

A Philosophy of Leisure Based on
Josef Pieper's Leisure the Basis of Culture

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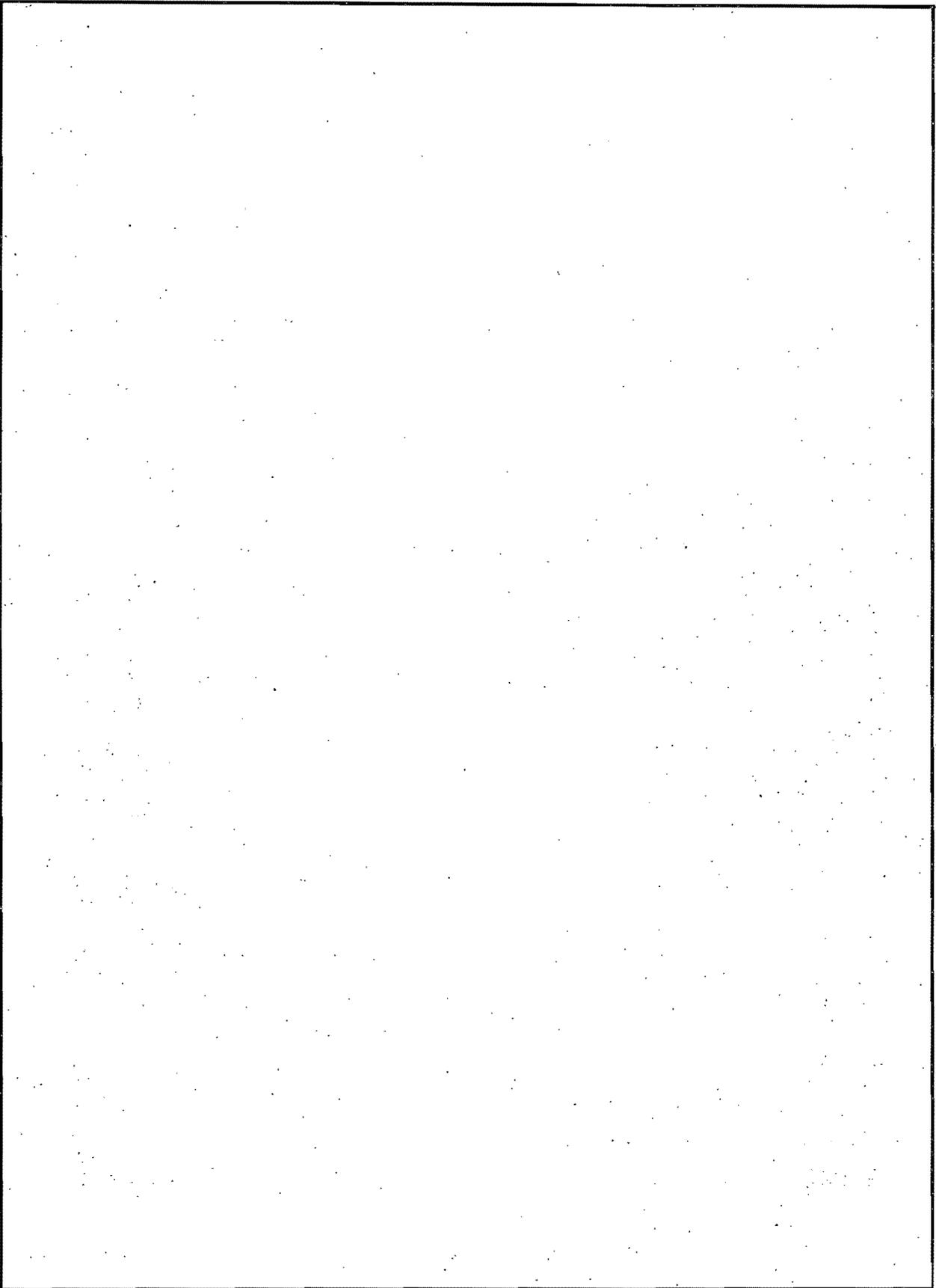


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INTRODUCTION:

The State of the Question

The world in the last half of this century is becoming an increasingly turbulent place in which to live, due to the explosions in population, knowledge, freedom, technology, leisure, communications, and international relations.

Value systems and institutions are being subjected to calculable strains. In this country, we are emerging from an economy of scarcity, toil, and exertion, as a way of life in which we produce "goods" to an economy of abundance, freedom from toil, as a way of life in which we consume "goods."

The world of yesteryear was characterized by hard work on the farm and in the factory, a small amount of earned leisure, comparative isolation from the rest of the world, individual entrepreneurship, a simple morality, nationalism, little government control, small towns and cities, and a production-oriented society.

Today we live in a situation characterized by labor-saving machines, more and more leisure forced upon us, more income for less work, world leadership in shrinking globe, advancing science, corporations and big business, big government, big cities and suburbia, and an economy that is consumption-oriented.

One of the traditional images of America is that of a toiling, sweating nation of workers who have labored frantically to achieve leisure as a kind of utopian yearning. Although pockets of poverty still remain, the vast majority of Americans have left behind the eat-sleep-work routine, where they eat

to gain strength to work hard to earn money to have enough to eat.¹

Most of us know when we have a money problem, a family problem, or a health problem. We also have a fair idea of what we should do about it, or where we should go for help.

However, some people insist that they have no leisure, much less a problem of what to do about it. Nevertheless, we have a leisure problem, despite the fact that a lot of people feel they hardly have a minute to themselves.² Footloose young people, bored adults, discouraged old folks, delinquency and crime, and emotional instability are just some of the factors which are making thoughtful people uneasy about the increased amount of free time people have, and how they are using or abusing it.

Americans are now standing on the threshold of a revolution in leisure 'time.' At this juncture the contours of this revolution can be but dimly perceived. Its full consequences, however, are bound to reshape the social and moral visage of American life.³

Doctor Lee goes on to say:

Leisure is no longer confined solely to a social and aristocratic elite. Although leisure has always been a fringe benefit in the history of mankind, now it is moving into the center of life, threatening to replace work as the basis of culture. Literally a revolution has occurred, for what was on the periphery is now at the heart of man's daily existence.⁴

Modern society is developing in such a way as to inhibit and mis-direct man's leisure pursuits. We have noted that our society is shifting from a primary focus on work to one on

leisure, from a production-oriented to a consumption-oriented economy.

To the extent that recreation has become a sub-category of the economy, directed toward the neurotic goal of impressing others, the root meaning of 're-creation' is lost. When the adjusted American is not using his leisure to consume impressively, he is usually using it to 'relax.' As he understands relaxation, it means going limp in a situation which will occupy his mind just enough to keep his problems from obtruding on his consciousness.⁵ Instead of using his leisure as an opportunity for self-discovery, he seeks the means of blotting out self-awareness, of diverting his attention from a self which he has not been able to accept.⁶

Although society is shifting its focus to leisure, ironically this is a harmful progressive shift because modern man has a misconception of leisure. And consequently, few people desire leisure and even fewer people achieve it. However, if we had a contemporary philosophy of leisure based on a classical meaning of leisure, showing its unique values, and not in reference to the workaday world, this misconception could be corrected and then modern man could identify with it, for "leisure can not exist where people do not know what it is."⁷

It is not facetious to ask the question: leisure--a blessing or a curse? For leisure presents possibilities which can either be a frontier for growth or the serious inhibiting of life: freedom to be bored or freedom to stop, reflect, and increase meaningful values. Here lies the dilemma. Leisure may be a challenge or a threat, a hazard or an opportunity, a bane or a blessing. Whether it will be a boring nuisance or an unmatched opportunity may well depend upon the perspectives

and resources we bring to bear upon the problem. The choice before us is clear: a new age of leisure or a new barbarism.

In her book, The Human Condition, Hannah Arendt gives us a scholarly, philosophical exploration of the character and prospects of industrial society. She points out in this work, which is subtitled, "A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man," exactly the same dilemma of which we are speaking here.

Closer at hand and perhaps equally decisive is another no less threatening event. This is the advent of automation, which in a few decades probably will empty the factories and liberate mankind from its oldest and most natural burden of laboring and the bondage of necessity... In this instance, it seems as though scientific progress and technical developments had been only taken advantage of to achieve something about which all former ages dreamed but which none had been able to realize.⁸

What then will be leisure's future in the light of these societal developments. Sabastian de Grazia hints at an answer in one of the closing paragraphs of his classical work:

A great facture in the ethos has taken place. The resultant fault will bring work and time under survey. The American will have to question his identity and ask about his destiny... Perhaps this long siege under garrison conditions will enable us to dream better, and dreaming better to build with art and intelligence.⁹

We of the twentieth century may not be here to enjoy the fruits of this questioning and to savor many of the changes. However, in our questioning we can produce a system. That is a philosophy of leisure which relates leisure to a universal and total view of man, in which leisure is seen as especially

important to the phenomenon of civilization and to man's full realization of himself in divine worship.

Starting from the basic assumption, then, that man has lost sight of a meaningful concept of leisure, a concept which could lie at the heart of any future perfectability of man's human condition. It is my conviction that man must re-discover this meaningful concept, not only to properly direct himself toward his goal of human perfection, which is potentially present to him who is made in the image and likeness of God, but also, more proximate, to enable him to transcend the workaday world in higher and more meaningful activities, to communicate with himself, his existence, and his God. This communication can and should take place in the workaday world, but can be more deeply effectual if it takes place on a non-utilitarian plain. In order to discover a meaningful concept of leisure it is necessary that we find an adequate methodology for investigation. Fortunately, there is such a methodology in the classical work of Josef Pieper, Leisure the Basis of Culture. Actually, this book is composed of two essays which were originally published separately. However, they are closely connected and belong together. In the preface to the English edition, the author states:

Their common origin or foundation might be stated in the following words: Culture depends for its very existence on leisure, and leisure, in its turn, is not possible unless it has a durable and consequently living link with the 'cultus,' with divine worship."¹⁰

Upon initial exposure, it might seem that Pieper's concept of leisure, placed as it is in the capsulized continuum above, might be dismissed by the non-believer.¹¹ Actually, upon closer scrutiny, Pieper's concept is seen to be founded in history¹² subjected to valid, contemporary social principles¹³ proposed to fill a void in our "secular" society, and only logically finding its link to divine worship.¹⁴

While turning to Pieper as the basis for my methodology, and for the content of my philosophy of leisure, I do not intend this thesis to be merely a rehashing of Pieper's ideas. Rather, in this thesis I will discuss the elements of true leisure, thus a philosophy of leisure, by elaborating upon these key elements in Pieper's analysis and bringing the ideas of other authors to bear upon the problem.

FOOTNOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

¹Robert Lee, Religion and Leisure in America, (New York: Abington Press, 1964), p. 19.

²Charles K. Brightbill, The Challenge of Leisure, (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 16.

³Lee, Religion..., p. 17.

⁴Ibid., p. 19.

⁵For a more Christian perspective in viewing the same problem, Cf. Majorie L. Casebier, An Overview of Literature on Leisure, (San Anselmo, California: National Council of Churches, 1963), p. 19.

⁶Snell Putney, The Adjusted American: Normal Neurosis in the Individual and Society, (New York: Harpers and Row, 1964), p. 189.

⁷Sebastian de Grazia, Of Time, Work, and Leisure, (Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut Printers, Inc., 1962), p. 8.

⁸Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1958), p. 5.

⁹Ibid., p. 436-7.

¹⁰Josef Pieper, Leisure the Basis of Culture, Transl. by Alexander Dru, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1952), p. 17.

¹¹Cf. C. F. Hovde, Nation, October, 1952, p. 362.

¹²Cf. Chapter Four of this paper: "An Historical Approach to Leisure and Contemplation."

¹³Cf. Chapter Three of this paper: "Leisure and Culture."

¹⁴Cf. Chapter Five of this paper: "Leisure and Celebration."

Chapter One

LEISURE AND WORK

We must seek the meaning of the leisure for
"leisure can not exist
where people do not know what it is."

Sebastian de Grazia

The classical Greeks wanted to be wise men. And they believed that to be wise one had to have leisure. But not every Greek had sufficient leisure in which to pursue truth. The body needs food and shelter, and to get them requires work. But work is neither the noblest nor the most distinguished activity of man. All animals seek food and shelter. Man alone can think, reason, and invent. If some men at least could be freed, i.e. freed from the menial occupations, they might soar to remarkable heights, and at the same time help lift to a higher level even those whose workaday life kept them pinned to the ground where vision was limited. No one has thought about leisure so well as the Greeks. "Leisure as a concept plays a basic role in their thought."¹

Men today would have great difficulty in accepting these ideas and greater difficulty in understanding the Greek concept of leisure. In his well-known study of capitalism Max Weber quotes the saying that one does not work to live but lives to work. There is not much difficulty today in understanding this. But as Pieper says:

The original concept of leisure, as it arose in the civilized world of Greece, has however, become unrecognizable in the world of planned diligence and "total work"; and in order to gain a clear notion of leisure we must begin by setting aside the prejudice--our prejudice--that comes from overvaluing the sphere of work.²

The conceptualization of leisure today is commonly work-oriented. We rest from work, for the purpose of doing more work,

or in order that our work will be more efficient. Many observers consider that leisure is "at the bottom a function of work, flows from work, and changes as the nature of work changes."³ Typical definitions view leisure as the antithesis of labor or as the time a man is free from work.⁴

Most contemporary authors' views on the subject imply that leisure is a reward for sweat, something that must be earned through productive effort, much as a beast of burden deserves food and a night's rest as a reward for a day of toil.

Leisure need not be viewed as subordinate to work nor as restorative for work, but may be seen as an end in itself, something valued for its own sake. "Strictly understood," contended Bennett Berger, "the conventional opposition of work and leisure is a false opposition because these terms characterize different orders of phenomena: leisure is a kind of time, whereas work is a kind of action."⁵

In setting leisure against work, the implication is that leisure is unproductive. Actually leisure is no less virtuous than work. Increasingly the distinction between the two has become tenuous. In fact modern society moves toward a fusion of labor and leisure. The close liaison between work and leisure, so much a part of Western thought, has been dubbed rightly or wrongly the "Protestant view of leisure."⁶ From a contemporary Protestant standpoint, this allegation may seem unfair in that it does not sufficiently take into account the complexity of the historical factors and circumstances in the rise of industrialism.

The Puritan Influence

The settlers who immigrated to America were heirs of the revolt against the holy days which characterized the Reformation. Of those early colonists, the group most criticized for its impact on present attitudes toward work and leisure has been the one which came from England to establish itself at Massachusetts Bay--the "Puritans." Exactly what the Puritan fathers believed and practiced is no longer really known. What exists in our day is the notion that anything which suggests strictness in morals, sobriety in conduct, piety in religion, thrift in business, diligence in work, or suspicion of pleasure can be attributed to the persisting influence of Puritanism.⁷

Illustrative of the view which traces the contemporary situation directly to the Puritan heritage is that expressed by George Soule:

A moral compulsion to work and get ahead appears to be necessary in the mythos of society if it is to operate an industrial system with highest efficiency. The Puritans supplied this in England and a larger section of North America...The bitter essence of their conception of worklingers in our ethics--it is a duty, like most duties unpleasant; and just because it is unpleasant it disciplines the soul. Any pleasurable pursuit they regarded for that very reason as vain or even wicked.⁸

Such an analysis seeks to locate America's preoccupation with work in the response which subsequent generations have made to the teaching of our New England ancestors that work is

morally right while idleness and excessive merriment are a sinful waste of time. From this point of view, it is quite easy to infer that Puritan fathers are also responsible for modern man's inability to accept and enjoy increased leisure.

It is a fact, however, that the extent of the Puritan influence on contemporary life is impossible to determine accurately. Any study of American history makes it abundantly clear that our complex makeup can not be regarded as the result of any one political, religious, or social tradition. It must be noted that we do have misconception of leisure and work, a misconception which can partially, at least, be attributed to the puritanical motives of our forefathers.

Purging Our Present Concept of Leisure

Sebastian de Grazia warns against regarding leisure as the antonym of work (which is free time) or confusing it with free time (a special way of calculating a special kind of time). He considers the historical development of leisure and attitudes toward it as well as our present consumer-economy which has made us critical of time unfilled by "things," concluding that true leisure is desired by only a few--scientists, theologians, philosophers, artists (who love ideas, the imagination, and truth) while the rest really desire only free time.⁹

To transfer the concept of free time into that of a proper concept of leisure is not going to be easy. First of all, free time is generally spent in the company of commodities, sometimes called leisure equipment, facilities, or items, e.g. television set, or a juke box.

The entertainment industry serves yet another neurotic pursuit. The adjusted American shrinks from candid association, and seeks to substitute a pseudo-intimacy based on superficial warmth and buoyed up by a froth of noncontroversial conversation. A television personality, a comic strip, or the World Series can provide material for small talk as safe as a discussion on the weather, and almost as universally applicable. The people and entertainment world provide a synthetic common interest through which strangers can interact without ceasing to be strangers.¹⁰

This characteristic is sometimes labeled as a part of "American materialism." The term is not common in Europe, except on applying the word to America. The sense possibly takes its

origin from socialist language, wherein materialism is directly related to the means of production, referring essentially, in a system based on capital and industry, to factories and mills.¹¹

The commercialization of free time insures that free time is spent collectively or uniformly. Whatever free time accessories are offered to the consumer must be marketable. The work-oriented education and specialized training Americans receive, combined with their lack of leisure tradition, leaves them open to suggestion from advertising. This brings up another factor that weakens what there is of an American ideal of leisure. The battle is over the wrong issue and shows how weak the ideal is. The fact that people have a lot of free time does not necessarily mean that they will have anything at all of leisure. The educators are, unfortunately, not offering liberal education as the solution to leisure as an ideal as much as a solution to the problem of too much free time badly spent.

All these qualities, then, whatever their cause may be, describe the current idea of free time, or leisure. Set off from yet mesmerized by work, it is limited by the clock and available only in small fragments. At times leisure is busily active. Then at others it is passive and uncritical. In most cases it is uniform and collective. Supposedly beneficial for everyone who has done his work and has a few dollars in his

pocket, it appears flanked by commodities and bent on fun. Matters like religion and politics and education are usually avoided.

Point by point the characteristics of free time, or leisure, today as an idea or an activity differ from the classical ideal, the exact opposite in some places, total irrelevance in others.¹²

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

¹Sebastian de Grazia, Of Time, Work, and Leisure, (Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut Printers, Inc., 1962), p. 32.

²Josef Pieper, Leisure the Basis of Culture, Transl. by Alexander Dru, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1952), p. 20.

³Eric Larrabee, ed., Mass Leisure, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958), p. 38.

⁴Nels Anderson, Work and Leisure, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1961), p. 33.

⁵Bennett Berger, "The Sociology of Leisure," Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society (Feb., 1962), p. 38.

⁶Ibid., p. 35.

⁷Robert Lee, Religion and Leisure in America, (New York: Abington Press, 1964), p. 151.

⁸George Soule, Time For Living, (New York: The Vicking Press, 1956), p. 125-6.

⁹Sebastian de Grazia, Of Time..., p. 40.

¹⁰Snell Putney, The Adjusted American: Normal Neuroses in the Individual and Society, (New York: Harpers and Row, 1964), p. 188-9.

¹¹Sebastian de Grazia, Of Time..., p. 338.

¹²Ibid., p. 347.

Chapter Two

LEISURE AND ACEDIA

Leisure is only possible when a man is at one with himself, when he acquiesces in his own being, whereas the essence of acedia is the refusal to acquiesce in one's own being.

Josef Pieper

Approaching a positive concept of leisure, Pieper begins by distinguishing it from acedia (a-kedos, not caring). He begins the third section of his essay by reviewing what he has found the three characteristics of the worker to be: "an extreme tension of the powers of action, a readiness to suffer 'in vacuo' unrelated to anything, and complete absorption into the social organism, itself rational planned to utilitarian ends."¹ He then says that, from this point of view, leisure is something strange, without rhyme or reason, "and, morally speaking, unseemly: another word for laziness, idleness, and sloth."² It is curious to note, Pieper goes on to say, that in the Middle Ages idleness far from being synonymous with leisure was considered to be the opposite of it, a condition which made leisure impossible. At this point Pieper discusses the philosophy of life attached to the word 'acedia.'

In the first place 'acedia' does not signify the 'idleness' we envisage when we speak of idleness as 'the root of all vices.' Idleness in the Medieval view means that a man renounces the claim implicit in his human dignity. In a word, he does not want to be as God wants him to be, and that ultimately means that he does not wish to be what he really, fundamentally, is.³

In line with this thinking, Kierkegaard analyzed 'acedia' as the "despairing refusal to be oneself."⁴ And Kierkegaard taught that this was the only real sin.⁵

Kierkegaard and two of his contemporaries represent repentance from the sin of sloth at different levels. For Kierkegaard, and for those existentialists who are most influenced by him, the individual must choose his own identity and not allow himself to be named by the expectations others inflict upon him. For Marx, man had to discard his superstitious reverence for unjust social structures before he could begin to change them. Nietzsche hoped for a new man beyond the bourgeois clod of the nineteenth century, a man who would have the courage to shape the very symbols and meaning by which he would live in the world.⁶

The sin against which these three nineteenth century prophets preached is exactly what the word sloth, 'acedia,' should convey. Sloth is one of the seven "deadly," or more correctly, "capital" sins. This does not mean it is just quantitatively worse, but that it is a source sin, the kind of structural derangement from which other sins arise. As Pieper says, sloth does not mean mere idleness, as though hyperthyroid activism were its antidote; rather, it means that man "renounces the claim implicit in his human dignity."⁷ In Medieval terms this means that the slothful man does not will his own being, does not wish to be what he fundamentally and really is. This is why sloth is such a dangerously fertile sin. It tempts man to other expressions of inhumanity. It leads toward what we might today call estrangement.⁸

Pieper explains this precisely:

Idleness, according to traditional teaching, is the source of many faults and among others that deep-seated lack of calm which makes leisure impossible.⁹

Pieper is saying that idleness, in the old sense of the word, far from being synonymous with leisure, is the inner prerequisite which renders leisure impossible. Leisure, we must remember, is a mental and spiritual attitude; it is not simply the result of external factors, it is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a week-end, or a vacation. It is, in the first place, an attitude of the mind, a condition of the soul, and as such utterly contrary to the ideal of "worker" in each and every one of the three aspects: work as activity, as toil, and as social function.¹⁰

Religiously, politically, economically, militarily, and mentally it is still thought better to work than to do what you please. Although all these justifications have weakened, the habits of work and its prestige in the world persist. Moreover, men prefer to work not because they do not know what to do with their free time--we, like the Greeks and Romans, enjoy boxing, wrestling matches, and horse races--but because the job still gives a sense of participation in the affairs of the city, the country, and the world. Whatever enjoyment they might get out of more free time, they can not give up their place in the scheme of things without gaining another place. Retirement, for example, does not offer them another, nor does it offer the social

satisfaction that many jobs have today. If work ever loses its significance, then parts of a job not included in the job description will lose much of their pleasure too.

The men who go to work in the morning and come home at night are still the pillars of society, and society is still their pillar of support. If an eroding work ethos causes these pillars to crumble, must the new pillars of purpose be found in leisure? This evidently is the hope of many of those who speak of education for leisure.¹¹ They foresee that free time is on the increase. They fear that empty free time is idleness. They fear that free-time activities today are vain and useless. They would like to fill these empty, vain, and useless hours, days, weeks, and years with something good, something that would turn into leisure. Really they are still using the old word, idleness. Unfortunately for their hopes, leisure has nothing to do with idleness or free time, nor are the mass of men easily attracted to its joys.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

¹Josef Pieper, Leisure the Basis of Culture, Transl. by Alexander Dru, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1952), p. 38.

²Ibid., p. 38.

³Ibid., p. 38.

⁴Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, Transl. by Walter Lewis, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 74ff.

⁵Harvey G. Cox, On Not Leaving It to the Snake, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1967), p. xv.

⁶Ibid., p. xvii.

⁷Pieper, Leisure . . ., p. 38.

⁸For a more contemporary discussion of the seven capital sins, especially sloth, Cf. Raymond Mortimer, ed., The Seven Deadly Sins, (New York: William and Morrow Co., 1962).

⁹Pieper. p. 40.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 40.

¹¹Cf. S.R. Ranganathan, Education for Leisure, (Delhi: Indian Adult Education Association, 1954).

Chapter Three

LEISURE AND CULTURE

Culture depends for its
very existence upon leisure...

Josef Pieper

Pieper argues that "culture depends for its very existence on leisure."¹ If freedom is an attribute of leisure, then it is apparent why leisure is considered the basis of culture.

The formulation of society's values and their effective transmission to the population and, equally important, the internalization of these crucial values demand at least some degree of freedom from toil.²

A well-known economist, Walter Buckingham, also points out the connection between leisure and culture with a startling prediction. Calling on a Gallup poll of 1961 for verification, he states that only seventeen per cent of Americans are currently reading a book. And he predicts that unless our increasing leisure is used to broaden our minds and cultivate our tastes, a nightmare of dangerously shallow distractions could emerge.³

Still another author, Max Kaplan, would verify Pieper's statement, culture depends for its very existence on leisure. In his book, Leisure in America: A Social Inquiry, Kaplan finds leisure a clue to the character of culture.⁴

In our leisure we stand exposed. Through our leisure we provide the elements for diagnosing our culture to the observer.⁵

With these thoughts in mind, having somewhat defined leisure,⁶ and locating it within the Western tradition, we can go on to further explain the relationship between leisure and the institutions that universally arise to meet society's

recurrent problems of continuity, cooperation, and survival.⁸

As we have seen, leisure is often defined functionally as the opposite of labor,⁹ but this definition is inadequate. The word has received a modicum of clarity by being distinguished from mere recreation,¹⁰ and from free time (any time set apart from the exigencies of toil). Recreation and free time find their justification as propaedeutics of work. From a purely business point of view, Sunday worship and the coffee break are qualitatively the same: they both contribute to making better workers for the enterprise. The underlying characteristic of all the various manifestations of labor is that labor is always incorporated into a system of services done with a certain regularity. The performance of these services does not depend solely upon the freedom of the working individual.¹¹

Leisure, on the other hand, is in an entirely different order. It enables man to transcend the social matrix of economic production and routine social duties so that he can consider the significance of things and perform more significant acts.¹² Thus Pieper includes within the comprehension of the term leisure, the philosophical act, the religious act, the aesthetic act, and of course, the effect of life and death, or some other way in which man's relation to the world is convulsed and shaken--all these fundamental ways of acting belong naturally together, by reason of the power they have in common of enabling a man to break through and transcend the workaday world.¹³

Although the Greeks reflected on leisure more than any other people, the concept of leisure is not unknown outside their tradition. The empirical fact of leisure can be intelligibly explained by a systematic, functional analysis of society. Viewed as a whole any successful society must solve four major functional problems: (1) adaptation to its environment accomplished for the most part by economic institutions; (2) goal setting, the task of political institutions; (3) management of tensions generated by the possible conflict between an individual's desires and capabilities, and society's demands and requirements, a contribution made largely by the family and other primary groups; and (4) the integration or harmonization of the different institutions that are meeting the problems of adaptation, goal setting, and management of tension. The integrative function is performed when the social system, through a religion or ideology, explains itself to itself. There must be a broad consensus as to the worth of the system and the justness of its demands, if relatively smooth interaction is to be possible.¹⁴ The implications of this analysis are apparent: if the integrative function is necessary for society, as both theoretical and empirical findings indicate, then much leisure is necessary for some members of society, and some leisure is necessary for all members. Leisure, then, appears in every society precisely because it is a prerequisite for the formation and survival of a culture. "Culture" is used here in the same manner in which

Pieper uses it.

Culture is the quintessence of all the natural goods of the world and of those gifts and qualities which, while belonging to man, lie beyond the sphere of his needs and wants. All that is good in this sense, all man's gifts and faculties are not necessarily useful in a practical way; though there is no denying that they belong to a truly human life, not strictly speaking necessary, even though he could not do without them.¹⁵

In conclusion, it should be noted that Pieper gives further validity to the fact of this interaction and dependence. He does so by showing that the history of the word attests the fact: for leisure in Greek is 'skole,' and in Latin 'schola,' the English "school." The word used to designate the place where we educate and teach is derived from a word which means "leisure." School does not, properly speaking, mean "school," but "leisure."¹⁶

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

¹Josef Pieper, Leisure the Basis of Culture, Transl. by Alexander Dru, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1952), p. 19.

²Harry C. Bredemeier, The Analysis of Social Systems, (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1962), p. 89.

³Walter Buckingham, Automation, (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 156-7.

⁴With regard to leisure as being a clue to the character of culture, consult: Ida Craven, "Leisure," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Volume IX, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1934), p. 402-5.

⁵Max Kaplan, Leisure in America: A Social Inquiry, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1960), p. 5.

⁶The first chapter of this paper.

⁷Cf. Chapter Four of this paper: "An Historical Approach to Leisure and Contemplation."

⁸Bredemeier, The Analysis . . ., Chapter III, "The Process of Socialization," p. 60.

⁹The first chapter of this paper.

¹⁰This term comes from the Latin 'recreatio,' to restore or refresh; recreation is a renewal or preparation for the continuance of routine and necessary work. Using the philosophical term, it should be classified as teleological. In its primary sense recreation has the purpose of re-creating or revitalizing so that we may more effectively go back to activities that are not recreational but fundamentally of a work nature.

¹¹One can see the lack of reflection on leisure as freedom, and the concept of freedom as related to the working individual in Mortimer J. Adler's compendium on The Idea of Freedom, (New York: Doubleday, 1958).

¹²It is, of course, impossible to include within the scope of this paper a comprehensive analysis of the part, more fundamentally than that of leisure, which religion plays in the interaction of religion and culture. On this point, the reader is

encouraged, therefore, to consult Daniel A. O'Connor's book The Relation between Religion and Culture according to Christopher Dawson, (Montreal: Librairie Saint-Viateur, 1952), especially Part IV, "The Relationship between Religion and Culture in the Medieval and Modern Period," pp. 159-237.

¹³Pieper, Leisure ..., p. 83.

¹⁴Pitirim Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1957), p. 2-19; "Forms and Problems of Culture Integration and Methods of their Study." Also: Bredemeier, The Analysis..., p. 39-47, "Functional Analysis of Social Systems."

¹⁵Pieper, p. 17-18.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 20.

Chapter Four

AN HISTORICAL APPROACH TO
LEISURE AND CONTEMPLATION

When looms weave by themselves
man's slavery will end.

Aristotle

The title should be a sufficient indication of the content of this chapter. However, what the title does not explain is the reason for this particular approach.

There are two statements in Pieper's essay which are essential to an understanding of his concept of leisure. Unfortunately, Pieper does not give an explanation of either of these statements. These are the statements in question:

The Christian and Western conception of the contemplative life is closely linked to the Aristotelean notion of leisure.¹

The soul of leisure, it can be said, lies in "celebration." Celebration is the point at which the three elements of leisure come to focus: relaxation, effortlessness, and the superiority of "active leisure" to all functions.²

To check the validity of these two statements, to ascertain their importance, and to indicate the richness of the concepts, it is necessary to trace the historical development of the ideals of leisure and contemplation. We can not, of course, follow all the ramifications. That would commit us to a world history of leisure and contemplation. At best we can mention various figures and periods that formed and touched the ideal, leaving it with some of the brilliance to which the Greeks had polished it, and forgetting some of the bitter experiences in which the Romans sought to drown it.³

In Aristotle, the words "peace" and "leisure" come

together often. They repeat his thesis that wars are fought to have peace, and peace is needed for leisure. Aristotle not only lived in, but was preceded by a century interested in leisure. His Greece, his Athens pulled back the curtains to offer the West an ideal. But what is this leisure?

In some cases it seems that leisure, for Aristotle, is another word for spare time. For example, the well-to-do, says Aristotle, if they must attend their private affairs have little leisure for politics.⁴ In common usage 'skole' seems to have had this meaning. The etymological root of 'skole' meant to halt or cease, hence to have quiet or peace. Later it meant to have time to spare or, technically, time for oneself. Of the great Greeks, Aristotle was the one who most often used the word 'skole.'⁵ At one point Aristotle gives a rough equivalent of leisure. He speaks of it and then adds, "or in other words, freedom from the necessity of labor."⁶

This, at a glance, seems similar to the modern idea of free time, time off the job, but we must be cautious here and be precise in the light of chapter two of this paper. There we noted that free time accentuates time, it sets aside a unit of time free of the job.⁷ In Aristotle's short definition, time has no role. Leisure is a condition or state--the state of being free from the necessity of labor.

Elsewhere, Aristotle mentions that it is not labor, but action which is in contrast to leisure.⁸ He speaks of the life of leisure versus the life of action. He uses "action" here in its precise meaning: activities toward other persons or objects in order to effect some purpose.

The distinguishing mark now begins to appear. For Aristotle, leisure is a state of being in which activity is performed for its own sake or for its own end.⁹ To understand what Aristotle meant we shall have to go back to Plato. Aristotle was his pupil for twenty years, until Plato's death. Often, particularly in the case of contemplation, he neglects to give an introduction to a subject that Plato has already discussed fully.

So far I have not discussed contemplation. By going into this idea, we shall get a firmer grasp of what Aristotle meant by leisure, and "freedom from necessity," and the relation between the two. Contemplation in the Greek sense is so close to leisure that in describing them repetition is inevitable. Plato first developed the idea in The Republic. His models were the Ionian philosophers, whose absorption in knowledge for its own sake inspired Plato's academy and Aristotle's Peripatetic school. The idea of contemplation itself in those days seemed to be groping for its true meaning. Our word comes from the Latin but the Latin is a translation from the Greek

'theorein,' (to behold, to look upon). 'Theoria' was also the word for theory, and was used in the phrase "the theoretical life," which in Latin became "the contemplative life," both of which have a fast friendship with the life of leisure.¹⁰

Contemplation for Plato and Aristotle was the best way of truth-finding. They prized it above all other activities. It was the only activity in which they could picture the gods. The contemplator looks upon the world and man with the calm eye of one who has no design on them.

In one sense he feels himself to be close to all nature. He has not the aggressive detachment or unfeeling isolation that comes from scrutinizing men and objects with a will to exploiting them.¹¹

Whoever does look on the world with design, whoever wishes to subdue or seduce others, to gain money, to win fame, can not see much beyond the slice he is cutting. His view of the world has placed blinders around his eyes. And he does not even know that his sight is distorted and limited.

Contemplation, like leisure (or itself being leisure) brings felicity. Aristotle contends that happiness extends only so far as contemplation. Indeed, happiness must be some form of contemplation. The activity of God, surpassing all others in blessedness, must be contemplative. Those men who most cultivate the mind are most akin to God and therefore dearest to him. The man in contemplation is a free man. He needs nothing, therefore nothing determines or distorts his

thought.

Because Wholeness is what man strives for, the power to achieve leisure is one of the fundamental powers of the human soul. Like the gift for contemplative absorption in things that are, and like the capacity of the spirit to soar in festive celebration, the power to know leisure is the power to overstep the boundaries of the workaday world and reach out to superhuman, life-giving existential forces that refresh and renew us. Only in genuine leisure does a "gate to freedom" open. Through that gate man may escape from the "restricted area" of the latent anxiety which a keen observer has perceived to be the mark of the world of work.¹²

Thus far we have seen how philosophers, in an arbitrary interplay of 'skole' and the contemplative life, transformed a word meaning simple spare time into the classical ideal of leisure with all its sense of freedom, superiority, and learning for its own sake. Here we see that the three elements of which Pieper speaks are crystallizing and coming into sharper focus.

The ideal of leisure went into Rome, carried there largely through the works of Plato and Aristotle and Epicurus. In Latin the word for leisure was 'otium,' and as in Greece its verbal opposite was formed by a negative prefix, 'negotium.' Leisure lured them; they sang its praises chiefly in terms of 'beato solitudo,' blessed solitude, in the country.¹³

In later writings Seneca carries the theme further. From 'Of Tranquillity' through 'Of Leisure' to his 'Letters,' the succession runs: first, a prelude to going into a life of leisure; second, the philosophical justification; third, the spirit of that life as it shines through to one who tries it.¹⁴

The young and the old, says Seneca, need leisure. Only in leisure can one choose the model by which to direct his life.

Pieper expresses the same reality in a different manner:

In leisure--not of course exclusively in leisure, but always in leisure--the truly human values are saved and preserved...¹⁵

In Seneca, the thought of the Greco-Roman world converges. Four centuries, from the second until the sixth, feel the influence of his drawing together and fusing Stoic thought with Greek writings on leisure and contemplation. Poetry and prose both profit from it. The emperor Julian, the last great defender of the pagan ideals, solemnly declared that whoever tries to persuade us that the philosophical life, meaning the life of leisure and contemplation, is not superior to everything else, is trying to cheat us.

We have reached the point at which the thought leads back to Plato and then goes off through Plotinus into Christianity and monasticism. Here the contemplative element is singled out. Yet leisure, with part of itself drawn into monasteries, still did not quit the world for the cloister.

The ideal has had an enormous secular influence. One current runs through the Stoics, and from them into Cicero and Seneca who later pass northward, penetrating as far as the English schools to put a stamp on the English and on part, but a lesser part, of the American character as well. Another current formed the idea of the liberal arts out of that of the

general culture. Much of the tenacity of the liberal arts (they survived the barbarian invasions) and their strange attraction (they won over Theodoric who was illiterate) comes from their freedom, the liberality of having their end in themselves.¹⁶

At this point, it will be necessary to employ a somewhat lengthy quote to bring the exact relation of Pieper's thought, and the meaning of the preceding paragraph and quote into sharper focus.

But the question is: whether the world, defined as the world of work, is exhaustively defined; can man develop to the full as a functionary and a 'worker' and nothing else; can a full human existence be contained within an exclusively workaday existence? Stated differently and translated back into our terms:

is there such a thing as an liberal art? (emphasis is my own)...And it is above all the expression 'intellectual worker' that epigrammatically confirms the fact that this is impossible. And that is why it is so alarmingly symptomatic that ordinary usage, and even university custom, allows the term 'intellectual worker' and sometimes permits 'brain worker.'

The ancients, however, maintained that there was a legitimate place for non-utilitarian modes of human activity, in other words, liberal arts...

In the Middle Ages the same view prevailed. "It is necessary for the perfection of human society," Aquinas writes, "that there should be men who devote their lives to contemplation."¹⁷--nota bene, necessary not only for the good of the individual who so devotes himself, but for the good of human society. No one thinking in terms of 'intellectual worker' could have said that.¹⁸

The Christian Focus

Christianity came into the world dominated by Rome; the New Testament was written in Greek. These obvious facts remind us of the innumerable contacts Christianity had with the Greco-Roman world. The Old Testament did not have a Greco-Roman heritage, so its chapters and verses need not be recalled here. The Greeks discovered leisure. No other language seems to contain the word with the meaning the philosophers gave it in Hellas. For this reason the most we could hope to discover in places untouched by Greece would be conceptions of free time or spare time, a meaning that the Greek word had too, of course, but which it sped far beyond.

Early Christians kept well in mind what Jesus Christ had said about the birds of the air: "They sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26). It is not Jesus' warning about work that affects the idea of leisure but His turning of men's hope toward God and the coming of the Kingdom.

The Greeks had said that the activity of leisure was contemplation, the highest of all activities because it was the part in man that was godlike, that most distinguished him from the animals. In Christianity the activity remains

important less because of itself than because of its focus. The contemplator is now divine not because he contemplates, but because he seeks to contemplate God. The result is that contemplation becomes more specifically a seeking of religious truth, and less of what Plato had in mind when he spoke of using goods found in contemplation as model for the 'polis.' A man contemplates because he loves the truth and wishes to know and understand it. Since man's ultimate aim is to contemplate God face to face, an act that would give him perfect happiness, man in contemplating, in gazing on God in his mind, has an intimation of real happiness.

In history, this period ends a relatively pure ideal of leisure for when the Kingdom did not appear as quickly as the early Christians believed it would, the order of Christians on this earth called for attention. Work and the morrow received fuller consideration from learned men. The monks, for example, had ideals of work different from those of the pagans. Work, manual labor in particular, became an instrument of self-perfection, of repentance, or for helping others in charity.¹⁹

Thus, a concept of work began to evolve; until in late medieval times, instead of delightedly accepting the eternal harmonious order to be discovered through contemplation, men intrude on nature actively. From the twelfth to the fourteenth century men came to grips with the stars, and animals, and

in experiment actively sought their transformation. By the fifteenth century, the Renaissance was ready to turn these ideas into mature doctrine, a new and great one for the Western world. This is the beginning of the resulting dis-equilibrium of which Toynbee speaks.

All the unique achievements of men and women in the realm of Art and all the cumulative achievements of Man in the realm of Science and Technology had been fruits of the profitably employed leisure of this creative minority; but in a post-industrial Westernizing world it could no longer be taken for granted that the growth of Civilization would continue to be fostered by the employment of leisure for these creative purposes; for the Industrial Revolution had upset--and this in several different ways--the previous equilibrium between Leisure and Life.²⁰

Toward an Understanding of Contemplation

To return to contemplation, let us elaborate its basic characteristics. The opposite of the contemplative life is the active life, or 'vita activa.' These two poles of distinction have also undergone a long history of development, disputation, and conflict. Put simply, the conflict revolves around the balance which should exist between thought and action. Both sides agree that action should be the product of thought. We can easily compare the Aristotlean concept of leisure to the same principle. Leisure is a receptive attitude of the mind, a contemplative attitude, and is not only the occasion but also the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation.

We can attribute to contemplation three basic qualities. The first is a passive response to reality. Josef Pieper shows its relation to knowledge:

Now discursive thought and intellectual contemplation are not simply related to one another as activity to receptivity, or as tense effort to passive acceptance. They are also related to one another as toil and trouble on the one hand and effortless possession on the other.²¹

...the essence of knowledge does not consist in the effort for which it calls, but in grasping existing things and in unveiling reality.²²

Secondly, contemplation has a high value of its own. The man of thought reflects and is restored. The stimulating activity of contemplation itself does not have to prove its value pragmatically. "Leisure, like contemplation, is of a

higher order than the 'vita activa'...And order, in this sense, can not be overturned or reversed."²³ The contemplative activity is associated with the activity of the spirit and the intellect, which are higher in order to the body.

The third characteristic of contemplation is its wholeness, the sensitivity to reality, which it admits. Thomas Merton describes this sensitivity to the world in a personal way:

...The contemplative life, which must not be construed as an escape from time and matter, from social responsibility and the life of sense, but rather as a confrontation with poverty and the void, a renunciation of the empirical self, the presence of death and nothingness, in order to overcome the ignorance and error that spring from the fear of 'being nothing.' The man who can be alone, who can come to see the 'emptiness' and 'uselessness' which the collective mind fears and condemns, are necessary conditions for the most radical encounter with truth.²⁴

By standing up to the obstacles of the world with courage, one becomes a person. A person is one who has become a whole self and has found his place in the world. He has added to the unity of the world around him because he knows his abilities and limitations.

We are now better prepared to understand the two statements by Pieper, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Also, we have the concepts for understanding how and why Pieper places divine worship at the basis of leisure, which is the subject of inquiry of the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

¹ Josef Pieper, Leisure the Basis of Culture, Translated by Alexander Dru, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1952), p.21.

²Ibid., p. 56.

³The primary source of my ideas for this section is Sebastian de Grazia's comprehensive work, Of Time, Work, and Leisure, especially chapter I entitled, "The Background of Leisure."

⁴Our understanding of the relation between leisure and politics in Aristotle, so central to this thesis, is complicated by our lack of treatment of the Aristotlean notion of politics. Sufficient, however, for the discussion at hand is the following explanation. If a man is at leisure only when he is free, the good state must exist to give him leisure. What he does in his leisure can be equated today with what we call the good life. Suprisingly few political philosophers have seen the connection between freedom and leisure as ends of the state. The prevalence of work in modern times, as we have seen, partly explains the oversight. Aristotle, however, took it for granted that the life of leisure was the only life fit for a Greek.

⁵Sebastian de Grazia, Of Time, Work, and Leisure, (Hartford, Connecticut: Connecticut Printers, Inc., 1962), p. 12.

⁶Cf. Politics II, 1269a, on leisure as freedom from leisure.

⁷Chapter two of this paper, p. 11.

⁸Cf. Politics II, 1275a.

⁹de Grazia, p. 15.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 19.

¹¹Ibid., p. 20.

¹²Pieper, p. 44.

¹³de Grazia, p. 20.

- ¹⁴de Grazia, p. 24.
- ¹⁵Pieper, p. 44.
- ¹⁶de Grazia, p. 25.
- ¹⁷"Commentary on Proverbs," by St. Thomas Aquinas.
- ¹⁸Pieper, p. 36-7.
- ¹⁹de Grazia, p. 27.
- ²⁰Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954.), p. 604.
- ²¹Pieper, p. 29.
- ²²Ibid., p. 31.
- ²³Ibid., p. 42.
- ²⁴Thomas Merton, The Ascent To Truth, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1952), p. 122.

Chapter Five

LEISURE AND CELEBRATION

A man will live thus,
not to the extent that he is a man
but to the extent that a divine
principle dwells within him.

(Nicomachean Ethics, 1177b)

The Basis of Leisure

We have been talking about the ideal of leisure. Now it remains to discover and explain the fundamental justification of leisure and that which makes it inwardly possible. In addition to considering leisure as the basis of culture, Dr. Pieper goes on to consider the basis of leisure, which he says is celebration:

Compared with the exclusive ideal of work as toil, leisure appears in its character as an attitude of contemplative "celebration," a word that, properly understood, goes to the very heart of what we mean by leisure.¹

Yet, it should be pointed out that in such a consideration of celebration, Pieper has in mind not the broad, general idea of merry-making, festivities, and the like, but rather the more limited idea of celebration in the religious sense.

And as we may read in the first chapter of Genesis that God "ended his work which he had made and behold, it was good." In leisure, man too celebrates the end of his work by allowing his inner eye to dwell for awhile on the reality of his creation. He looks and affirms: it is good.²

In this last quote, the key word is "affirm," which Pieper goes on to explain.

Now the highest form of affirmation is the festival; among its characteristics, Karl Kerényi tells us, is "the union of tranquillity, contemplation, and intensity of life." To hold a celebration means to affirm the basic meaningfulness of the universe and a sense of oneness celebrating it, in holding festivities upon occasion, man experiences in the world an aspect other than the everyday one.³

True leisure, then, can be viewed as contemplative "celebration" for it leads man to accept the reality of the creation and thus to celebrate it. Consequently, feast days and holidays "are the inner source of leisure."⁴ Sebastian de Grazia has this to say about the same relation:

Man's recognition of himself and his place in the universe is essentially a religious discovery. As such it transcends the workaday world.⁵

In elaborating upon the importance of the concept of celebration and its relation to leisure, Pieper begins the fifth and last section of his essay with this central question:

What, then, ultimately makes leisure inwardly possible and, at the same time, what is its fundamental justification?⁶

The content of the fifth section of his essay, which is the answer to his own question, can be summarized in these two paragraphs found at the beginning of that section.

The soul of leisure, it can be said, lies in celebration. Celebration is the point at which the three elements of leisure come to focus: relaxation, effortlessness, and the superiority of "active leisure" to all functions.

But if celebration is the core of leisure, then leisure can only be made possible and justifiable on the same basis as the celebration of a festival. 'That basis is divine worship.'⁷

Divine Worship as the Basis

Every discovery man makes of his relation to God, to the universe, to his fellow humans, and to himself, is so wonderful it calls for a celebration. Religion marks it with a holiday. The state too has its holidays. A holiday is universal. It is celebrated not by the discoverers alone, but by all who share in the wonders it reveals. It joins the two classes, the great majority and the leisure kind, and all those who have strayed and separated into society's many crannies. The holiday, if properly celebrated, heals whatever rifts exist and reminds men that they are bound together by the one equality with which they came into this world and with which they bow out.⁸ So for the few who love leisure, and for the many who need it, the holiday is a day to celebrate the wonder of life. The meaning of leisure, as we have said, is man's affirmation of the universe and his experiencing the world in an aspect other than its everyday one.

Now we can not conceive a more intense affirmation of the world than praise of God, praise of the creator of this very world. The most festive festival one could possibly celebrate is divine worship. What is true of celebration is true of leisure: its possibility, its justification derive from its roots in divine worship.⁹ That is not a conceptual abstraction, but the simple truth as may be seen from the history of religion.

What does a "day of rest" mean in the Bible, and for that matter in Greece and Rome? To rest from work means that time is reserved for divine worship: certain days and times are set aside and transferred to "the exclusive property of God."¹⁰

Separated from the sphere of divine worship, of the cult of the divine, and from the power it radiates, leisure is as impossible as the celebration of a feast. Cut off from the worship of the divine, leisure becomes laziness and work inhuman.¹¹

That is the origin or source of all the sham forms of leisure with their strong resemblance to want of leisure and to sloth. The vacancy left by the absence of worship is filled by mere killing of time and by boredom, which is directly related to the inability to enjoy leisure, for one can only be bored if the spiritual power to be leisurely has been lost.¹² The celebration of divine worship, then, is the deepest of the springs by which leisure is fed and continues to be vital; though it must be remembered that leisure embraces everything, which without being merely useful, is an essential of a full human existence.

Our effort has been to regain some space for true leisure, to bring back the fundamentally right possession of leisure, "active leisure." The true difficulty in this often desperate effort is due to the fact that the ultimate root of leisure is not susceptible to the human will. Absolute affirmation of the universe can not, strictly speaking, be based on voluntary

resolve. Above all it can not be done for the sake of a purpose outside itself. Leisure can not be achieved at all when it is sought as a means to an end, even though that end might be the salvation of the Western civilization. Celebration of God in worship can not be done unless it is done for its own sake. The most sublime form of affirmation of the world as a whole is the fountainhead of leisure

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

¹Josef Pieper, Leisure the Basis of Culture, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1952), p. 42.

²Ibid., p. 42-3.

³Ibid., p. 43.

⁴Ibid., p. 55.

⁵Sebastian deGrazia, Of Time, Work, and Leisure, (Hartford Connecticut: Connecticut Printers, Inc., 1962), p. 434.

⁶Pieper, Leisure p. 56.

⁷Ibid., p. 56.

⁸deGrazia, Of Time p. 435.

⁹Pieper, p. 57.

¹⁰deGrazia, p. 437.

¹¹Pieper, p. 59.

¹²Cf. Chapter Two of this paper.

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