prodi, who first introduced me to Ivan Illich, and who supported my research on his life and work.