



Ivan Illich's Critique of Western Medicine

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Ivan Illich's critique of Western medicine shows that there are social and political challenges, advanced technology has denied a person's right to suffer, and doctors, as well as institutes are using modern medicine for their own benefits rather than helping others. Modern medicine has always been seen as a positive in our society. Ivan Illich exposes the flaws with how our society uses medicine to gain personal advances rather than help the overall population of people. Medicine has never been critiqued the way that Ivan Illich talks about medicine. It brings in a whole new perspective to how we see medicine today.



Illich's View on Modern Medicine Overall

- Medical problems and their side effect outweigh the benefit of helping people.
- "Medicine has created another illusion whereby only medicine can control health, disease or postpone our own mortality and, in the process, has medicalized many of the activities and skills that were traditionally part of families and communities." - Ivan Illich
- Medicine has taken over our lives. We see it as our salvation instead of looking for other solutions.
- Illich argues that our complex bodies, that are meant to pass away one day, are being changed and manipulated so that they can last longer.



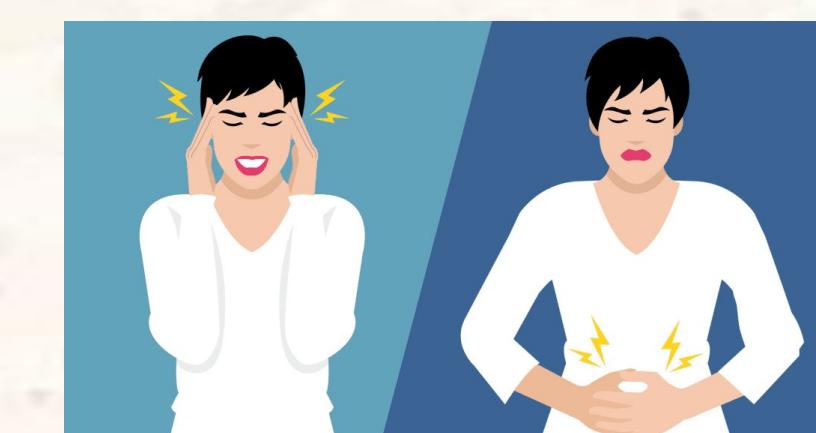
Social and Political Challenges

- Illich is trying to show that medical health needs to shift from an individual perspective of behavior change and diseases to the creation of a community where health behaviors are regulated and not abused.
- Iatrogenic is a illness that is caused by medical examination or treatment. "The iatrogenic phase is preceded by two other phases, the first phase occurs in the early life of an institution when it is small in scale and is marked by a period of modest productivity. In the second phase, as the organization grows beyond a certain threshold, its productivity begins to level-off, during which time there will typically be a neutral-impact, which is to say institutions are neither helpful nor harmful; they are in effect non-productive, relative to intended outputs." - Ivan Illich
- Proportionality would help with the relationship between the institutions and their citizens. There can be a cultural revolution, which would push against the overreach of institutions and their medical practices, as well as institutional counter-productivity.
- Illich divides iatrogenesis, when health care takers provide a treatment that does not help the person in need, into three levels. The clinical, the social, and the cultural. He argues that the more we concentrate on how technology is supposed to help us, the more we start to lose ourselves and our connection to life.



Medicines Ability to take away Suffering and Meaning

- ❖ In Medical Nemesis, Illich writes "like school education and motor transportation, clinical care is the result of capital-intensive commodity production." He exposes how medicine ignores a man's pain and suffering so that it can deal with extending their life.
- ❖ "medicine constitutes a prolific bureaucratic program based on the denial of each man's need to deal with pain, sickness, and death" - Ivan Illich
- ❖ Illich believes that to cure pain and suffering, a priest should come and give you "The opportunity for purification, penance, or sacrifice" to be cured from your disease.
- ❖ Many count on medicine to extend their life. There is evidence to show how many developed countries focus on preventing death instead of helping people who are suffering.
- ❖ Illich argues that people should spend less time trying to extend someone's life and to let them have a "good death" instead of being overloaded with medicine at the end of their life.
- ❖ "Suffering, healing, and dying are essentially intransitive activities that culture taught each man, are now claimed by technocracy as new areas of policy-making and are treated as malfunctions from which populations ought to be institutionally relieved." Illich does not want technology to rob our means of existence and living as human beings.



Doctors and Institutions Use of Modern Medicine

- ★ Health care has become a common item to have. A great business where the patient becomes the consumer.
- ★ The thirst for more health care and medicine has not helped any developed or underdeveloped society but has made people become dependent on medicine to save them.
- ★ Rituals practiced and performed in medical clinics are no different than what religious shrines practice.
- ★ 50-80% of adults swallow some kind of medically prescribed chemical every day.
- ★ As simple as nutrition and clean water can solve many medical problems that we see today in underdeveloped countries.
- ★ Doctors tend to be negligent and incompetent when it comes to malpractice of medicine. Random human error, as well as lack of specialized equipment often fall as a technical problem. Illich sees this as abusing the idea of medicine and how it is supposed to help people.
- ★ Ivan Illich blames doctors for how medicine has become a medical monopoly, as well as technology being the number one reason our health has been degrading.



It is evident, from Ivan Illich's perspective that modern medicine has taken advantage of our lives. We lost our old ways to technology. Medicine has shaped our social and political challenges, advanced technology denies a person's right to suffer, and doctors, as well as institutes, are using modern medicine for their own benefits rather than helping others. Illich viewed Jesus Christ as our savior. He died for our sins and suffered to do it. Medicine has taken away our right to suffer. Jesus took away our sins and the least we can do is accept his sacrifice and honor it. This research has increased my significance in the global south by showing how we, as a society, have been trying to advance our living instead of looking for simple and clear ways to help those who need it the most. The world we live in today relies on medicine to be our number one savior. Advance societies continue to search for new ways to extend our life spans instead of using their time and money to build up societies again and to help those in the south more. Medicine has always been seen as a positive in our society, but Ivan Illich exposes the troubles that come with advanced technology.

