

whereas in our industrial and commercial culture, disease and the processes of dying alienate the individual from his friends and relations and turn him into an impersonal cog in a bureaucratic medical machine. Moreover, the elevation of the medical profession into a religious elite means that anyone suffering from an illness, however trivial, will tend to adjust his symptoms to this medical model. A stomach-ache, for example, is not something to be dealt with and experienced by the individual: it is a free pass into the medical machine. Pain, Illich suggests, is a necessary component of human life and all cultures in the past have learned how to deal with and experience their pain. The commercial medical machine thinks only in terms of 'pain-killing' and has produced the monstrosity of the expanding drug industry - one of the effects of which is enormously to increase diseases caused as accidental side-effects. The pinnacle of this is the use of pre-frontal lobotomy to produce an anaesthetized zombie who feels neither pain, nor humanity.

It is, one might say, very easy to criticize but what could one do about this? Probably nothing. Such is the insidious power of the organized medical profession that any attempt to lessen their influence would be very quickly stifled.

In fact Illich says - 'the skills needed for the application of the most generally used diagnostic and therapeutic aids are so simple that the careful observation of instructions by people who personally care would probably guarantee more effective and responsible use than medical practice ever could. Most of what remains could probably be handled better by 'barefoot' non-professional amateurs with deep personal concern than by professional physicians, psychiatrists, dentists, midwives, physiotherapists or oculists.'

In view of the probability that Western industrial society is about to break down completely, this is an encouraging and hopeful thought. What is less encouraging and less hopeful is that it would probably need the complete break-down of our society before such a simple truth could be put into effect.

V.M.

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**I'm angry with you but you won't  
be angry at me, so why should I  
be angry at you? You make me angry  
with you by not being angry at me  
when you know I'm angry with you.  
I know you're angry with me because  
when I'm angry with you you won't  
be angry at me. That makes me angry  
with you, but . . .**

**Alix Pirani**