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Leisure the Basis of Culture

Christianity and Culture

"Can a metaphysical culture be recovered without the classical heritage?" asks a reviewer in *The Listener* of a book⁽¹⁾ by Dr. R. R. Bolgar. A much more pertinent question is: Can a metaphysical culture exist at all unless it is generally recognised that Society is primarily metaphysical and unless the laws and customs of Society are based on its metaphysical nature? The attempt to look upon culture as something separate from Society itself is, as with the prevalent attitude to 'religion,' an example of that fragmentation of Truth which is the source of the evils of our day.

A related question is: Is culture an end to be strived for in itself, or is its ultimate sanction that it is the earthly means by which man serves ends desired by his Creator?

These are questions which are answered with assurance by Dr. Josef Pieper in two essays published under the title *Leisure The Basis of Culture*.⁽²⁾ In his Introduction to the book Mr. T. S. Eliot refers to the dependence of Dr. Pieper's philosophical thought on theology as a necessary limitation of the freedom of thought of the philosopher. But he omits reference to the no less significant point that at the other end of Dr. Pieper's philosophical thought, definite conclusions are reached in the domain of policy, and even strategic implications are briefly mentioned.

Christian theology and the doctrine of the Incarnation have no practical meaning unless they lead through philosophy to the practical decisions of men concerning the policy which shall order Society; and it is the cardinal fault of our Intellectuals and Men of Letters, not to mention the Episcopate, that this integration does not take place.

"Christianity is essential reality" says Dr. Pieper, and "The point is that a man's existence should be so deeply

⁽¹⁾*The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* by R. H. Bolgar, Cambridge, 45/-.

⁽²⁾*Leisure The Basis of Culture* by Josef Pieper, Faber & Faber, 10/6.

rooted in the Christian reality, that his philosophy, too, should become, as a result, Christian. . . . Even where natural knowledge is concerned, the discovery of the truth is not merely a matter of hard thinking, and when the truth concerns the meaning of the world, a good brain is not enough: the whole human personality is involved."

How does the whole human personality become involved? "Is there a sphere of human activity, one might even say of human existence, that does not need to be justified by inclusion in a five-year plan and its technical organisation?" Josef Pieper asks the question, and answers it in his first essay with sureness and clarity which are as refreshing as urgently needed: ". . . leisure stands opposed to the exclusive ideal of work *qua* social function. A break in one's work, whether of an hour, a day or a week, is still part of the world of work. It is a link in the chain of utilitarian functions. The pause is made for the sake of work and in order to work, and a man is not only refreshed *from* work but *for* work. Leisure is an altogether different matter; it is no longer on the same plane; it runs at right angles to work—just as it could be said that intuition is not the prolongation or continuation, as it were, of the work of the *ratio*, but cuts right across it, vertically. *Ratio*, in point of fact, used to be compared to time, whereas *intellectus* was compared to eternity, to the eternal now. . . .

"Leisure, like contemplation, is of a higher order than the *vita activa* (although the active life is the proper human life in a more special sense) . . . no one who looks simply to leisure to restore his working powers will ever discover the fruit of leisure; he will never know the quickening that follows, almost as though from some deep sleep.

"The point and justification of leisure are not that the functionary should function faultlessly and without a breakdown, but that the functionary should continue to be a man—and that means that he should not be wholly absorbed in the clear-cut milieu of his strictly limited function; the point is also that he should continue to be capable of seeing life as a whole and the world as a whole; that he should fulfil himself, and come to full possession of his faculties, face to face with being as a whole."

Max Weber once said of the 'capitalist' world that 'one does not work to live; one lives to work'; and it is said, we think with real justification, that nowadays people do not understand what was meant by leisure in the Greek and Roman world and in the Middle Ages. "One works in order to have leisure," said Aristotle. In the Middle Ages sloth and restlessness were identified with the incapacity to enjoy leisure. The Greeks had a word for it, *acedia*; and in the medieval view this idleness meant "that a man prefers to forego the rights, or if you prefer the claims that belong to his nature. 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*. The modern Socialist version was given by Hitler: "every action has some meaning, even a crime; but to be passive is always senseless." That statement not only shows the appalling poverty of mind of the modern power-maniac politicians who have risen on the tide of the enfranchised proletariat, it is one of the guiding ideas behind what Dr. Pieper calls the 'total work' State, that "world of 'the worker'" which he says "is taking shape with dynamic force—with such a velocity that, rightly or wrongly, one is tempted to speak of dæmonic force in history."

Dr. Pieper lists some of the defensive positions which have been taken up to counter the evil forces at work, all of which can be included under the word 'humanism.' But all of these he dismisses as inadequate, both psychologically and because they are unsound on metaphysical grounds "in the sense of providing a genuine source of power capable of influencing the course of history." And, "An appeal to antiquity in the name of learning merely is virtually meaningless in times such as these; it is powerless against the enormous *pressure*, internal as well as external, of 'the world of work.' An appeal to Plato is no longer any good—unless one goes to the very roots of Plato (for we are concerned with roots, not with precedents, 'influences.')

The possibility and ultimate justification of leisure, says Dr. Pieper, "derive from its roots in divine worship. . . .

"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."

The originators of Western philosophy rested their thought on an acceptance of traditional truth, to quote Plato, "handed down by the ancients." Discussing the doctrine of ideas in the *Philebus*, Plato says, "Knowledge came down to us like a flame of light, as a gift from the Gods, I am convinced, brought to us by the hand of some unknown Prometheus from a divine source—and the ancients, being better than we are, and nearer to the Gods, handed this tradition down to us." And, says Dr. Pieper, "Where the religious tradition has dried up and words like God, Logos, Revelation no longer convey any meaning, philosophy ceases to be possible."

We have reiterated here and elsewhere that there is some force which is determined to keep us concentrated on the shallow materialist plane (and we note a return to the "B."B.C. microphone of ministers of pseudo Christianity, denigrating the contemplative and decrying tradition), whereas it is certain that life in its full and Christian meaning is concerned with and has its roots in a world which has a dimension at right angles to material experience. And if this is accepted, it must be recognised that there can be no effective resistance to the forces at work which is not founded in conviction based on spiritual experience. The difficulties which beset this problem are, of course, immense; but only power can get us out of it, and that power must proceed from an urge. Where is this urge? That it springs, or can spring, from wonder and the wonderful, we have little doubt.

"... But if Jesus could 'marvel,' Aquinas says, we must suppose the presence of that which is capable of marvel, of the *mens humanā*, the human mind, of the spiritual soul in addition to the presence of the Divine Word and the sensual

soul (both of which are, as we have seen, not capable of 'wonder'). Only a spiritual capacity for knowledge that does not know everything it knows at once, and perfectly, is capable of becoming gradually aware of the deeper and more essential world behind the sensual, physical world—only the human spirit is capable of wonder."

The practical approach to a dissolvment of some of the difficulties of the problem is as urgent as difficult to find, but is probably along several parallel lines which need to be linked. One of them is probably along the lines of the heroic efforts of Margerita Berger-Hammerschlag described in *Journey Through a Fog*. Another is certainly in company with Dr. Josef Pieper: "the considerations put forward in this essay were not designed to give advice and draw up a line of action; they were meant to make men think." We don't hesitate to say that *Leisure The Basis of Culture* is a work of great importance, and one whose reading should be recommended as widely as possible, particularly among the clergy. It is real thought, in regard to which Douglas once wrote to a correspondent: "As you know, I believe that all real thought, steadily pursued, incarnates in action: and it is *right* action we want. The occasion may be nearer than we think"

There is Christian hope; and the future is not for the hopeless. Who is engaged in the pursuit?

Too Diseased to Notice!

On July 16, we sent for publication to *The Times* and the *Church Times* the letter which was published in *Voice* on July 16. It will be recalled that the letter called for a Leisure policy in lieu of a Full Employment policy, and emphasised the overriding need that financial policy should enable men and women to be released from subservience to the Industrial machine for cultural pursuits. The editor of the *Church Times* said that he was unable to publish the letter, and the reply from the editor of *The Times* was marked "Personal," "Confidential" and "Private." He did not publish the letter.

On July 22 the editor of the *Church Times* in his paper commented on an address given by Sir William Haley, editor of *The Times* at the annual meeting of the London Library. Sir William noted the decline among leaders of the community in reading good literature. Said the *Church Times*:

"As society grows more complex, so do public men, in all walks of life, find themselves forced to devote more and more time to the study of regulations, reports and memoranda—'documents are studied; books are skipped.' Sir William's warning that 'the nation seems destined to founder in a sea of paper' should be taken to heart. It applies with equal force to the Church. The same factors operate there. Bishops, for instance, are worked to death, without having the time to do that quiet and steady reading which is essential alike to true recreation and to their duty of safeguarding the faith. Everyone recognises the disease. *No one seems able to suggest the slightest remedy.*" [Our italics.]

But the Gods, taking pity on mankind, born to work, laid down the succession of recurring Feasts to restore them from their fatigue, and gave them the Muses, and Apollo their leader, and Dionysus, as companions in their Feasts, so that nourishing themselves in festive companionship with the Gods, they should again stand upright and erect.—*Plato*.

Labour or Leisure?

The inventor of the wheelbarrow must have been a lazy fellow. He must have had a little leisure to think out a way whereby he could have much more. In the eyes of the full-employment brigade he was a criminal. We prefer to call this unknown thinker a benefactor of humanity. Having thought out the general principle of a wheelbarrow he set to work sawing planks, making a wheel, fastening the variously shaped parts together. Let's hope it worked first time. Now the principle of a wheelbarrow is this. Assuming that the centre of gravity of barrow and load is halfway between where the wheel touches the ground and the handles, then the operator carries half the load and the earth carries the other half. The effort required to move one ton of earth from A to B is considerably reduced by using a wheelbarrow, whether the primitive method was using a hod or something even more laborious. This inventor therefore was one of the millions who each have contributed their quota in lifting the curse of Adam off our shoulders. He could please himself whether he worked, say, half time for the same reward, or the same time for double, or relied on a share of the profits of others for whom he made new wheelbarrows, or a combination of these. The point to stress is that neither he nor his fellows would suffer from his invention; but then in those days there were no bankers, no old-fashioned economists, and none of the blatantly misleading mass propaganda from which we suffer to-day. To suggest that the construction of wheelbarrows will occupy more time and take more effort than the work saved is so ridiculous that no sane and honest person will do so.

Yet that is precisely the argument that is being put forward in connection with the coming Second Industrial Revolution. Atomic Power and Automation apply the same principle as the wheelbarrow except on a vastly greater scale. The wheelbarrow relieved the operator of about half the effort previously required of him, A. P. A. will carry all but about one hundred thousandth of the effort. The criminally stupid policy of our financial system insists that before a person can have access to goods and services, already produced by human effort plus machine plus power, he must give more human effort equivalent to all three. It is therefore not surprising that employees on the whole are terrified of A.P.A. just as hand weavers were terrified of the power loom. The consolation being handed out is to the effect that production of automatic machinery will make more work than it replaces. We have already considered this argument as it applies to the wheelbarrow and found it ridiculous. Let us consider it in a modern setting.

Let us picture a manufacturer of clothing. A traveller calls on him with particulars of a machine which will enable the manufacturer to save £10,000 per annum in wages. It turns out that the machine costs £30,000 and lasts two years when it is scrap. Is the manufacturer likely to buy? What he will do is to throw the traveller out on his ear if the latter doesn't go quickly of his own accord. The manufacturer can afford to acquire only such machines whose cost of replacement is considerably less than the reduction effected in wages saved by the machine.

It is to be hoped that readers of this periodical have noticed the significance of frantic attempts to mislead the public on the effects of A.P.A. There are honourable

exceptions but these are few and not to be found in the daily newspapers. The very flood of misrepresentation, subtle and clever, is evidence of the determination of certain sections, interested in the progressive enslavement of men and women, to clamp the chains on all of us and in no circumstances to allow A.P.A. to benefit the great mass of the public. What better evidence, short of the final act of enslavement, could anyone expect?

There can be only one sane application of labour-saving devices; the saving of human labour. To present them as a means for finding employment in their manufacture shows an evil ulterior motive, power mania. This propaganda, even before the full impact of A.P.A. has begun to be felt, is so perverse and so persuasive that there are on the market a number of alleged labour-saving devices that in fact are mere gadgets and don't in the long run save the purchaser's labour at all. This applies largely to domestic appliances. The manufacturer can't afford to be caught like that, or he would soon be out of business. Every Christian must regard it as a prime duty of great urgency to counter the brain-washing to which this and every other nation is being subjected. Happiness and development of self are not to be achieved by the accumulation of gadgets and distractions. It can be achieved by simplifying one's life. This Christian aim is evidently anathema to the power maniac, hence the effort to instil a work complex into a largely simple and unsuspecting public. People must learn and learn soon that the promise of leisure in 2 years, 20 years, or 200 years coming from politicians, who from their actions are servants of the power maniacs, is a mere carrot. If we follow it we are asses. What weren't we promised by these politicians 2, 10, 20, 30 years ago! What is wanted is the implementation of a leisure policy now, at once.

H. R. PURCHASE.

Mass-produced Music

From *Johann Strauss, A Century of Light Music* by Heinrich Eduard Jacob (Hutchinson & Co., 1949) translated by Marguerite Wolff.

(p. 384. "The End and The Beginning").

"Since the Peace of Versailles five hundred thousand Americans travel annually from America to Europe." If Paul Morand calculated correctly there must have been nine million Americans in Europe since 1919. It is important to realise that these nine million tourists must have caused a considerable dislocation of the aesthetic equilibrium in Europe. There has been no parallel invasion of America by European travellers.

Characteristic of the sophisticated American is the supreme nonchalance with which he undertakes the crossing. . . Fundamentally the ship is taking America with her on her journey to Europe. Her passengers remain in their own company and make for their own vast playground that stretches from Scotland to Greece. Here they stay a few months, giving orders when they leave for arrangements to be made by the time they come again. The power of money is behind them, so the orders are obeyed.

These nine million people completely transformed the rhythm of European amusements. The jazz and charleston records they brought over with them might have been heard

in every tiny mountain village they visited. The new rhythms triumphed everywhere, and by the twenties of the present century had crushed out of existence any remnants of European dance-music.

The new tunes were pleading, and yet a feeling of discomfort pervaded Europe. People sensed the invasion of an inorganic alien rule. There were two reasons for this which everyone realised. One was the mechanical, constructive origin of the melodies. They were not derived like Sousa's marches from inspiration, but from collective industrial efforts. And the other was the orchestration.

Tin-Pan-Alley is the place in New York from which jazz music made its start. . . . The industry in Tin-Pan-Alley produces for and supplies eight million gramophones, nine million pianos, and nine million electrolas. It provides all theatrical, military, and civil music, serves the choral societies and schools and the quarter million professional jazz players in America, to say nothing of foreign countries. According to the *Saturday Evening Post*, 600 million dollars were spent in the United States in 1924 for printed music and for instruments. Eighty per cent. of this sum . . . went to Tin-Pan-Alley for jazz. The jazz exports to the rest of the world made about the same sum again. An industry which deals in such enormous capital has no use for real composers. It would not know what to do with a new Strauss or a new Sousa. The 'composition' of a lullaby proceeds on much the same lines as the production of a Ford car. It is quite easy, because the whole field of European music can be exploited for the purpose. Then there is the work of the clerical staff, from the book-keeper to the stenographer. The most influential unit is the arranger. Almost all popular music is produced as follows: One of the arrangers—in 1934 there were thirty thousand of them—suggests the publication of a new song. After discussion with the sales department, a music-smith is set to work in the composition department, the best specialist that can be found for the particular job. Then there are experts for 'Mammy' songs, love songs, soldiers' songs. A technical jury decides whether the song is to be accepted. If acceptance is decided upon, then the first copies are sent to the appropriate authorities for copyright, the next to the head of the Publicity Department. It is his duty to interest variety and film theatres, charity bazaars, picnics, races, circuses, and public assemblies.

The European, even if he does know all that goes on behind the scenes, feels instinctively the inorganic element in the origin of American jazz music, the emptiness under its palpitating façade. But if there is one thing more than another that spells ultimate death to the rule of jazz in the world it is the complete hash made of its orchestration.

The inventor of the saxophone was called Sax and did not live, as most people think, in our time. His invention dates from 1840. But nobody attempted to bring about a revolution by its means. Cautiously and slowly the new magnifiers and tone modulators were taken over. European orchestras with their infinite adaptability assimilated the foreign elements and yet retained their individuality. Hungary was worshipped, the Czardas regarded with affection, but nobody tried to pauperise the orchestra and shower on a waiting Europe the blessings of the cymbal as its principal instrument. This was the folly committed by jazz when it forced the jazz-band on the world. The piano became nothing but an accompanying mechanism to the banjo, the Hawaii guitar, the mouth-organ, the bandonion, the 'singing-saw,' the

'flexatone,' the Japanese lotos-flute. Any of these instruments might have been taken over, but never all of them together. Orchestration of that kind, which completely ignored the fact that our old instruments are by no means played out yet, could not and cannot compare with the profundity, scope, and dignity of European tone-bodies. Europe is already on the alert to regain its mastery with the help of its old string quartet, its old wood and brass instruments. She will certainly adapt anything she finds practical in American music and American dances to her own purposes, such as the voice of the banjo in music and muscular flexibility in the dance. But it will all be swallowed up and re-formed in accordance with Europe's own standards.

When will that be? Most certainly not until some great political turning-point. We have seen . . . that the music made use of by mankind, though it marches slowly and haltingly, quite decisively attaches itself to the political hegemony of the epoch. The royal minuet held sway while France was supreme; the waltz became the undisputed monarch of the ball-room when Napoleon was overthrown with the help of the Germans. One hundred years later the German-Austrian waltz died out when the victorious troops of America streamed across the ocean to the battle-fields of Europe.

Expansion

The U.S.A. is spending 45 billion dollars per annum on capital outlay.—*Harper's Magazine*.

In Great Britain P.E.P. has quoted "Some larger capital investment plans recently announced."

Coal: £19 million per year.

Electricity: £240 million per year.

Gas: £56 million per year.

Nuclear Power Stations: Probably more than £300 million by 1965.

Railways: Probably over £80 million per year.

Roads: Probably £50 million per year.

Ford Motor Company: £65 million investment programme.

Vauxhall Motors Ltd.: £36 million investment programme.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Paris

"The advancement of the workers, freedom of scientific research, the coming of the lay apostolate, zeal in witnessing to the faith, all these are signs of a craving for freedom which we should welcome with respect, that also with some degree of prudence and discernment.

" . . . Wherever I go I meet servitude . . . There is the servitude of Labour, of means of transport, of fashion, of reading and leisure; the slavery imposed by class or party; servile obedience to pictured suggestions, to the slogans of the Press, of the cinema and radio. Social pressure: spiritual emancipation. Which will win? As a man I cannot tell; as a bishop I am bound to choose. And my choice is freedom. The more technical my diocese becomes, the more urgent becomes the task of forming free men: men who make themselves free by utilising robots, not robots taking the place of human beings." (Cardinal Feltin).