Paul Kennedy
Good evening and welcome to *Ideas*. I'm Paul Kennedy, and this is Part 4 of David Cayley's series on “The Corruption Christianity,” with Ivan Illich.

Ivan Illich
The idea of fit, of appropriateness, of a thing which is good, simply good, no matter what value it has, this idea has been washed out in post-1950 ordinary thinking.

Paul Kennedy
Cultures, Ivan Illich says, were once defined by their sense of how things fit together. The experienced world was a *cosmos*, a Greek word for what the French call *vis à vis*, the way things line up in relation to each other–heaven and earth, sea and shore, woman and man–each giving presence and definition to the other. *Cosmos* was the order of relationships in which things had been placed, and people's actions were tailored to this order. What was good was what fit.

This sense of fit, Illich claims, has now vanished from contemporary culture. We no longer live in a *cosmos*, a proportioned world, in which each thing defines and complements its opposite. How this world was lost and how this loss can be understood as a perversion of Christianity are Illich's themes tonight. Part 4 of “The Corruption of Christianity,” by David Cayley.

David Cayley
During the first three broadcasts in this series, Ivan Illich has argued the hypothesis that much of what is unique and unprecedented in modern Western society can best be understood as a corruption of Christianity, a hypothesis he sums up in the formula: the corruption of the best is the worst. Many twentieth century social theorists have written about the formative influence of Christian thinking on contemporary institutions but they have generally seen these institutions as a practical realization of Christian spiritual ideals. Illich, as his carefully chosen word ‘corruption’ suggests, takes a radically different view. He understands the modern world to be involved in a betrayal of its Christian antecedents. He calls the modern attempt to re-make the world a blasphemy, another carefully chosen word which means ‘a sin against faith’. “Through faith," he has written, "what I see and feel, I know to be creation. What I see as real I know exists only by participation in the divine goodness. But the world in which I find myself,” he goes on, “is mostly an artificial world, a manufactured construct ever further removed from creation, a world in the hands of experts who presume, through a kind of transcendent pride, to manage it.”

Illich approaches this reality as an historian who believes that only through careful study of the past can we cultivate a sense of how strangely out of tune our contemporary society is. "Only in the mirror of the past," he says, "does it become possible to recognize the radical otherness of modern assumptions." He begins his reflections tonight by looking back to the genesis of one of those assumptions, the idea that the world lies in human hands, open to unlimited manipulation. He finds its origin in an idea that deeply coloured the Christian sensibility of the Middle Ages, the idea of contingency. This conception, he says, expressed both the fullest flowering of the Christian sense of the *cosmos* and the seeds of the eventual shattering of this *cosmos*. He opens with a definition, occasionally quoting from an article on the Christian concept of contingency by German historian of philosophy Hans Blumenberg, which Illich sometimes consulted as he spoke.

Ivan Illich
Contingency refers to a state of living in a world which doesn’t bear in itself the reason for its own existence but gets it from an absolutely necessary, personal, ever-creating God. Things get their existence, their presence in the world from an act of the will of the Creator. We are both, in our essence, human beings, but it is a personal act of God’s will to bring you and also that little cat, that kitten there, into existence

and keep you both in existence. And in front of this act of God's goodness, I can do nothing else but bow in deep respect.

David Cayley
The idea that world's existence is contingent on the will of God has deep biblical roots and is shared by other monotheistic religions like Judaism and Islam but it receives a unique accent during the Christian Middle Ages and, above all, in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Central to this Christian version of the idea–and central also to Illich's own philosophy–is the notion of existence as a personal gift.

Ivan Illich
At this moment, the world's very existence assumes the nature of something gratuitous. The world which is around me, the cat over there and the roses, the four red roses which bloomed during the night, are a gift, something which is a grace. This moment of our being together, which I immensely enjoy, is not predetermined by some *karma*, isn't just chance, isn't logically necessary, it's a pure gift. It's a gift from that creator who keeps beings in existence and, therefore, we can also understand our own activity of freely sitting here together as a gift to each other in an entirely new way.

David Cayley
The novelty and originality of this idea, Illich says, continuing to quote Blumenberg, can be seen by comparing it to classical views of how the world is brought into existence.

Ivan Illich
The coming into existence of the antique *cosmos*, the *cosmos* of Aristotle, the *cosmos* of Plato, was in no way dependent on the act of someone's will. Neither in its genesis, its coming about, in its birth, nor in its continuation. The *cosmos* was but the fullness of expression of what was identically fit for existence. If something came into being, it came into existence, you couldn't think of the contingent. However, since Augustine, things have changed. Augustine answered the question why God created the world with that incredible *quia voluit*, because it pleased Him, because He willed it, He wanted it. In Spanish I would say, "*Por que tenia ganas*." I know that in America you don't have *ganas* — it's a will which comes from pretty deep in the stomach of God. The world's existence is the result, therefore, at every moment, of a sovereign act.

David Cayley
The idea that the world, at every moment, depends on God's will is, for Illich, a glorious expression of the surprising, unfathomable generosity of existence. But contingency, he says, is also a fragile and unstable doctrine because it hangs existence by a single thread. Only break the thread and the world tumbles from the hands of God into the hands of man. God's sovereignty becomes the model for human dominion. Such a break was made thinkable, Illich says, by a change in the way later mediaeval thinkers, like Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, interpreted this doctrine. To put it as simply as possible, these philosophers, basing themselves in part on Augustin's *quia voluit*, put more and more emphasis on God's freedom, until His will itself came to be seen as something arbitrary. Thomas Aquinas had seen creation as something possessing a rational and intelligible structure. Duns Scotus, writing just a generation later, claimed that there can be no rational explanation for God's will whatsoever. His will is unintelligible as anything other than pure will. This teaching made God's very being contingent, and contingency, in consequence, began to take on the meaning that any dictionary will tell you it has today–mere chance, instance or accident. The stage was set, Illich says, for the philosophers of the seventeenth century to claim that each being has within its own nature the reasons for its existence.

Ivan Illich
His will became the symbol for arbitrarity and prepared the way for an understanding of the world outside of contingency. Contingent, to us, means a chance world, a world of chance, in which everything bears in itself the reason for its being. For a long time, during the seventeenth and even the early eighteenth century, scientists were still true Christian believers who affirmed constantly that God created the world as it is and therefore placed the seed of nature into each thing, but the connection between the aliveness of nature and the constant creative act of God was cut, was broken.

David Cayley
One of the consequences of this cut in the taut thread of contingency, Illich says, was that nature lost what had never before been in doubt–its aliveness.

Ivan Illich
One thing was certain in antiquity, that nature was alive, that *natura a nascitura dicitur*, that nature is a concept, an idea, an experience, derived from birth-giving. If we say that things as they are are natural, we say they are born. This idea was deeply affected in the twelfth century by the sense of contingency. The whole of nature lies in God's hands. Nature has its aliveness through its constant support by the creative act of God. But, with this elevation and, for me, glorification, of classical nature, the condition was created by which, once nature was taken out of the hands of God, it could also lose its most essential quality which is aliveness. If therefore we speak about the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of natural science, we are faced by research on a nature which not only is outside of the hands of God, but has lost that basic characteristic, which it had all through antiquity in our tradition, of aliveness. And, once you have to do with a science which studies the working of nature separated from aliveness — you can call it mechanical, you can call it necessary, give any name to it you want — an issue comes up which is characteristically modern: how do you explain, how do you speak about life in a nature and among natural things which are not born but, so to say, mathematically programmed, we would say today, by what remains of nature?

David Cayley
With this de-naturing of nature, Illich argues, the c*osmos* came apart at its seams. The microcosm ceased to mirror the macrocosm because things now contained within themselves the seeds of their nature, or, as one would say today, the principles of their development. The being of things in the world was no longer determined by their mutual correspondence or fit but by an internal law peculiar to that thing. Through the unique, overbearing power of the idea of contingency, the pattern of the world was broken. This shattering of the sense of proportion, Illich claims, produced a new world, a world unlike any that had ever been before. This novel, unprecedented character becomes clear, he says, when it is contrasted with the informing idea of all previous societies.

Ivan Illich
The idea is that heaven is mirrored by earth and the earth is mirrored by heaven, that this baby I saw yesterday in a woman's arms is a *cosmos*, a *microcosmos*, and that I can look at the stars or look at this baby's makeup and look in two directions where I see something which at first sight is utterly dissymetric and yet fitting in every point. I need a specially trained gaze to do that, which anthropologists call cultures. I would rather speak of the art of seeing the *cosmos*, bearing it, suffering it and enjoying it. The correspondence between the beyond and the here, the beyond which might be the stars, seems to be, at least for those cultures and worlds of which I know something, certain. It's the background, the magma, out of which at least *circum*-Mediterranean cultures, but as far as I can understand also Far Eastern cultures and the

Mexican Aztec and Maya *cosmos*, which I know a little bit, emerge. You can't enter there without having that assumption that the world is the result of a mutually constitutive complementarity between here and there.

David Cayley
The idea of contingency, of a world dependent on a single supreme will - threatened to unbalance this proportioned *cosmo*s. This potentially corrosive effect was quite evident, for example, to the wise men of China when the first Christian missionary reached the Chinese court at the end of the sixteenth century.

Ivan Illich
Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, sent one of his best men, Padre Ricci, to Macao, the only foothold available. It was a Portuguese colony already consisting of one town. It still is. And Ricci, who had trained his memory in northern Italy, in the Po Valley, splendidly according to the Ciceronian rules of memory training, succeeded in learning something like 25,000 Chinese signs in a few years. Never before had somebody coming from the outside learned these signs, that is, learned Chinese, but he somehow picked it up. And, once he knew Chinese, he had to be admitted to the imperial court in Peking as a bonze Matteo Ricci. Now, barely was he speaking and teaching there, when letters from all over China, from the literate men, streamed into the imperial court calling attention to the fact that this was a most dangerous and poisonous man. Ricci didn't speak about God. He knew that he shouldn't. Neither the pre-Socratic nor the post-Socratic divinities of classical times existed there, nor the Wotans of Northern Europe. God seems not to be, or gods, a very Chinese idea. But Ricci was talking about a master in heaven, and they all called to the attention of the Emperor that, if we admit a master in heaven the perfect balance between heaven and China, heaven and earth, would be broken. China would cease to be — to be! — the center of this world, the reason for this world, as heaven is the reason for China. These Chinese learned *literati* understood that the spirit of contingency, even at the time of its very advanced sunset, was still poisonous and upsetting for China for a metaphysical reason: because China was based on an equal balance, a perfect balance between up and down, above and below.

David Cayley
To upset this balance, as the Chinese *literati* quickly grasped, was to undo the harmonious proportions of the traditional *cosmos*. Things would lose their natural tuning and no longer fit together. And this was precisely what began to happen, Illich says, in seventeenth century Europe. A world that had formerly taken its very existence from something beyond itself now came to exist entirely in itself, of itself and for itself.

Ivan Illich
We can think about a world of objects and of persons and of social constellations here to which nothing on the other side corresponds. It is not only a wombless world, it is a world in which the idea of frontier, of limit has a meaning which I think before Newton and Leibnitz was inconceivable. If one formerly spoke of limit or horizon, the word itself implied a frontier to something else. The ability to live in a world in which frontiers have no beyond is something profoundly new, and I'd like to explore how it affects our daily dealings and how it make us so different from all other cultures, worlds, languages. It makes even our writing of poetry arbitrary in a way which was not available to the renaissance, even if some modern text theoreticians try to colonize the renaissance past with our contemporary ideas of analogy.

David Cayley
A world with no beyond, Illich argues, is also deprived of its sense of a uniquely proportioned here, that distinctive way in which a given people in a given place embody their sense of what is good. When it becomes

possible to conceive of a frontier with no beyond, he says, the feeling that things can be good in themselves breaks down. The old language of good gives way to a new language of values and this, for Illich represents the decisive moment in the de-tuning and disproportioning of the world. The good is something for which people have a culturally shaped sense, as real as smell or touch, a sense for what, in a given context, fits. Values lack this distinct colour, shape and feel. They are, by definition, relative and interchangeable. Like commodities, they circulate and change shape, respecting no boundary. They can be arranged in hierarchies, then shifted and re-prioritized. They know no stability, permanence or place. And, for this reason, Illich says, this new language can no longer incarnate what people once sensed as the good.

Ivan Illich
I must first make it clear that as far as I can understand I live in a world which has lost the sense for good, the good, the certainty that the world makes sense because things fit together, that the eye is made to grasp the sun, not the sunlight, to have an optical effect on that ... biological camera which still works somehow in my head, the sense that virtuous behaviour is fitting, appropriate for the human being. And we have lost it in the course of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the rise of the concept, and the experience, of value. Good is absolute. The light and the eye are simply made for each other, and this is deeply experienced, which is very different than saying that the eye has value for me because it allows me to orient myself in the world. Values can be positive or negative; so, as soon as I speak about values in philosophy, I assume that there is somewhere a zero point from which values rise or decline. It is not the economy which introduces commodity-like reflections into philosophy but it is the philosophical replacement of the good by value, by the idea of value which finds also an expression in economics, which then is one of the major forces shaping the milieu within which my life is a pursuit of values and no longer the pursuit of the good which, for me, can be only another person. What else could it be?

David Cayley
The language of values, according to Illich, makes it impossible any longer to speak of either good or evil because both are absolute concepts which cannot be connected to a purely relative scale. And this has profound consequences for Christianity, he says, because it hides the existence of sin.

Ivan Illich
In the tradition of which I speak, sin allows a heightened understanding of evil. Evil is the opposite to good. It’s not a disvalue or a negative value. And sin is a mysterious aspect of evil which I see connected with a personal offence of God. If I’m not wrong, the loss of philosophical certainty that good and evil exist, and the replacement of this certainty by value and disvalue have destroyed the basis on which the existence of sin was predicated because sin cannot be connected to negative values.

David Cayley
What follows, for Illich, is that we have lost the only language in which the modern condition can be adequately grasped, because to him sin is the only name that can comprehend the betrayal of Christ's New Testament that this condition represents. And this for him is the worst. For not only have we lost the sense for what fits, we have also lost any way of recognizing that it has gone.

David Cayley
The feeling for just proportions, for what fit, Ivan Illich has argued, was a physical sense, a real perceptual ability that people once had. The world of values, therefore, deprives us not just of the idea of the good, but imposes an actual sensual deprivation. Illich sees an example of this deprivation in the way contemporary people experience their own

bodies. Until well into the eighteenth century, he says the body was felt to be a microcosm. There was a correspondence between the individual body and nature as a whole. According to a tradition which descended from the Roman physician Galen, the body was thought to be composed of four humours, and health was conceived in terms of the balance of these cosmic elements as they flowed or were blocked within the body. Illich has studied this humoural, microcosmic body by observing the way it conditioned the encounter between physicians and their patients. The doctor, in this old tradition, he says, could do no more than support and foster the body's tendency to return to a balanced state. Unlike the contemporary doctor, who determines his patient's experience by his diagnosis, these older doctors had to rely on the patient's own report.

Ivan Illich

When I look at doctors–and by now I have five or six good studies which do this–and at how they behave when they meet a patient, before modern medicine has trained them to a modern consciousness of themselves as doctors, what they do is they listen to the patient. I am tired of hearing that a modern doctor does it, too. Let him do it in seven minutes, seven minutes and a half. The doctor listens to the patient's story, makes an anamnesis, which is the patient's self-awareness, which is pretty credible because usually it takes the form of complaints. The patient comes with complaints. He comes to cry on the doctor's shoulder. And, when I analyze what the patients tell the doctor, it is about how they feel. I don't have to say, in old English, how they feel themselves, because, even in modern English, how do you feel means how do you sit in yourself, how is it today, how is that who you are, both in relation to your own seat and stance, and in relation to the world around you? What the doctor treated was what he got through the confession of the patient. "You know, doctor, my right eye gives out since I saw that man being hanged" — it was a very common thing — "and I'm blind on my right eye, although sometimes I see." Or, here's another concrete example: "Since my landlord, who is a powerful man, threw me out of the house in a most uncivilized way, I have enormous pains because I feel that my juices don't run down my leg, left leg any more." I could go on telling dozens, hundreds of such stories. And the doctor not only hears what the patient says but he also immediately qualifies what kind of a character in the humoural–today we would almost say astrological–sense, this is. He notes that this sanguine man reports on a blockage of his red flows to the tips of his toes on the left side and then translates this into much more detailed, specific, beautiful, Latin language which we call Galenic medicine, which he has learned in school. So the doctor's task is essentially an interpretative one, it's an exegesis of what the patient reveals about himself. And his competence consists in his ability to translate this into explicit medical knowledge which is so clear that it immediately makes him see internally the plants which are related to the same issue. Plants, at least in our Western, post-medieval medical manuals, are classified by organs, by human organs. The little man who stands in the middle of the classification miniature relates the organ, the liver, to that plant and the stomach to that other plant and here assemble bouquets of plants and flowers, and sometimes even animals, which the doctor immediately thinks of. So the doctor translates the story he has heard about the humoural, the flowing experience or stopping experience — the cold and the warm of the flows, the biting nastiness of some and the sweetness which is overwhelming of others and takes away his good judgement and he sees that woman's face — into scientific language, his science, which relates to possible other cosmic elements which might–and that he must know–help under these circumstances.

David Cayley

Two things stand out, for Illich, in this encounter of doctor and patient. First, that the

patient tells a story, which locates whatever discomfort he is feeling in the context of his entire experience. And second, that the doctor attends to this experience, rather than to some construct which his superior knowledge allows him to impose on it. He relies on the patient's word.

Ivan Illich
All traditional doctors believed in people, their patients telling them about their nature. Nature was experienced, was felt, was smelled, was tasted by people and the physician, as if he were participating in a Greek tragedy through *mimesis*, sympathy which becomes feeling the other, was trained like the spectator in the Greek theatre to feel the actor, to feel this tragic instance of an individual sitting in front of him who had been caught in his human condition in some mess, in something contrary and nature was trying to heal itself. The idea of health didn't exist, but only of nature being more or less capable to constantly heal itself. And what he did as a doctor, through counsel, through sympathy, through the power of the word, the healing word, and perhaps through ground corals or mercury pills, which are highly poisonous, as we would say today, was to encourage nature, to reinforce nature, to perform its own healing act. Today we can hardly think that way about what the function of the doctor is. We always think that he uses some tool of his profession to do something to the system or the sub-system in the patient which he knows about, not the patient.

David Cayley
What is significant about this change, for Illich, is the way in which it undermines, and brackets, the patient's experience of his own flesh. His condition is no longer something that he can feel but something he has to be told about. In the terms Illich developed earlier, there is no longer a fit. The body has lost its correspondence with other elements in the *cosmos*, and become a set of values which the doctor alone is qualified to read and interpret.

Ivan Illich
If I think of a medical encounter today, it usually has certain shape, unthinkable until my generation. I call up the doctor and say, Doctor, I feel terribly tired. Well, Mr. Illich, take a pencil, you go to the lab and have a blood test of such type and urine test of such type and excrements of such type and, when you come here, my assistant will make–because you're an old man by now–a cardiogram and let's hope he stops there. And when he looks at the results he can tell me what's happening with my body–and if he's a very well-trained, modern doctor, he'll say, and further, I'll give you a few direct and indirect psychological tests about what is happening with you because you are not a body only, you are a psycho-physical being. From earliest childhood on, it is in this way that we are trained, or our mothers are trained, to think about what we are made of, what the stuff is which sits there and smiles or sighs. Nothing of this I can find in eight hundred years of history of the medical encounter. The one thing the doctor wants from a patient is that he tell him stories. He doesn't have to solicit them because the patient will begin and say, you know, doctor, I am so terribly tired and I knew that this would be coming now that I'm a 70-year-old man. Once, when I was a boy, I walked along that cemetery wall during the night and it was afterwards, for the first time that I felt this and to say the truth, I'm completely sandy, washed out, dry. I can't connect now when I speak to you with my bowels. It's very difficult. I have to ask a second or a third cup of coffee or something even better than coffee. That is, the doctor, as I suggested yesterday, had to learn to accept that the flesh was summed up in the experience of it, in the experience of materiality, in the experience of stuff, in the stuffiness, the gestalt, the shape of the stuffiness of the guy sitting in front of him which he, through hearing the story and watching the man's behaviour, language, gestures, way of sitting, diet, could grasp. The body was what the word ego pointed to, that which I make present in our conversation when I say, *I say to*

you, I believe. That body has been profoundly obscured during the last 50 years, in my opinion. The ability to perceive has been maligned, and the traces of it have been transformed into symptoms which a doctor, if he's a good specialist somewhere on the border of psychology, can classify. I have therefore come to the conclusion that I live in a world in which that body about which — let me stay with my story — the angel Gabriel told the girl in a town of Galilee, Nazareth, that God wants to be in her belly, is something which is out of the world in which I live.

David Cayley
This last point of Illich's, that contemporary persons cannot grasp the meaning of God's Incarnation in Jesus because we are no longer ourselves embodied in this older sense, is one to which I'll return at the very end of tonight's program. But I want to continue for the moment with the evidence for his argument that modern persons have lost the experience of their own bodies. Twenty-five years ago, when Illich wrote his book, Medical Nemesis, he used the term "iatrogenesis," literally doctor-made, to describe the illnesses that arise from medical treatment–getting the wrong diagnosis, the wrong pill, or the wrong operation. Today he gives this term a different twist with his claim that what doctors now mainly give people is their bodies.

Ivan Illich
The medical establishment takes on the task of providing people with bodies and then these bodies are introjected by alternative medicine. I remember one of the main people in the United States who write about body history coming to see me and my friends — I don't know if you were there — and he said, well, first thing, so that we can clearly understand each other, we must now, very sweetly he trumpeted, sit down and I will lead you through an internal visualization. He wanted me to apply my own eyes, as if they were sonar equipment or magnetic resonators. You feel your heart and you feel the right chamber and whatever he connected with the right chamber, and with the left chamber. And he believed that he was leading us out of the medical paradigm, when he was actually leading us ever more into the *iatro,* doctor, genetic, made, thing with which most people today run around. You can say, Ivan, you exaggerate. I would like you to meet Doña Lupe, a nice village woman who's husband, I think, died and she's earning some money as a maid somewhere in town but she comes back to the village in the evening to make some extra money. She sells, sometimes on advance payment and then picks up the rest of the subscription in the next six or eight weeks, journals which help people who hardly can read, through comics, to acquire iatorogenic bodies. And, thereby, she disqualifies, represses, veils the sense with which a lot of Mexicans still ran around about themselves 30 years ago — *como se siente?* how do you feel? People had something which they felt and medical science couldn't do anything else but interpret it.

David Cayley
The modern medical patient, according to Illich, is taught from childhood on to internalize a body which he cannot sense. He learns to identify himself with measured values like his blood pressure or his cholesterol level, with the mapping of his interior that is made possible by X-rays, magnetic image resonators, ultrasound probes, or CAT scans, and today increasingly with the various risks, as of cancer or heart disease, to which he might be genetically pre-disposed. And in none of this, Illich says, is there anything he can actually feel.

David Cayley
In the few moments remaining in tonight's program, I want to return to Illich's main theme in this series–the corruption of Christianity. Earlier, Illich argued that traditional societies were defined by their sense of proportion, their sense of how things fit together. He then went on to show that this sense was undone by the doctrine of contingency, the idea of a world entirely dependent on a single divine will which

overbalanced and eventually overturned the system of correspondences which, in the traditional cosmos, held each thing in its proper place. This upsetting of the traditional order, in Illich's view, was a corruption of Christian belief and in no way a necessary or inevitable consequence of it. His example is the text he has used as his touchstone throughout this series, the gospel parable of the Good Samaritan. The story is told in the gospel of Luke, when Jesus is asked, who is my neighbour? In response he tells the story of a man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho who is waylaid by robbers, beaten, and left half dead by the road. A priest of the temple chances upon him and passes by other side. Another official of the temple does the same. Then comes a Samaritan, an outsider from the northern kingdom of Israel who did not worship in the temple. He takes mercy on the fallen man, binds up his wounds and takes him to an inn, where he pays for his care.

This story, as Illich understands it, announces a new and unprecedented freedom. As a foreigner, the Samaritan had no ethical obligation whatsoever to the wounded man by the road because ethics, in the ancient world, applied only within the boundaries that defined a given people, in a given place, with a given tradition. Jesus announced the Samaritan's freedom to step across this boundary and embrace the wounded man. This certainly transgressed a traditionally sacrosanct frontier, and in that way potentially threatened the traditional sense of proportion, but it also, in Illich's view, implied an entirely new kind of proportionality.

Ivan Illich
What is revealed to us in the parable of the Samaritan is this: When they ask Him who is my neighbour, He answered he to whom you, as a free human being, establish your personal proportionality by turning to him in love and inviting him to mutuality of love which one usually calls friendship. The Samaritan made me understand that I am I, in the deepest and fullest sense which is given to me to be I, precisely because you, by allowing me to love you, give me the possibility to be correlative to you, to be proportionate. I see, therefore, in love hope and charity the crowning of the proportional structure, in the full old sense, the proportional nature of creation. Nothing is what it is except because *convenit*, it fits, it is in harmony with something else. And I am free to choose with whom, or better, to accept from whom I want, to whom I let myself be given the possibility of loving. The Samaritan, therefore, the call of the Samaritan, charity, *agape*, does not destroy but elevates proportionality onto a level which formerly was not perceived. It goes beyond Plato and Aristotle and beyond the Greek mysteries. It says your *telos*, your end-purpose, the goal of your being is your choice of charity.

David Cayley
The story of the Samaritan, Illich says, elevated proportionality to a new height. He used the same term earlier in relation to the idea of contingency which, he said, elevated nature to a new, if fragile dignity as God’s continuous creation. And the same, he argues finally, can be said of the Christian view of the body, which is implied in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. It makes possible the destruction of traditional body images but it is in itself a glorification of the body. His text is a scene described in the Act of the Apostles, in which the apostle Paul preached the resurrection of the body to an assembly of Athenians.

Ivan Illich
Paul gave this speech which seemingly appealed to Athenians, the most civilized people of that time, I would say. The Agora was, where it happened, well, I’m speaking really as an adoptive New Yorker, something like Washington Square in its best moments. People listened to him with great enthusiasm about Jesus, about His death on the cross, but then he wanted to speak about the resurrection of the dead. And somebody told him, for today

it was enough, come another time and tell us about this. Paul spoke about something which even the Athenians didn't want to listen to. Come back another time. They were a delicate people, decent people, well-educated people. And yet, belief in the resurrection of the body, in Christ's ascension, in the popular devotion to the body of Mary physically taken into heaven — so common that a modern Pope believed that on the basis of the commonness of the devotion he could say that it is a part of Christian belief — demanded from those who lived in that culture a respect in front of their bodies as a mystery which, in a way, went beyond, but in a way also destroyed all the different kinds of old body images or perceptions which were culturally determined, differently in different cultures. We have now these marvelous studies by Mrs. Ruth Padel about where the Greek heroes felt their minds — they could take it in their hand — or their liver, their courage could push them on. These body cultures, if you want to call them that, have been, surprisingly, in our Western culture replaced, or overshadowed is a better word, they have been overshadowed by the respect for the body which is Christ's body. And once that disappeared, a void space was left into which you couldn't put any construct.

David Cayley
The reluctance of Paul's Athenian audience to follow him in his discussion of the resurrection certainly shows their awareness of how potentially destructive such a teaching might prove to their traditional sense of the density of their own flesh. And yet, Illich says, the resurrection also created a new respect for the body, a new sense of the splendour and dignity of flesh that was destined for resurrection. Where corruption enters is through the very delicacy and fragility of these ideas. The idea of contingency, which asserts God's care at every instant of existence collapses into an assertion of human sovereignty and the resurrected body of Christ, when it is no longer experienced as comprehending all bodies, leaves what Illich calls a void space, an absence in which no body can be made to fit.

Paul Kennedy
On *Ideas* tonight, you've listened to Part 4 of "The Corruption of Christianity," Ivan Illich on gospel, Church and society. The series concludes tomorrow night with Ivan Illich's reflections on the world at the end of the second millennium.