The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe
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VIEWPOINT

THE INVENTION OF LEISURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

In 1964 the seventh *Past and Present* conference was concerned with work and leisure.[1] After thirty years or so it may be opportune to return to the theme and to look at what has been happening in the interval. As might have been expected at the time, the 1964 conference devoted most of its attention to the subject of work.[2] In 1994, on the other hand, the Twenty-Sixth Week of Studies on Economic History organized by the Datini Institute at Prato chose "leisure" or "free time" as its theme, thus exemplifying the recent turn towards consumption on the part of economic historians, a turn which has led them to extend their frontiers in the direction of social and cultural history.

In the last twenty years or so, social historians of Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been carrying out a good deal of research on leisure and sport, concentrating on the period since 1850.[3] Their colleagues in sociology have moved in the same direction. The sociology of leisure was an expanding sub-discipline as long ago as the 1950s, while the late Norbert

[1] K. V. Thomas, "Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society", *Past and Present*, no. 29 (Dec. 1964), pp. 50-62, and the ensuing discussion, pp. 63-6.

[2] But see the comments on leisure by Beryl Smalley, Lawrence Stone and others in the discussion after Thomas's paper: *ibid.*, pp. 65-6.

[3] For Britain, for instance, see R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society* (Cambridge, 1973); G. Stedman Jones, "Class Expression versus Social Control: A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of Leisure", in his *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 76-89; P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London, 1978; rev. edn, London, 1987); J. Walvin, *Leisure and Society, 1830-1950* (London, 1978); R. McKibbin, "Working-Class Gambling in Britain, 1880-1939", *Past and Present*, no. 82 (Feb. 1979), pp. 147-78; R. McKibbin, "Work and Hobbies in Britain, 1880-1950", in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 127–46; H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1980); J. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (Cambridge, 1981); J. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (Harmondsworth, 1986); R. Mandell, *Sport: A Cultural History* (London, 1984); J. Hargreaves, *Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain* (Cambridge, 1986). For an overview, see P. Bailey, "Leisure, Culture and the Historian", *Leisure Studies*, viii (1989), pp. 107-28.

Elias devoted a book to the sociology of sport.[4] As usual in the history of academic learning, an extension of scholarly territory has been marked by the establishment of new journals — interdisciplinary journals such as *Leisure Studies* and the *Journal of Leisure Research*, historical journals such as *Sozialgeschichte des Sports* and the *International Journal for the History of Sport*.

Implicitly or explicitly, most recent work has been based on one central hypothesis, that of a fundamental discontinuity or great divide between pre-industrial and industrial society.[5] According to this view, in medieval and early modern Europe, as in other pre-industrial societies, the modern idea of leisure was lacking.[6] The modern distinction between the ideas of work and leisure, like the regular alternation of work and leisure, was a product of industrial capitalism. Pre-industrial societies had festivals (together with informal and irregular breaks from work), while industrial societies have leisure, weekends and vacations. The emergence of leisure is therefore part of the process of modernization.[7] In other words, the history of leisure is discontinuous. If this theory is correct, there is what Michel Foucault liked to call a conceptual break or "rupture" between the two periods,[8] and so the very idea of a history of leisure before the industrial revolution is an anachronism.

It is indeed difficult to accept the idea of a continuous history of leisure, going back to the Middle Ages or indeed to the classical world of games and circuses.[9] This is not of course to deny that late medieval and early modern Europeans engaged in many pursuits which we would describe as leisure or even as sporting activities — jousting, hunting, tennis, card-playing, travel, joking and so on. It is not to deny that Europe in this period was dominated by what Thorstein Veblen was to call a "leisure class",[10] or that workers often chose to exercise what economists now describe as a "leisure preference". The point is simply that

[4] E. Larrabee and R. Meyersohn (eds.), *Mass Leisure* (New York, 1958); N. Elias and E. Dunning, *The Quest for Excitement* (Oxford, 1986).

[5] J. Dumazedier, *Toward a Society of Leisure*, trans. S. E. McClure (New York, 1967).

[6] J. Verdon, *Les loisirs au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1980), p. 9.

[7] M. R. Marrus, *The Emergence of Leisure* (New York, 1974).

[8] Cf. M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, trans. A. Sheridan (London, 1970), p. xxii.

[9] J.-M. André, *Recherches sur l'otium romain* (Paris, 1962). It is to be hoped that J. P. Toner's illuminating dissertation, "Leisure and Ancient Rome" (Univ. of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1993) will soon be published.

[10] T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, 1899).

these concepts were not available in the period under study, and more generally that hunting, gambling and the like were not regarded at the time as part of a larger category or package called "leisure".

This point is not trivial, since it affects the meaning of the individual and collective actions we are concerned to study. Take the example of football, for instance. If we could visit seventeenth-century Florence on Shrove Tuesday and make our way to Piazza Santa Croce, we might find a game of football in progress. However, the game formed part of a set of rituals rather different from those of the twentieth century. "The two factions of the Calcio, the Red and the Green", an English visitor reported, "choose each of them a Prince. The two princes resolve on a battle at Calcio". The contest could only take place after ambassadors had been sent and "war" proclaimed.[11] This form of *calcio* seems to have had more in common with the ritualized ball-games played by fourteenth-century Japanese courtiers or by the pre-Colombian Maya than with the contemporary world of Pelé, Gazza or Maradona.

Or take the case of fencing, a subject on which a number of treatises were written in the sixteenth century. For us it may be a "sport", but for the gentlemen of the Renaissance it was a serious art or science.[12] Conversely, activities which we may think serious, notably warfare, were not infrequently described as forms of *passetemps*, for example by such sixteenth-century French writers — and warriors — as Monluc and Brantôme.[13]

The greatest danger facing historians of our topic is surely to assume continuity and to work with the modern concepts of leisure and sport, projecting them back on to the past without asking about the meanings which contemporaries gave to their activities. However, the discontinuity thesis is not satisfactory either. Historians holding this view attempt to avoid anachronism by means of a simple dichotomy, cutting European history into two slices, pre-industrial and industrial. Unfortunately, the binary opposition between what one might call a "festival culture" and

[11] R. Lassels, *The Voyage of Italy* (Paris, 1670), p. 212. On *calcio* as diversion, ritual and training for war, see H. Bredekamp, *Florentiner Fussball: Die Renaissance der Spiele* (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1993).

[12] C. Agrippa, *Trattato di scientia d'arme* (Venice, 1553).

[13] A. Jouanna, *Ordre social* (Paris, 1977), p. 141.

a "leisure culture", like many dichotomies and polarities, is as misleading as it is convenient.

The dichotomy remains of use, however, in so far as it reminds us that the rise of industrial capitalism was not purely a phenomenon of economic history, but had social and cultural preconditions and consequences. All the same, the price of working with the dichotomy is high, in the sense that it reduces a great variety of medieval and early modern European ideas, assumptions and practices to a simple formula, "festival culture". What follows is an attempt to add some of the necessary nuances to this formula.

In reflections of this kind, it is impossible to avoid the history of words, or better, the history of clusters of words, since it does not make sense to study the rise of the concept of leisure without also examining changing ideas of work and of time. We also need to follow the example of Lucien Febvre and to pay attention to the absences, the "mots qui manquent".[14]

In medieval and early modern Europe, the concept "leisure" in its modern sense did not exist. The English word "leisure", like the French *loisir*, often meant "opportunity" or "occasion". Again, the term "sport" did not exist in its precise modern sense. It was in England in the early nineteenth century that we first see the rise of the idea of a "sporting world" which included hunting, racing, shooting, angling, cricket, walking and boxing. The rise of a sporting jargon at about this time is another indicator of the increasing organization of this socio-cultural domain.[15] In similar fashion, the term *lo sport* entered Italian in the late nineteenth century — despite the existence of a perfectly good Italian word with the same root, *diporto* — to refer to a new phenomenon, games which were professionalized as well as competitive.[16]

Despite these absences from the vocabulary of early modern Europe, there was no lack of terms opposed to "work". On the contrary, there was a veritable superfluity of them. In Latin the term *otium*, part of the complementary opposition of *otium* and *negotium*, *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, which replaced Aristotle's rather different contrast between the theoretical and the practical life, was defined by the Romans, redefined by the

[14] L. Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au 16e siècle* (Paris, 1942), p. 385; trans. B. Gottlieb, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), p. 355.

[15] P. Egan, *Sporting Anecdotes* (London, 1820).

[16] S. Jacomuzzi, "Gli sport", *Storia d'Italia*, v, pt 1 (Turin, 1973), pp. 913-35.

Church Fathers, and transformed by medieval monks to form part of their vocabulary of contemplation, before the word was revived and adapted once again by Renaissance humanists. For the Romans, *otium* was the complementary opposite of political activity or *negotium*, associated in particular with the seasonal withdrawal of the upper classes from the city to their country villas. For Tertullian and Jerome, on the other hand, *otium* was a pejorative term, more or less "idleness", though Augustine and Ambrose showed less hostility. For medieval monks, it referred to their essential activity, religious meditation, while for humanists it denoted the life of study as opposed to the "business" of trade and politics.[17] Again, the term *vacatio*, originally used to describe a state of mind, by the fifteenth century was applied to institutions in the case of the suspended activity or "vacations" of the court of Rome, the lawcourts, the Inns of Court, and of course the universities.[18] In Oxford and Cambridge, the term "long vacation" was in use by the seventeenth century.

Let us turn to the vernaculars. In Italian, the classical opposition between *ozio* and *negozio* was taken over from Latin, but by the sixteenth century *ozio* had many alternatives, each with its special meanings and associations: *festa*, *giuoco*, *passatempo*, *solazzo*, *spasso*, *diporto*, *trattenimento*, *ricreazione*.[19] Let us take the case of *ricreazione*, for example. It meant "recreation" in the literal sense of renewal, whether physical, mental or spiritual. One sixteenth-century Italian writer recommended ball-games for the purpose of *ricreazione*, but another recommended visiting relics or looking at the sea. In the seventeenth century, a zoological study appeared under the title *Recreation of the Eye and the Mind by the Observation of Snails*.[20]

In French, *négoce* (a term which, unlike *negozio*, was limited to trade), lacked a complementary opposite, but sixteenth- and seventeenth-century terms for non-work included *divertissement*, *fête*, *jeu*, *loisirs*, *menus-plaisirs*, *passetemps*, *oisiveté*, *recréation*.[21] As

[17] J. Leclercq, *Otia monastica: études sur le vocabulaire de la contemplation au Moyen Age* (Rome, 1963); B. Vickers (ed.), *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation* (Zurich, 1985).

[18] On the original sense of *vacatio*, see Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, pp. 42-9.

[19] On romance languages, see F. Schalk, "Otium in Romanischen", in Vickers (ed.), *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation*, pp. 225-55.

[20] F. Bonanni, *Ricreatione dell'occhio e della mente nelle osservationi delle chiocciole* (Rome, 1681).

[21] P. Dumonceaux, *Essais sur quelques termes-clés du vocabulaire affectif et leur évolution sémantique, 1600-1715* (Lille, 1971), pp. 464-71.

in Italian, the last word was used broadly enough to include certain kinds of study, as in the case of Heinrich van Etten's *Récréations mathématiques* (1624).

In English, the closest term to the classical *otium* was "ease" in the narrow sense of "repose" or "idleness".[22] Alternatives included "entertainment", "feast", "festival", "game", "holiday", "pastime", "play", "recreation", "revels" and "sport" or "disport" (a term with a rather vague general meaning at this time). There was also "retirement", a word which used to have spatial as well as temporal associations, referring to withdrawal from the city to the country as well as withdrawal from occupation (a meaning attested from 1648). As for the term "leisure", it was employed only occasionally in any precise sense. Like modern economists who discuss the "leisure preference", the English diplomat Sir William Temple commented in 1672 that "Where Ambition and Avarice have made no Entrance, the Desire of Leisure is much more natural than that of Business and Care".[23]

It would be an endless as well as a fascinating task to extend this investigation to other languages. Some valuable studies of this topic have been published, notably Wolfgang Nahrstedt's book on the rise of the idea of "free time" or *Freizeit* in eighteenth-century Hamburg,[24] but much work remains to be done. It is therefore more useful to abandon a general survey at this point and to focus instead on one central concept or "keyword",[25] attempting to identify its contemporary associations.

The concept is "pastime", and its main association was with attempts to avoid boredom. When Friedrich Nietzsche and Lucien Febvre compiled their famous lists of important topics whose history had not been written — love, hate, fear and so on — they both omitted a major theme, that of boredom, *la noia*, *l'ennui*.[26] For boredom does have a history, in the sense that the

[22] B. Vickers, "Public and Private Life in Seventeenth-Century England", in Vickers (ed.), *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation*, pp. 257-78.

[23] W. Temple, "An Essay upon the Original and Nature of Government" (1672), in his *Miscellanea*, 3 vols. (London, 1680-1701), i, p. 52.

[24] W. Nahrstedt, *Die Entstehung der Freizeit* (Göttingen, 1972); cf. Schalk, "Otium in Romanischen", pp. 225-7.

[25] Cf. R. Williams, *Keywords* (London, 1976).

[26] F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), §7, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann (New York, 1976 repr.), p. 94; L. Febvre, "Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past" (1941), in his *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, ed. P. Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York, 1973), p. 24.

occasions of boredom and also what might be called the "boredom threshold" are subject to change over time. It is likely that boredom was felt more acutely in the early modern period than it is today, at least among the leisure classes.

The evidence for this assertion comes in part from texts, including classics like Boccaccio's *Decamerone* and Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, in which the framework includes a group of men and women anxious to find some way of passing the time. It comes too from the history of language, notably from the word "pastime". In French, *passetemps* was a word coined in the fifteenth century and it has been argued that the new word expressed a new assumption, "that time was a substance which might be shaped by human will".[27] In English, the word "pastime" is first recorded in 1490.[28] At much the same time, at the court of Isabella d'Este, a contemporary described Carnival games as a means "to pass the time" ("per passare il tempo").[29] We should not be too quick to envy members of a leisure class. Montaigne commented on the French term *passetemps* that it implied that time was "something annoying and contemptible" ("chose de qualité ennuyeuse et dédaignable").[30] In similar fashion the English novelist and magistrate Henry Fielding observed towards the end of our period, "To the upper Part of Mankind Time is an Enemy, and . . . their chief Labour is to kill it".[31]

As intellectual historians frequently remind their colleagues, it is dangerous to pluck terms like these from their social contexts or from the "discourses" of which they form a part. In the case of pastimes and recreations it is necessary to distinguish at least four different "discourses", whether they are to be found separately in different treatises or whether they are combined in a single text.

In the first place, there was an educational discourse. Treatises on the training of children, or books on the ideal courtier, nobleman, housewife and so on, generally have something to say (fol-

[27] R. Glasser, *Time in French Thought*, trans. C. G. Pearson (Manchester, 1972), p. 150.

[28] *O.E.D.*, *s.v.* "pastime (sb.)", 1.

[29] L. Frati, "Giuochi ed amori alla corte d'Isabella d'Este", *Archivio storico Lombardo*, ix (1898), pp. 350-65, at p. 352.

[30] M. de Montaigne, *Essais* (1588), ed. C. Pinganaud (Paris, 1992), bk 3, ch. 13 (p. 848).

[31] H. Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1751), ed. M. R. Zirker (Oxford, 1988), p. 84.

lowing classical writers such as Plutarch) on the place of recreation in the educational process. Thus Sir Thomas Elyot, in his *Book Named the Governor* (1531), concerned with the training of the English gentleman, stressed the importance of "recreation after tedious or laborious affairs" and recommended "pastimes" such as archery, hawking and dancing.[32] Nicolas Faret's *Honnête homme* (1630), an adaptation of Castiglione's *Cortegiano* to noble circles in seventeenth-century France, mentioned dancing, swimming and the *jeu de paulme* as honourable "pastimes".[33]

In the second place, there was a legal and political debate about the uses of recreation. One of the most famous examples of such a debate took place in seventeenth-century England, mobilizing Ben Jonson, Milton and Marvell among others in defence of traditional holidays and pastimes, which were under threat for a mixture of religious and economic reasons.[34]

In the third place, there was a theological-moral discourse, Catholic or Protestant, from the *Tratado del juego* (1559) by the Spanish Franciscan Francisco de Alcoçer, to the *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) of the Elizabethan Puritan Philip Stubbes. These writers were primarily negative in their aims, concerned to forbid pastimes or at least to keep them within strict limits, to distinguish recreation which was "lawful" or "useful" from that which was not, to ensure, for instance, that Carnival did not invade the space of Lent, or that dancing did not lead to illicit sexual activity. In Counter-Reformation Italy, there was even talk of compiling an Index of Prohibited Games.[35]

Where most people spoke of "passing" time, the reformers thought in terms of wasting it. Games were sometimes rejected, as the seventeenth-century merchant William Martyn rejected cards, as a "loss of time".[36] There were also discussions of "idleness" as a sin or an occasion of sin, to which some writers responded by distinguishing kinds of idleness, such as *ozio vile* and *ozio onesto*. *Ozio vile* brought evils in its train, but *ozio onesto* was justifiable on several grounds.[37] Indeed, activities which we might define as work, such as painting, were sometimes presented

[32] T. Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor* (1531), ed. S. E. Lehmberg (London, 1962), bk 1, chs. 7, 16-27; quotation from p. 22.
[33] N. Faret, *L'honnête homme* (1630), ed. M. Magendie (Paris, 1925), p. 17.
[34] L. S. Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth* (Chicago, 1986).
[35] S. Bargagli, *Dialogo de' giuochi* (Siena, 1572), p. 52.
[36] W. Martyn, *Youth's Instruction* (London, 1612), pp. 92-3.
[37] S. Guazzo, *Civil conversazione* (Brescia, 1574), bk 2, pp. 172-3.

as pastimes (by Giorgio Vasari, for instance, in the cases of Beccafumi and Bronzino), in order to justify the artists' claims to noble status.[38]

Ozio onesto was also recommended for health reasons. This brings us, in the fourth place, to a medical discourse which, contrary to that of the moralists, fastened on the positive features of pastimes, and on the psychological need for relaxation. The body is sometimes compared to a bow, which must not always be in a state of tension.[39] There is therefore a need for some kind of "refreshment", which might be obtained through sleep or through games and other recreations, including music.[40] One might not have expected to find tennis praised for its contribution to *tranquillità dell'animo*, but this is precisely what one sixteenth-century Italian writer does, adding that it is "especially of benefit in the purification of the spirits through which the soul performs all its functions".[41] The need to drive away melancholy, *iscacciar malinconia*, is another recurrent medical theme.[42]

These treatises, together with other kinds of evidence, offer some basis for a reconstruction of changes in attitudes over the long term. I should like to suggest, therefore, that leisure activities of different kinds, whether for children or adults, males or females, came to be viewed as less and less marginal from the late Middle Ages onwards. It is for this reason that the title of this article refers to the invention of leisure in the period, employing the term "invention" not to imply that the change was sudden, which it was not, but to emphasize the role of human agency in the process.

The following seven points are offered in support of this attempt to produce an alternative to both the continuous and the discontinuous histories of leisure, seven hypotheses which will doubtless be tested, qualified or rejected in the next few years of research.

(1) Guides to conduct of various kinds devoted increasing attention to the subject of recreation and also wrote of it with increasing sympathy. The extreme examples of this tendency

[38] M. Warnke, *The Court Artist*, trans. D. McLintock (Cambridge, 1993), p. 167.

[39] D. Atanagi, *Lettere facete* (Venice, 1561), dedication. On the image of the bow, cf. St Francis de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote* (1609), ed. H. Bordeaux (Paris, 1948), pt 3, ch. 31 (pp. 249-50).

[40] A. Colluraffi, *L'idea del gentilhuomo di republica* (Venice, 1633), pp. 200-6.

[41] A. Scaino, *Trattato del giuoco della palla* (Venice, 1555), p. 1.

[42] S. Bargagli, *I trattenimenti* (Venice, 1587), p. 7.

come from Utopias, from More to Campanella, ideal societies in which the inhabitants work for only four or six hours a day, so that leisure activities are everyday occupations for adults as well as for children. Even moralists formed part of the trend. Pedro de Covarrubias, for instance, defended games as necessary for "alleviation [and] relief, and relaxation from vexation and weariness of the spirit" ("la releuacion [y] aliuio: y descanso de la vexacion y fatiga del spiritu") before passing to specific warnings.[43] St Francis de Sales defended a whole range of pastimes as good in themselves, among them tennis, running at the ring, chess and draughts. Books on education, of which John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) is a classic example, argued that children need recreation and even on occasion that the learning process should be made as much as possible like a game. In similar fashion, treatises on the conduct of ladies, such as Anne-Thérèse Lambert's *Avis d'une mère* (1728) shift their emphasis from piety and the administration of the household towards conversation and other pastimes.

(2) Treatises on particular types of recreation, usually "how-to-do-it" books, multiplied in numbers in the early modern period. Renaissance Italy was a clear example of the trend. The books on outdoor activities, like Antonio Scaino's treatise on *Il giuoco della palla*, are relatively well known (though it may be worth noting Scaino's assertion that girls played football in Udine in his time).[44] What deserves to be emphasized here is the proliferation of treatises on what we call "parlour games", including Lorenzo Spirto's *Libro della ventura* (1476), which used dice to select prophecies; Sigismondo Fonti's *Triompho di Fortuna* (1527), which offered answers to seventy-two questions by a progression through *fortune*, *case*, *rote*, *sphere* and *astrologi*; Francesco Marcolini's *Le sorti* (1540), which used cards to select the answers to questions; and Innocentio Ringhieri's encyclopaedic *Cento giochi liberali* (1550). The treatises seem to have transformed the traditional Italian *veglie*, or nights of recreation, whether for women alone or for mixed company, associated with the feast of All Saints in particular.[45] The multiplication of printed treatises also gave a new respectability to this kind of pastime. Historians

[43] P. de Covarrubias, *Remedio de jugadores* (Burgos, 1543; first pubd 1519), pt 1, ch. 1 (fo. V[a]).

[44] Scaino, *Trattato del giuoco della palla*, p. 2.

[45] T. F. Crane, *Italian Social Customs* (New Haven, 1920), pp. 263-322.

too were beginning to think recreations worthy of study. By the early seventeenth century, the collective attempt by Renaissance humanists to reconstruct classical culture had produced an international cluster of treatises on the history of gymnastics, Greek games and Roman circuses, while a Spanish humanist, Rodrigo Caro, published a dialogue comparing ancient and modern festivals and activities.[46] By the eighteenth century, histories of post-classical pastimes were beginning to appear, including Henry Bourne's *Popular Antiquities* (1725) and the essay on the history of public games published by Lodovico Muratori in his *Dissertazioni sopra le antichità italiane* (1751).[47]

(3) The evidence of paintings, like the multiplication of treatises on recreations, suggests that leisure activities became more visible, or more respectable, or at any rate that they attracted more interest in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: witness the paintings of Michelangelo da Caravaggio, Georges La Tour, Frans Hals, Pieter de Hoogh, Adriaen van Ostade, David Teniers, or Jean Antoine Watteau, representing people smoking, drinking, dancing, playing backgammon, playing cards, dice, and so on. Earlier paintings sometimes included figures of this kind, such as the Roman soldiers at the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, but scenes of relaxation now became an independent genre. It is not easy to make use of this pictorial evidence, since the rise of new genres depends as much on trends internal to the history of art as on social change in general. In any case, it is usually difficult to discover where the paintings were originally displayed (in private houses? taverns? brothels?) and for whom they were originally made. Hence we cannot say whether the pastimes they illustrate were associated with "us" or "them", the owner's social group or another (presumably lower) class. Difficult as it is to interpret, however, this evidence is too important to ignore. Simon Schama has exploited it with skill to explore attitudes to childhood and to speculate about the sense of national

[46] G. Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica* (Venice, 1569); J. C. Boulenger, *De circo romano* (Paris, 1598); O. Panvinio, *De ludis circensibus* (Venice, 1600); J. Meursius, *Graecia ludibunda* (Lyon, 1622); R. Caro, *Días geniales o lúdicros* (1626), ed. J.-P. Etienvre (Madrid, 1978).

[47] H. Bourne, *Antiquitates vulgares* (Newcastle, 1725); L. A. Muratori, "De gli spettacoli e giuochi pubblici de' secoli di mezzo", in his *Dissertazioni sopra le antichità italiane*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1751), ii, pp. 1-32.

identity in the Dutch Republic,[48] but it might also be used to reconstruct changing European attitudes to adult leisure.

(4) A sense of leisure as an extended period can be found with increasing frequency among the upper classes, particularly the urban upper classes, who developed the habit of spending the summer months in the countryside. The Italian custom of *villeggiatura* — whether it should be viewed as a Renaissance revival or as a simple survival of the habits of ancient Romans — spread to the élites of other parts of Europe, from Amsterdam to London.[49] The villa came increasingly to be viewed as the site for leisure activities, especially in the summer. The seventeenth-century writer Adriano Banchieri, for instance, described one of his books as a means of escaping summer idleness, *Discorso per fuggir l'ozio estivo* (1622). The names of some of the villas themselves carry a similar message. "Avoid boredom", *Schifanoia*, was the name of the Este family's famous villa outside Ferrara. "Repose" was the name of the imaginary villa in which Raffaele Borghini located his dialogue *Il riposo* (1584). In similar fashion, the names of country houses of Amsterdam patricians of the seventeenth century included "Pass the Time", *Tijdverdrijf* (owned by Nicolaes Witsen), and "Without Care", *Buitensorg* (owned by Willem Backer), anticipating Frederick the Great's *Sanssouci*.[50]

(5) Organized pastimes were not confined to the countryside. That the rise of academies in Italian cities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should be viewed as a new form of leisure or even play is suggested by the names of some of these upper-class discussion clubs, including the "idlers" (*Oziosi*) and the "unemployed" (*Sfaccendati*).[51] By the seventeenth century, guides to major cities, whether compiled for travellers or natives, began to list the major recreations and their locations. In the case of London, the location of eighteenth-century leisure areas such as Vauxhall Gardens is well known. In the case of Paris, Nicolas de Blegny's *Livre commode* (1692) offered its readers information about what the author called "passetemps et menus-plaisirs",

[48] S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London, 1987), esp. ch. 7.

[49] P. Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam* (London, 1974; rev. edn, Cambridge, 1994), ch. 5.

[50] D. Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, 1979).

[51] M. Maylender, "Accademia degli Oziosi", "Accademia degli Sfaccendati", in his *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, 5 vols. (Bologna, 1926-30), iv, pp. 181-95, v, pp. 170-1.

from the theatre at the Palais-Royal to the *jeux de paume* in Faubourg St-Germain (the site of card-playing and billiards as well as ball-games). Blegny included advice about the best places to buy chessboards, carnival masks and even pets. A generation later, the German J. C. Nemeitz offered similar guidance for foreign visitors, whether they were interested in gambling, conversation, promenades, dancing, or billiards (dismissed by the author as "the pastime of those who have nothing to do", "le passetemps de ceux qui n'ont rien à faire").[52] By the later eighteenth century, Parisians could buy an equivalent of *Time Out*, entitled the *Almanach des Loisirs*.

(6) The five points made so far are mainly concerned with the leisure of élites, especially male élites. However, there is also evidence of a gradual rise of a sense of "free" time among ordinary people, at least in certain relatively large towns. Nahrstedt's study of Germany between 1750 and 1850 is exemplary in its combination of research on changing social habits in a particular city, Hamburg, with a more general study of language, noting the shift from the concept of *Musse* (more or less "idleness") to that of *Freizeit*, and comparing the new concept of freedom in three social contexts, those of the church, the state and the household.[53] Another way of describing the change might be to speak of an increasingly sharp distinction between work and leisure, the shrinking of what looks to us a border area or "no man's land" between the two domains. The sharper sense of free time was associated with the routinization of leisure, the shift from an annual turning of the world upside-down at Carnival to small but regular doses of daily or weekly recreation. This shift was in part the result of the growing commercialization of leisure which developed in this early "consumer society", but it also encouraged further commercialization.[54]

(7) It might be thought that the numerous and well-documented attacks on recreational activities by reformers of various kinds undermine the thesis of the increasing respectability of recreation. However, the reformers did not deny the value of

[52] "A. Pradel" [N. de Blegny], *Livre commode* (1692), ed. E. Fournier (Paris, 1878), pp. 269-75; J. C. Nemeitz, *Sejour de Paris*, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1727), pp. 114-15.

[53] Nahrstedt, *Entstehung der Freizeit*, pp. 40, 64-9, 155.

[54] J. H. Plumb, *The Commercialisation of Leisure in 18th-Century England* (Reading, 1973); N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (London, 1983); cf. R. Sandgruber, *Die Anfänge der Konsumgesellschaft* (Munich, 1982).

recreation in general. What they did was to try to impose their ideas of devout, "lawful" or "useful" recreation on the rest of the population. Historians of the nineteenth century have had much to say about the movement for "rational recreation", in which the middle classes, in England and elsewhere, tried to distract the working classes from bear-baiting, drinking and street football and to encourage visits to parks and excursions to the seaside.[55] In the perspective of the long term, we can see that this movement for rational recreation developed out of an older tradition of reform, associated in the English-speaking world with Puritans and Quakers in particular.[56]

In short, a whole complex of changes in what may be described, retrospectively, as the European "leisure system", was visible well before 1800. It follows that it is impossible to explain the changes in terms of the rise of industrial capitalism alone. What is the alternative?

Paradoxically enough, the rise of leisure was connected with the process or processes which Norbert Elias called the rise of "civilization", and Michel Foucault the rise of "discipline".[57] In some ways these two theorists look like opposites. Elias approved of civilization, Foucault wrote against discipline. Elias emphasized self-control, Foucault the imposition of discipline on others. Foucault was concerned with different kinds of work, whether performed in prisons, barracks, schools, or factories, while Elias was especially interested in non-work, in courtiers for example, and in activities such as eating and drinking. All the same, the two theorists have in common a concern with the history of regulation and an interest in our period, from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

If we were to accept the central idea which Elias and Foucault share, the idea that Western society became more regulated in this period, then the concept of leisure or free time might be viewed as a reaction to this trend. In the "disciplinary society", even play has to be subject to rules saying when, where, and among whom it is permissible. As free time was increasingly organized, and institutionalized, people became more conscious of it as a separate domain, rather than as a pause between bouts

[55] Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England.*

[56] D. H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp. 146-51, 552-5.

[57] N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. E. Jephcott, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978-82); M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan (London, 1978).

of work. As work became less playful and working hours were more sharply defined, there was more need for the non-utilitarian activities we have come to call "leisure". In that sense, we owe our concept of leisure to the people who, long before the Industrial Revolution, were obsessed with making others work.

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