Paul Kennedy
Good evening, and welcome to *Ideas*. I'm Paul Kennedy.

If history were to be conceived as a competition between the senses, then the eyes would certainly have it. More and more of what contemporary people know and more and more of what they do involves seeing. Radio programs that were once made by cutting magnetic tape with a razor blade now are produced by manipulating wave forms on a screen. Numerous other occupations have been restructured in the same way. The television, the Internet, the video game, the myriad of scanners and simulators all give precedence to the eyes and turn the screen into our primary access to the world.

How this happened is our theme tonight on *Ideas*, as Ivan Illich presents a brief history of seeing. The program is Part 3 of David Cayley's series on “The Corruption of Christianity.” In previous programs, Illich has argued that our contemporary world can be understood only as a distortion of Christianity. In this episode, he examines the way in which the sense of sight has changed under the influence of the Christian claim that Jesus was the image of God. “The Corruption of Christianity,” Part 3, by David Cayley...

David Cayley
During much of the last twenty years, Ivan Illich has been preoccupied with what he calls "body history,” a history, not of what people did or thought or said, but of what they physically experienced. The body appears, at first glance, as a natural fact, something on the side of nature rather than history, its experiences relatively unchanging over time. But, during the last generation, Illich and many other historians have shown that this is not true. The body exists in context, and each historical epoch embodies its experiences differently. Television, jet travel, organ transplants, and the mapping of the genome, these contemporary experiences are not just things that happen to an unchanging body; they shape our deepest imaginings of what we are. People in the past undoubtedly had noses, skin and eyes, but what they smelled and touched and saw was very different from what we smell and touch and see today.

In this program, Ivan Illich considers the history of one bodily sense, seeing, in relation to his theme in this series, the modern as a distortion of Christian faith. Our world, he believes, is now so captivated by created appearances–the apparitions that beckon from movies and magazines, billboards and video screens–that the represented threatens to eclipse the real. But before this triumph of the image could occur, he says, an old hesitancy and caution in front of images had to be overcome. And what made this overcoming possible, in his view, was the validation of the image within Christianity. We discussed what he calls “the history of the gaze” while I was his guest in the village on the outskirts of the Mexican city of Cuernavaca where he lives during part of each year. He'll come in a moment to what Christianity has to do with the history of the senses, but he began by telling me how he took up the subject.

Ian Illich
During four years, the first four years of the nineties, I focussed my teaching and my reading on a history of the senses. By doing so, I took advantage of the fool’s freedom which my renunciation to any formal teaching position gives me. When I’m invited as a guest professor I can really choose to teach what I want to teach, and don’t have to accept a subject or a field or a discipline or a method which is imposed on me by my hosts. How did I get to this? Why did I want to understand hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, walking, feeling by looking at them from the past? That is, trying somehow to become capable of understanding what a personally formerly meant when he said “I heard.” I wanted to do this because I somehow had to explain how the senses can be satisfied in subsistence cultures with practically no money circulation, very few marketed objects appearing in their

lives. I then realized that in order to understand the past in its reality I had to get into body history and, in order to zero in on something, on a bodily, a physical, a sensual feature of everyday life which today is not only understood but felt differently from the past. I focussed on the history of the gaze. And, since I wanted to understand more clearly what body is, it so happened that by focussing on the history of the gaze, which is, or at least was, a bodily act of intercourse with the object of my gaze, of union — not of fusion, but of union — remaining the two of us, or a rose and I, distinct, I found a particularly propitious way of reflecting on the disembodiment that is characteristic, in my opinion, for more modern times.

David Cayley
This disembodiment is the sad climax of Illich's tale and we will return to it at the end of the hour, but first, it's necessary to understand how Illich connects the history of the gaze to our present theme, the corruption of Christianity. The key, he says, lies in the gospel of John where it is said, “The Word became flesh and lived among us and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as his only son.”

Ivan Illich
The heart of the New Testament message is that the infinite, the good, wise, powerful — all these words do not reach Him — that he whose name the Jews wouldn’t pronounce, that Allah, now let me say God, that God not only became Word, as in the prophets, but flesh in the womb of a little girl. That, therefore, the flesh which John the Evangelist, obviously with tears in his eyes remembers that he touched, that he lay his cheek on the shoulder of Jesus as he presided at the Last Supper is the flesh of God. Now, it’s the flesh of the God/man. That, therefore a new respect for the human flesh, not as social entities, but as uniquely and enfleshed persons, was indicated by the Gospel. I know further that basing themselves on New Testamentary statements, Christians always believed that the church itself is a body which comes into existence by Christian feeding on the sacrament, which was what *sacramentum* meant — that, and baptism. By baptism they were immersed in this new body as into water and, in the liturgy of mass, they shared in it by eating. And, capacitated through confirmation of their faith, they shared its spirit in that mouth-to mouth kiss of which we spoke, conspiration. That what comes about there is a body, not in the abstract sense, but a body of true flesh and blood.

David Cayley
Through their belief in Christ's resurrection from the dead, Illich says, Christians asserted that daily, embodied existence had been touched and transfigured by the eternal life of God, that "the ruins of time," as the English poet William Blake said, "build mansions in eternity." The Christian encounters God in the body.

Ivan Illich
The object which my eyes seek, which I’m invited to seek in the face of everybody whom I encounter is the face of the incarnate God. Therefore, the object of my bodily reaching out or communing has something to do with the resurrection of the body, the belief that even though you and I will be ashes pretty soon, our encounter, our bodily encounter is outside of this world in which I am now, that the bodiliness of I, of me and of you and of us is a metaphysical quality, not an accident of the moment. My goodness. How can I speak about this mysterious new glory, thickness, phenomenalogical density of the body under the influence of Christianity, under the influence of the Gospel and the influence of the belief that he who knocks at the door asking for hospitality will be treated by me *as* Christ, not *as if* he were, but *as* Christ?

David Cayley
To the Christian, the stranger *is* Christ, Illich says, because the resurrection adds a new dimension to all bodies, not just the body of the risen Lord. But, to understand how this Christian belief would eventually influence the

experience of seeing, we need first to understand how the act of seeing was understood in the ancient world. This understanding was in many ways the opposite of our own. In the modern view, sights come into our eyes, conveyed there by rays of light. The ancients conceived vision as operating from the inside out, as out-reaching by the projection of a visual ray out of the eye.

Ivan Illich
In classical antiquity, the gaze was an activity by which my flesh got married with the flesh, or more precisely the colours, of the objects on which it grazed. The gaze was clearly described as a psychic *proboscis* or hand. It was called a *psycho-podium*. *Ta podie* are the hands and feet. One reached out when one opened one's eyes, when one placed one's gaze upon somebody, when one sought the reflection of Ivan in David Cayley's *pupilla*–*pupilla* means exactly the little image of me which I find there. Seeing was an erection out of the *pupilla* as loving as other erections are. That therefore, when I look at you, I caress you with my eyes.

David Cayley
This understanding of looking as an active, outgoing movement, rather than a passive reception, made seeing a moral subject. It's something I do, and can therefore do in a good or bad way. Classical optics, or *opsis*, as Illich says using the Greek word, was not just about how vision occurs, but also about the proper use of the eyes.

Ivan Illich
As long as the gaze was conceived of as a human action, seeing was conceived of as something as willed, something as capable of being trained as speaking or as hearing. Opsis of the antiques, beginning with Euclid, was the intellectual underpinning of the appropriate moral behaviour. How to become doubtful when I see something. Is it a mirror image or a reflection or do I really touch it? Do I get where I want to get, namely to the eyes of Cayley, or am I being distracted from it by the watery substance of the air between us which deflects not only my attention but actually my visual ray from what I want to search for in order to love it? Optics were the basis for the appropriate moral use of the eyes as searching, touching bodily parts. When you open any book of asceticism, any book which teaches you how to meditate, how to live in the presence of God, if you open these books, the *custodia oculorum*, the guarding of the eye is always a major chapter–how the eye must be guarded from seeing wrong things, of seeing not interior vision but dreams, apparitions, follies created by my wishes, the constant awareness that I can train my eyes as I can train my hands to repeat the right look onto the right objects which I've chosen as models, which I want to interiorize. Just as the virtue of hospitality can be developed by practising it until frequent repetition transforms it into part of my stance, my inner habits, the belief in the existence of a set of inner senses led among ascetics to a very careful attempt to train young people in the guard of their eyes. In the second millennium, guarding from what comes in became much more important. In the first millennium it was mostly guarding from rushing on something which is out there, touching it and bringing it home.

David Cayley
How the guard of the eyes was eventually let down is the story Illich wants to tell tonight. It begins with the extraordinary New Testament assertion that Jesus is the "image of the unseen God." The divine could be pictured in human form, and this gave the human image an unprecedented validity and power. Through this belief, something radically new was brought into both the Greek and Jewish worlds of the time. The Jews, following the commandments given to Moses, forbade images. "You shall not makes yourselves a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath," the children of Israel had been told. The Greeks, Illich says, permitted images, but, through their philosophy, had achieved a clear distinction between image and reality.

Ivan Illich
In the couple of centuries before Socrates, an attempt is made to place the accent which until then was on the image (in the newly literate society) onto the concept. It is love of which you are to speak in philosophy. It's water, not Neptune. It is war or struggle, and not Mars. With this shift from a concrete image to a valuing and even affective relationship to ideas, concepts, words, God, the ultimate God, the invisible God becomes something which is thinkable, even thought it's not imaginable. It makes possible in classical antiquity the representation of a god by a statue which everybody knows is not the god and at the very same time deserves the incense or other honours. Reflection on image, on the image itself, and its essence–what it does, what distinguishes it from the real–is marvellously absent in classical philosophy. The new Jewish sect, which Christianity was at that time, enters a world in which the image has been rejected, overcome and transcended by philosophers and is, therefore, not a major problem. I insisted on Jewish sect because the Jews bring in an attitude towards the image which is of extraordinary radicality. "Thou shalt not make yourself any image or likeness" because it could distract you from the adoration of the living God. The strict prohibition of image making in the Jewish tradition was one of the major reasons why the early followers, disciples of Jesus had a hard time because they claimed that they had seen the Son of God, not the ultimate prophet who would, again, through his words incarnate God, but God having become flesh. They spoke about Jesus as the image of the Father and Christians, during the first few centuries, began to represent in mosaics, in frescoes not only scenes of the New Testament, faces or figures from the Bible, but images. They represented those whom they worshipped in clear contrast to the Jewish mandate "thou shalt not make yourself any image or likeness." By the fifth century, the Byzantine churches of the Mediterranean were filled with overwhelming mosaics, all of them figurative, all of them representing not just figures but persons, as stylized as you want, as over-dimensioned as you want, but images of persons.

David Cayley
As Illich has just said, this profusion of images directly contradicted the command of the Hebrew scriptures whose authority the Christians continued to acknowledge. It also blurred the clear distinction in Greek philosophy between the visible and invisible. God, for the Greek philosophers, belonged to the immaterial realm of what Plato calls The Ideas, and this first principle, by definition, could not be pictured. The resulting tension between these different conceptions of the divine led to sustained reflection in the early Church on the status of *icons*, the Greek word for image. It also led to questions about their proper use. Was the increasing devotion to icons a proper part of Christian worship or a resurgence of idolatry, the worship of idols? The question came to a head, Illich says, in the eighth century.

Ivan Illich
The reflection on iconology, on what images are, why it should be legitimate for Christians to violate the command of the Old Testament, "Thou shalt not make yourself an image" because Christ had appeared as the image of the Father comes to an explosion in the year 726. When is that? For those who are not Byzantinologists or church historians, it's 50 years before, 40 years before Charlemagne is born. We're already in the West well into the Middle Ages. It was a time when the Moslems became a major threat for the continued existence of Byzantium. Leo III, the emperor of Byzantium, won a battle in which he had stopped the iconoclastic, image-destroying Moslems. A revival of the Jewish command with a vengeance had come out of Arabia and had swept away the images from the churches with the progress of the Islamic armies from Egypt through Asia Minor into Greece. Right after the victory over these notoriously iconoclastic Moslems, the Emperor went to the bronze gate of his palace, the main gate of his

palace, and removed the image of Christ that was enthroned above it and replaced it with a simple symbol, a cross. With this ceremony he started a fierce debate that raged sometimes with violence and war for several generations. Its issue was: can Christians bow and pray before an image? The icon bowers, the *iconodouloi*, held that the cult of images was a legitimate and good form of piety, a devotion, a liturgy that has been customary since the beginnings of the Church. A true and pretty bloody war began about the gaze.

David Cayley
The war ended in the year 787, sixty-one years after Leo had replaced the image of Christ with the naked cross. An ecumenical church council was convened to thrash out the issue at Nicea, the same place where a much earlier council had formalized the doctrine of the Trinity in the so-called Nicene Creed. The council was carried by the views of John of Damascus, sometimes called the Damascene. He drew a distinction between the *prototypos*, the prototype which is the model and source of the image; and the *typos*, the type, which is merely an instance, or impression of the *prototypos*. The legitimacy of the image was preserved.

Ivan Illich
At the close of that council, the icon of Christ was placed again into the bronze door until, half a millennium later, the Moslems took it down. How was the issue resolved? John of Damascus reached the consensus of the great majority of the council fathers, the bishops from east and western Mediterranean with his doctrine that an icon is a threshold. It is a threshold at which the artist prayerfully leaves some inkling of the glory which he has seen behind that threshold — a *typos* of the *protoptypos* which is in heaven. The icon is a window into eternity where the risen Christ and his bodily assumed mother are already in the glory of the angels. And the prayerful person uses the created beauty, the beauty created by the artist in prayerful painting in order to step through *typos* devotedly to the *prototypos*. If, therefore, he bows, he bows in front of the reflection of the real flesh of those who are represented there as incorporated already in the union with the body of Christ. John explains that by doing so, by engaging in this form of pious bodily expression of respect, the worshiper not only touches with his eyes beyond the threshold represented in the icon but he brings back the *emphasis**, the mingling of the gaze of the faithful with the flesh of the resurrected and constructs Church here on earth. This way of dealing with the icon, not as a picture but as a threshold, has been kept alive by the characteristically different liturgy of the Eastern Church–Russian, Greek, Syriac and what have you. I had the chance of reading a report of some Soviet art historians under Stalin, who had found a particularly beautiful and precious icon in a poor woman's hut. They wanted to expropriate it for a museum and tried to do so in the most gentle way possible by explaining to her, "Imagine how many thousands of people will see this beauty in the museum." And the woman answered, "An icon is not to be seen but to be prayed with."

David Cayley
The condemnation of iconoclasm by the Council of Nicea was not the final word in the Iconoclastic Controversy in the Eastern Empire. Twenty-seven years later, in 814, the Iconoclasts regained power and it was not until the year 843 that the legitimacy of icon veneration was established for good, a date still celebrated in the Eastern Church as the feast of Orthodoxy. But what the council of Nicea did, in Illich's view, was to lay a firm intellectual foundation for the understanding of images. Conceiving the image as a threshold allowed a clear distinction to be made between the image in itself, the image as object, and the image as a gateway or access. It kept at the forefront the question of what the image gives access to, of the purpose for which it is used. In the Eastern Church, this teaching remained vital right down to the time of the poor woman who corrected the Soviet art historians. But, in the Western Church, Illich says, the doctrine of the council of the Council of Nicea soon

became the justification for an entirely different view of images.

Ivan Illich

This highly sophisticated view of the image as a

(*uses *emphasis*, Greek; “emphasis,” English)

gateway, not for information but for the bodily, physical reach into the beyond, never became the principal way of looking at holy pictures in the Christian West. In fact, at that very same moment another type of artistic activity really began in the West, the so-called *evangelium pauperum*, the gospel of the non-readers. This was a scroll — there are quite a few of them preserved — from which the gospel was read from the pulpit in the tiny churches by the priest or deacon, and while he read, the scroll unrolled on the other side and showed people pictures of those scenes. The Council of Nicea, which established for the whole Christian Church the doctrine of the legitimacy of icons by the Western Church was immediately used to legitimize the making of teaching devices in order to make preaching easier, better and longer-lasting by illustrating the sermon. I find the doctrine of John Damascenus beautiful and convincing, I must say. But this doctrine by which the picture, the image acquired legitimacy within the cult, when it was brought back to the West, made the image a teaching device. Western pictures are painted as representations of scenes, not, especially after the thirteenth century, as thresholds inviting you as little shadows into the glory behind them. In this way, the basis was laid on which our world of objectivity is built.

David Cayley
The *evangelium pauperum*, the gospel of the poor, in Illich's view, was a sign of the radically different ways in which the doctrine of the Council of Nicea would be interpreted in the Eastern and Western Churches. The gospel scenes that unrolled before the congregation while the word was read from the other side of the scroll were an early example of the type of representational painting that would soon become a staple in the West. The point of this new type of painting was to instruct, impress and entertain the spectator, not to conduct his gaze into the beyond. The art of representation, as it advanced, drew attention more and more to the object itself, absorbing and holding the viewer’s gaze in the luxury and glamour of the painting's sensuous presence. This is an instance of what Illich calls the corruption of Christianity. Without belief in Christ's resurrection there could never have been a doctrine like that of John of Damascus, with its claim that the prayerful gaze can mingle with Christ's flesh in eternity. But at the same time, he says, this doctrine opened the way to a new intoxication with earthly images.

Ivan Illich
The doctrine of the Council of Nicea served to remove the influence of the Jewish and, later, the Moslem prohibition to look at images in order not to be turned away from the real thing, to look at portraits, after the fourteenth century, as a way of not having to face the other person, creating the possibility of seeing the other person in the image, the real person in remembrance of the portrait. It served for a march, a victorious march of the image over the centuries in increasingly secularized form and it helped — for me, it became essential — in the history of what we call objectivity.

David Cayley
Objectivity, Illich believes, is the condition of a world that can be pictured, a world in which pictures tell us what things are really like. But for this world to come into being, something more was necessary than just the legitimation of images. There also had to be a change in the scientific account of how seeing occurs. Illich spoke earlier about the classical science of optics in which an outgoing visual ray grasped the word. The modern theory holds that the eye is a camera in which a lense focuses incoming light on the sensitive screen of the retina and this scientific theory, Illich says, was a crucial and necessary underpinning for the idea that the things of the world can be represented.

Ivan Illich
The passage from the outreach of the gaze to the eye conceived as *camera obscura* is a precondition for the possibility of conceiving of the image, of the painting as a teaching device about reality. In modern optics, in the science of light, you can pretend to create a facsimile

by which the artist or he who commands the artist transmits *doxa* and dogma, knowledge, to you through your eye. You cannot use a facsimile as a substitute for reality where the gaze is outreaching. The possibility of making the painting representational is deeply tied to the transition from seeing as a bodily activity, a virtuous activity, to seeing as, at least partially, a passive incorporation.

David Cayley

The passive eye, Illich claims, could be more easily instructed and informed. It digests vision, while the out-reaching eye, the psychic hand of the first millennium, discovers things by touching and fingering them. The theory underlying this modern, digestive eye was firmly established by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Kepler had given modern scientific optics its first formulation, and modern optical devices like Galileo's telescope had already begun to hint at realities outside the range of the unaided eye. During this modern period, Illich distinguishes two distinct stages in the history of the gaze. The first stage in how things were pictured was marked by the technique of perspective in which things were observed from a fixed standpoint, as if through one eye. In this stage, a painter or draftsman still invited the viewer to see what he saw. In the second stage, which extends to our own time, natural perspective was abandoned, and things intended to be seen were placed in what Illich calls virtual, or non-local space. In the drawings of anatomists, for example, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, distance was eliminated; and the interior of the body was visualized in a sort of architecturally enhanced close-up that no eye could ever actually see.

In both these stages, the gaze is trained on a world that is increasingly mapped, measured and diagrammed. We see, not as Aristotle supposed, because of the natural fit between the eye and its objects, but because our tools of observation and techniques of representation remove the veil of mere appearance and show us what is really there. One of the pioneers in this scientific reeducation of the eye, Illich says, was Leonardo da Vinci.

Ivan Illich

Leonardo da Vinci, around 1502-03, says, when he dissects the bodies of hanged men whom he purchased from the executioner, you must draw everything you see in a human body because in the flesh the eye can’t see anything. Only when you have drawn it, drawn it again and again, will you slowly understand what you are speaking about. From that almost foreshadowing of the ideas of the seventeenth century in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth, we move pretty quickly to the idea that the best way, still staying in the example of anatomy, of writing about the body is to have a draftsman draft it as he sees it according to the rules of monocular fixed standpoint perspectival representation and then have your text discussing about the feature in the image marked with an ‘a’, ‘b’ or a ‘c’. Modern science began basically with the interpretation of designs. In many areas of Europe, you couldn’t get a degree at a university, much less become a state employee, if you didn’t pass an exam in drawing because reports home, reports to your chief, reports to the king had to be illustrated to be credible. But this was always an illustration which still placed the designer into the picture, even if invisibly, through the rules of perspective. Then in the nineteenth century we have a completely new way of imagining the image. The image is to represent what really is out there, not what the anatomist or the geographer or draftsman sees. In scientific treatises, the demand for perspectival representation, perspectival objectivity, is abandoned and objects are represented as measured, as mapped, as seen in an architectural drawing in which the gaze is assumed always to be perpendicular to the object represented. The draftsman creates a virtual space into which he places things as they are and not as they are seen by him. And the reader is asked to look at an object–a cut through a brain, a baby, a muscle–in a space into which he never could reach.

David Cayley
What Illich means by a virtual space might become clearer if you think, for example, of the anatomical drawings that still appear in most biology textbooks. You begin with an image of the skeletal and muscular structure of the body and then impose a series of transparencies which add the organs, the nervous system, the circulatory system and so forth. The result is not something you could ever see, nor is it pictured as existing in a space you could ever inhabit. The bloody mess that Leonardo actually saw when he peered into the bellies of his cadavers has been clarified, sorted into systems and transposed into the idealized context in which modern persons are taught to recognize their bodies. And this is only the beginning of what Illich means by virtual or non-local space. Today, such spaces are everywhere. The Internet is a vast, simultaneous nowhere in which no one actually knows where anything is. Computer-generated images shred the distinction between the imaginary and the real. Expectant parents bond with ultrasound scans of their unborn children. We now habitually see and experience things, Illich says, in spaces that are beyond any threshold we could ever pass.

Ivan Illich
What impresses me so much is the speed with which, during the second part of my life of 70 years, virtual spaces, images and other objects presented in virtual spaces, have become generalized. There are now quite a few serious thinkers who claim that among the most important, profound changes of the last 25 years is the ubiquity of virtual spaces in which, from which we are asked to derive our knowledge. Perhaps now you'll get an inkling why I insisted on the icon. The icon was conceived as a threshold into a super-reality into which only faith could lead. The virtual space asks you to look into a nowhere in which nobody could live. I want to show the contrast between the first and most sophisticated form of iconology, of the Damascenus, which sees in what he calls icon a shadow from the beyond which leads into eternity and today's virtual space which has characteristics into which one can't reach or smell or step or touch, in which most of the things which we take for granted are shown to us and those which we know are better explained to us — with the idea that only if you have seen it on television is it believable in reality.

David Cayley
Illich wants to show the contrast, he says, between the virtual world and the threshold at which the believer's eyes were conducted into eternity. The virtual space, as he has said elsewhere, is a utopia, a word coined by Thomas More in the sixteenth century from the Greek words for no place. It is a threshold with no beyond. There is no "there" there, as Gertrude Stein once said about the United States. This no-place, Illich supposes, is the terminus of the triumphant march of the image that was made possible by the Council of Nicea's validation of devotion to icons. This is as far as he has taken his argument, but based on what he has said, one could go further and also point to the uncanny resemblance between the glory that shone through the icon and the cascade of virtual beings that pour through the video screen. The icon leads into a super-reality, and so, in a sense, does the screen by showing us what the natural eye could never see. The icon promises a state of blessedness, and so also the screen by showing us the perfected world pictured in so much advertising and entertainment. The icon, finally, helps to build the body of the church, while interconnected screens now fill many heads with visions of a new sort of super-organism pulsing with electronic communications. Illich, as I've said, has not gone this far, and yet it seems consonant with his thesis about the corruption of Christianity to wonder whether the virtual world is not, in its timelessness and placelessness, a kind of a counterfeit eternity, something that could never have been without the Christian original.

For Illich, what is terrible about the enchantment which the image has worked on our world is the shadow it throws on people's

face-to-face encounters. Christianity overcame the old Jewish proscription of images, and the old Greek hesitancy before the coloured shadows of the visible world in order to celebrate the new reality of God's appearance in the flesh. But this new freedom to see the divine also became a licence for the avalanche of images that followed; and this has left modern people uniquely exposed to illusion and entrancement, because the old reservations about the image have been overcome and discarded. In consequence, Illich says, the power of images now threatens to deprive us of the insight that comes only from seeing ourselves in the eyes of others.

Ivan Illich
The Old Testamentary and the Islamic, still alive, proscription of the image has, as far as I can understand it out of the texts, the major tasks of not taking your face as an image, not identifying it, as we said, with your painting or photograph or my internal imagination about you, but remaining constantly vulnerable to what looking at you in the flesh will reveal to me about myself. That is, tear away illusions, fancies, consolations which make it possible at this moment to live with myself. The proscription of the image is at the very same time an invitation to be ruthless against myself in seeking myself in what I find through your eyes. Imagery, particularly imagery of the human face and, even more so, imagery which is mechanical, like photography, interferes with that ultimately undescribable gaze which reaches out on several levels simultaneously and for the believer always also into the beyond, searching eternity, ultimate truth which is a living body behind the threshold of the image. With the gaze conceived as that of the camcorder, with the ability to speak about the satellite view of the world — as a view! — with habituation to seeing in front of my eyes things which by their very nature are not in the order of the visible, perhaps because as long as I am living they are below the skin as the movements of my heart, perhaps because they are figments like the visual representation of quantitative data which has developed so magnificently during the last 150 years, perhaps because it is a so-called genome which implies control and command, with this habituation increasingly we lose the everyday habit of placing our gaze on that which falls under our eyes.

David Cayley
This habit, Illich holds, can only be recovered by restoring what he earlier called the guard of the eyes. The idea is somewhat foreign to contemporary sensibilities which run more to the cynical and the blasé, answering all occasions with a precociously wised-up “so what?” But it is Illich's view that the eye requires training and protection now as never before. Virtuous seeing is still possible, he says in conclusion to tonight's program, but it depends on a recovery of the awareness that seeing what is not there can impair our ability to see what is.

Ivan Illich
Antique optics is concerned with preparing a virtuous way of seeing and making you aware of the pitfalls into which your visual ray can fall. In the same way I think that contemporary *opsis*, rational, disciplined, methodical study of the exercise, the human act of gazing, ought to make me aware of what I bring back into everyday meeting with people from establishing the habit of looking at these figments into whose company I’m constantly being invited by the producers of these non-entities of extraordinary attractiveness — I said attractiveness, yes, but, since I know where I stand, I say of extraordinary seductive power.