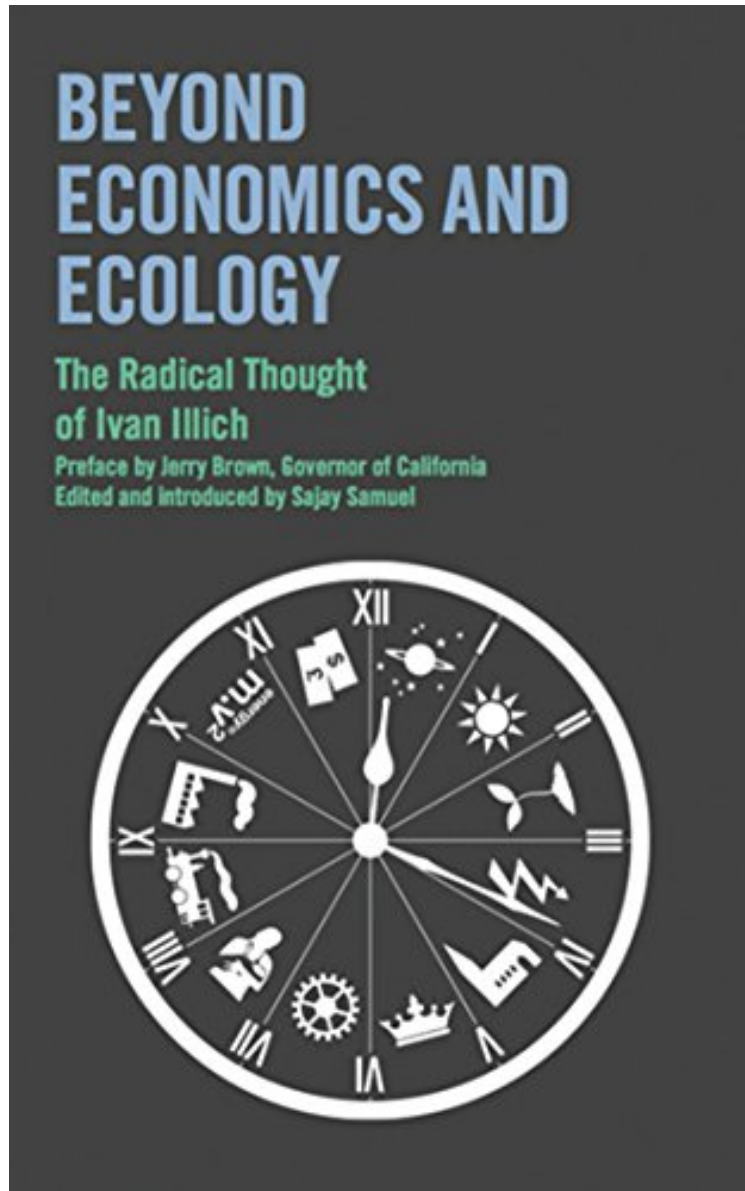


Beyond Economics and Ecology: The Radical Thought of Ivan Illich: 1

Ivan Illich

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Each of the four essays reprinted here was written for a specific occasion and together comprise only the smallest selection from a larger corpus questioning commodity and energy-intensive economies. The essays are presented thematically instead of chronologically to offer a better view of the sweep of Illich's argument. In the first two, 'War against Subsistence' and 'Shadow Work,' Illich reveals both the ruins on which the economy is built and the blindness of economics which cannot but fail to see it. The second two essays, 'Energy and Equity' and 'The Social Construction of Energy,' unearth the nineteenth century invention and subsequent consequences of 'energy' thought of as the unseen cause of all 'work' whether done by steam engines, humans, or trees. The science of ecology relies on this assumption and, as Illich explained, unwittingly fuels the addiction to energy. The close dance of energy consumption and economic growth is characteristic of not just industrially geared societies. After all, energy consumption steadily increases even in so-called post-industrial societies, fueling the fortunes of Google and Apple no less than Wal-Mart.

About the AuthorIvan Illich (1926-2002) was an Austrian philosopher, Roman Catholic priest, and critic of technological society and the unacknowledged axioms of the modern mind. He was appointed vice-rector of the Catholic University in Puerto Rico in 1956. In 1961, Illich founded the Centro Intercultural de Documentacion (CIDOC) at Cuernavaca, Mexico, where he developed many of his ideas. He is the author of many books including Limits to Medicine, Deschooling Society, Disabling Professions, Celebration of Awareness, Tools for Conviviality, Energy and Equity, Shadow Work, Gender, H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness and ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind.Sajay Samuel is Associate Professor of Accounting at Pennsylvania State University, and lives in the USA.Jerry Brown is Governor of the State of California, and lives in Oakland, CA.