

# The Prophetic Genius of Ivan Illich

How did the non-conformists and radicals of the 1960s and 1970s, who were also heavily skeptical of the medical-industrial complex and who helped turn alternative medicine into a billion dollar industry, become some of the most rabid supporters of lockdowns and COVID vaccine mandates?

My mother, a woman who has spat in the face of conformity for 78 years, is a prime example of this unsettling phenomenon. God bless her, she was, and still is, an iconoclastic thinker on many issues, and at one time had a copy of the Christian-libertarian Ivan Illich's [\*Medical Nemesis\*](#) alongside his [\*Deschooling Society\*](#) on her bookshelf. Her influence on my intellectual journey and life is still profound. Yet, fear of death is extreme for her generation, it seems. Incredibly, she is now a vaccine evangelist and possibly a Zero-COVID fanatic (trust me, I don't ask anymore).

In my college years, I glanced at *Medical Nemesis* in passing and wasn't particularly drawn in. For one, it is a somewhat dry academic treatise. On another hand, it contains footnotes that would be the envy of David Foster Wallace. By no means is the book easy going and I did not return to it until 2021, while society was still in the throes of COVID mania. I immediately realized its stark prophecy. Hiding among the footnotes (Illich's research is impeccable) is a guide to our current predicament, written many decades ago in an age that in retrospect feels like a public health free-for-all. Ashtrays in the vegetable aisle of my local grocery store are a common memory from my childhood in the 1970s. Seat belts anyone?

*Medical Nemesis* so well predicted where the medical profession and public health was headed that it is now worthy of a close

reading for anyone who is skeptical of the hysterical global response to COVID. If Illich were alive today he would simply say, with his trademark grin: "I told you so."

We are all "sick." We exist in a Looking Glass, iatrogenic diseased wasteland where children are subjected to endocrine system-destroying hormones at young ages by misguided and corrupt pediatricians, COVID boosters are mandated on top of viral loads from natural immunity, boosters which alone cause unimaginably horrible side effects, and our society blandly accepts neck and back surgeries that invariably make many conditions worse.

Teens are jacked up on loads of pharmaceuticals to treat everything from ADHD (which Illich would probably say was just a sensible reaction to the travails of public schooling) to mild anxiety. The National Geographic Channel and other cable channels may as well be called Big Pharma TV. The listing of side effects alone should make everyone smash their televisions.

These are just a few of some of the more egregious and head-spinning examples of a dystopian, medicalized age gone mad with greed and criminal disregard for holistic well-being.

Iatrogenesis is Illich's focus in *Nemesis*. Iatrogenesis, to put it in layman's terms, is not simply an isolated example of medical malpractice. It, by definition, is the systematic *causing* of medical conditions and population-wide sickness and disease through widespread and unnecessary medical interventions, which Illich calls "social iatrogenesis." Case study #1 from our current age; mild to severe myocarditis from an often **forced and mandated** mRNA vaccine presented in healthy young people who would have little more than a bad cold with COVID.

To make matters even worse, there now seems to be a faction of those in the public health profession who have coupled

seemingly intentional iatrogenic disease with a heady blend of 18th-century superstition and endorsement of pure untruths, in eerie parallels to Maoist China. These days, talismans like cloth masks are claimed to still reduce spread of a respiratory disease and the COVID vaccine continues to be touted as a vaccine that can “reduce transmission” by the CDC.

Anthony Fauci believes we didn’t do lockdowns hard enough to reduce spread. All are bald-faced lies and trickery, the likes of bloodletting and leeches. Every day we are buffeted by unscientific propaganda coupled with radical leftist ideology that helps fuel a medical-industrial complex that had already buried itself in pharmacological corruption, which in turn makes a panicked and safetyist public even more willing to cash in.

Illich’s perhaps most cogent argument is that vaccines and constant medical interventions almost always have a limited shelf life as it is. What matters *most* for public health is combating malnutrition and unsanitary conditions that still fester in a large part of the globe, and doing this by “incorporation of these procedures and devices into the layman’s culture.”

This was true in the 1970s and is true today—the vast majority of diseases are eradicated through good sanitary infrastructure, access to contraception and economic development. This is one of the reasons Illich devoted the majority of his life to helping the poorest of the poor in New York City and the Morelos region of Mexico.

Likewise, Illich was a fierce critic of what he saw as a form of cultural imperialism among global organizations, an imperialism we see at play on a grand scale in the 21st century. As is the case in much of the Third World, improvement of material conditions and eliminating poverty isn’t really the goal of entities like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; treatment and eradicating disease is the

goal. Yet, if the current surge of malaria is any indication, this is essentially a Sisyphean task without an improvement of material conditions.

Round and round we go and the WHO slush funds from philanthropic NGOs find themselves easily replenished. As it was in the 1970s, so it is today. From p. 56: "90 percent of all funds earmarked for health in developing countries is spent not for sanitation but for treatment of the sick. From 70 percent to 80 percent of the entire public health budget goes to the cure and care of individuals as opposed to public health services."

Is Illich's clarion call now a classic example of too little, too late? This may be. With the advent of a security state in the early 2000s, which is heavily dependent on broad measures that restrict civil liberties and privacy, iatrogenic medicine coupled with a rise of authoritarianism created the possibility for a nanny state that does not have citizens' best health interests at heart. Add to this a willingness of Western societies to take nearly all their leads from a vicious, genocidal regime in the early response to COVID, namely Xi Jinping's CCP, and the die was cast.

Illich's book was a radical screaming into the wilderness at the time, much like *Deschooling Society*. But by the 1980s and 1990s the medical profession and public health had very openly been corrupted by ideology, greed and fealty to the corporate state. Ritalin was a de rigueur therapy for young boys and girls who just wanted to play outside but were forced to sit in sterile classrooms for 8 hours a day.

Vaccines for relatively benign childhood diseases like chickenpox started to emerge. The overprescribing of antibiotics became a scourge as well as elective surgeries that made orthopedic conditions far worse and caused a lifetime of crippling pain, pain for which then Oxycontin was prescribed, causing spiraling addiction.

It was all out in the open for everyone to see, but COVID made iatrogenesis a headline story every single day for those of us who were paying attention. In 2022 many have realized that actively working against the society-destroying effects of iatrogenesis is perhaps the most important fight of our times. Illich writes:

*Medical nemesis is resistant to medical remedies. It can be reversed only through a recovery of the will to self-care among the laity, and through the legal, political, and institutional recognition of the right to care, which imposes limits upon the professional monopoly of physicians.*

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