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EDUCATION AND THE LEISURE ETHIC

Many of us are prone to accept as truth, concepts that have been smuggled through the borders of the mind under a cloak of darkness, when in fact they are opinions at best. Too often we accept tradition as truth and when these traditions are safely cemented into the framework of our minds and hence our actions, it is extremely painful to extract them - if we ever do. It is an ordeal to give up what we have been taught to believe and to part with our own self-centered prejudices about how things appear or ought to be.

My intent here is to speak about leisure, recreation and play from a very different point of reference than is customary. In many respects, it is a break from tradition. The thoughts I shall share come out of my own orientation toward life and my peculiar bent toward reasoning and experiencing. I do not ask you to do more than think with me about leisure in a logical and analytical sense.

That which once worked for us in a pragmatic sense may no longer work. Our concepts about cities must change because cities are no longer what they have been in the traditional sense. Old methods are no longer applicable. We used to be able to erect signs on our parks to keep people from making pathways through the rose gardens, now we find that they dig up the roses and take them away. We once believed that recreation was a primary instrument for reducing juvenile delinquency, but now must admit that there are centers for recreation that may well be breeding grounds for anti-social behavior. I need not repeat to you the explosive changes taking place in religious ethics, moral values, economic principles, in child rearing, in political organization and behavior, and in our whole social complex of which education and recreation are a part. All of our traditional values are being challenged and we in the field of education, parks and recreation are changing some of our most cherished beliefs of the past.

Some of us find it is much easier to change our ways of thinking than others and some of us are challenged and excited by new ideas with which to experiment. I would hope that I am speaking to a majority of you who are and want to be in the forefront in this great experimental age of ideas. Because, what we once believed was a zenith in education; an epitome of a sound philosophy of leisure, recreation and play; an ultimate in management of leisure and recreation resources; those ideals are slowly and sometimes dramatically being corroded away by forces which we cannot hope to control. Some of us may be ready to admit that recreation services as they presently

exist are unmanageable in some of our large cities today. As one administrator admitted to me, "I cannot cope with the changes, master plans are a joke."

Where we once believed that a master plan was good for 20 years; where we once believed that we could meet the "needs and interests" of the citizens of our communities for recreation; where we once believed that party politics could be kept out of parks and recreation; where we once believed that training recreation and park professionals in how to manage and conduct programs was the most fundamental; where we once believed that emotionalized definitions and exaggerated values of leisure would suffice as explanations; and where we once believed that teachers had superior knowledge over their students; and where we once believed that given the proper amount of schooling democracy as our founding fathers had planned it would be assured; where we once believed that America had the finest health protection in the world; and where we once believed among many others that these things were fundamentally certain, we are now finding them misconceptions if not basic inaccuracies as measured by today's realities.

What ideas do you have that would change our ways for producing a population that would understand and appreciate leisure, recreation or play? It seems to me - whatever we do depends directly upon our beliefs and knowledge as to what constitutes leisure, recreation and play. Can we still hold to the notion that leisure is what persons do in their free time and that leisure, recreation and play are the opposites of work and because we or someone else has worked that we are then entitled to recreation? Can we logically say that recreation makes us better fit for our jobs and that we produce greater quality and quantity because we have taken part in some activity that has been labeled recreation? In my way of reasoning, these concepts were appropriate during the industrial revolution, but are highly questionable today. If we carefully observe the behavior of millions of Americans at work and at play, we must come to some other kind of conclusion.

The title assigned to me for this session is "Education and the Leisure Ethic." These are indeed very difficult and ambiguous terms with which to deal and whose referents are in a constant state of flux. They cannot be dealt with outside of the particular time and influences under which we live. Turning to Webster, we find that ethic is moral action - and coming from the Greek, *ethikos*, symbolizing conduct or custom of manners and character. It is used in the modern context of what is right and proper conduct, conforming to a standard of what is considered right, good and virtuous. In other words, the leisure ethic would necessarily refer to what is good to do - a duty to what ought to be done. If we were to look for a leisure standard, we would need to apply a criterion of some kind to leisure. We cannot use the criteria of 5th Century B.C. Greece, for leisure was then a distinct quality of life and in no way represented what we mean today as free time. If we were prone to accept leisure as free time, then it could have no morality - for time has

no morality - it can be neither good or bad in an ethical sense. If by definition we are ethical when we do our duty, then leisure must have within it some obligation or commitment to it. As a profession, we have our code of ethics to which we may attempt to adhere, but that does not constitute a leisure ethic. We have no specified standard for what constitutes leisure literacy, or what is optimum recreation or play.

I contend that we have yet to develop a leisure ethic of our own, but there may exist a number of leisure ethics in America depending upon special interests. Greatly over simplified, I see four leisure ethics. First, there is the business ethic of leisure in which - what is labeled leisure - is viewed as a commodity with value in the market place. Tastes are stimulated for forms of activities with little regard for consequences or impact on individuals. Profit is the motive and certainly an ethical value with standards. Any increase in duration of vacations, shorter working hours, early retirement, and any increase in expendable income are plus factors in terms of profit. Second, there is the so-called work ethic, in which leisure can only exist when it has been earned. Leisure comes from productivity of goods and a direct result of savings in time and money. It is what I call the conservation concept of leisure, recreation or play; it is the work-utility concept of education. To the work oriented person, education, leisure, recreation, and play are all held to be the opposites of work. Third, there is also the ethic of social moralists in which leisure must have a moral value and a social normalcy. Leisure activities must be socially acceptable, therefore they must conform to values held by the majority of individuals who have the power to enforce their views - and usually through institutionalized channels. The moral ethic of leisure results in a great leveling-off process. It helps to produce behavior in people who abide by schedules, who order life by a series of duties to perform, much as a housewife makes a grocery list according to meal plans. It stultifies spontaneity. The social moralist's ethic inhibits and violates privacy and resources for solitude. It is the most powerful disciplinarian and extracts duty rather than encouraging freedom. It results in the "Great Guilt Complex." Fourth, and last, there is the political ethic of leisure, recreation and play in which they are proscribed and prescribed through laws. Have you ever considered the volume of law contained in the statutes governing forms of leisure and play in your own community? Indeed, there are standards of good and bad. I need not mention the political ethic of party politics and power blocks that shape and influence to an increasing degree, development and operation of public park and recreation services. School personnel, in all probability, are more keenly aware than any of us regarding the political ethic of leisure, for the educational process through schools is thoroughly bound to duty, and its curriculum is dictated by established law governing students, teachers and even parents. The Platonic ideal of leisure and education is but an artifact of history.

Any leisure ethic that might be contrived as existing must be a mixture of the business ethic, work ethic, moral ethic, and political ethic. From a sociological viewpoint, it cannot be described outside of these powerful forces. This is no dire calamity, however, for the same condition exists for all our mature social institutions. The basic difference is that parks and recreation has not reached the level of maturity as a social institution to have established its own acceptable standard of conduct for the people at large that we can evaluate as "good leisure or bad leisure." We are committed to the magnificent illusion that free choice must prevail when in reality there are only alternatives instead.

If we believe that it is important that we bend our efforts to develop a leisure ethic in America - and some of us strongly support such a proposition, then there is a great deal of research yet to be done. For the philosophers among us, for the scientists we are developing in our colleges, and for the managers and leaders who are carrying the greatest brunt of all, we have our work as a profession cut out for us. We cannot sell our product until we can show a model that works or can be described sufficiently and supported by facts. We are dealing within a period of history when the scientific model is the thing.

In the intellectual development of the park and recreation movement, we have come through two stages and are now entering into the third stage. The first stage was the missionary era - where we emotionalized our purposes and objectives and sought converts to our causes. The second was the organizational stage where we were involved in establishing techniques for management, operation, finance, and leadership. Now we are beginning the third stage - the stage of evaluation and experimentation, using the tools of science and hopefully developing some new scientific tools of our own. We are presently asking, "What is the phenomenon with which we are dealing? How can we describe it so we can educate for it?"

There are two great wailings I read and hear that trouble me. One is, "People don't know what to do with their leisure!" The other is, "I don't have any leisure to worry about." What do these statements tell us? What is it that people are doing - they are on their way doing something - and are having the time to do it. We are seeing only the minute beginnings of the explosion of activities. People are packing Disneyland, cramming highways and country roads with what have come to be known as recreation vehicles, clogging airports to be funneled in and out as tourists, making Yellowstone National Park appear like a Morocco flea market - a human traffic jam, and pounding high mountain trails into clouds of coughing dust. It was reported that backpackers on the Appalachian Trail passing a spotting point numbered one every 20 seconds this July. What are we seeking, what are we finding? My husband remarked one time when we were starting on a holiday, "Everybody is going somewhere to find what other people have left behind." What do you believe they are trying to find? Could it be labeled recreation? Is this the

way Americans play? How can we answer these questions? By what criteria do we measure that Americans spent some 50 billion dollars - or some other such figure - on recreation last year? How can we draw such a conclusion? If it represents what people do for pleasure during their free time, why not include the cost of marijuana and contraceptives - perhaps they are included, for I seldom read how these figures are derived. Marion Clawson has used a mind boggling figure for leisure by adding up all the free time Americans have when off their jobs. It seems to me that until we know more about persons' motivations, we can know little about a national quotient of leisure, recreation or play.

After more than 35 years of full-time work in this field, I have passed through the first two stages of its development and into the third with some of you here. In the last few years I have been devoting myself to reading in depth, studying, gathering data, and writing about this phenomenon called leisure. My husband and I have spent two years digging in libraries - in this country - in Europe, Germany and Greece, reading ancient manuscripts in the British Museum, playing with children in Spain, Japan and numerous other countries. We have been children-watching and people-watching in countries around the world in search of answers to my quest of what is the significance of leisure.

For many years I had found it difficult, if not impossible to describe leisure in traditional or contemporary terms that could stand up to the test of logic. I found the same for recreation, for the work itself is metaphysical and comes to us through religious channels and applied to certain types of activities prescribed for 18th Century industrial workers. Prior to that time only the privileged, the elite or polite society recreated or had leisure. Only children and the Anglo-Saxon peasant played. Through systematic observations and the accumulation of hundreds of case histories and work of willing students who have served as observers for me, from reading the writings of ancients to the present, I believe I have worked out some possible clues for myself at least.

It has all boiled down to the obvious - as so much research does. By analyzing data collected, identifying the frequency in which certain behaviors occurred and by developing a model that could be applied to a variety of so called recreation or leisure activities in every type of setting possible, and with various age groups, I have come to the seemingly simple conclusion that man is seeking play in leisure and recreation. It is play - which he finds pleasurable and therefore has an insatiable appetite to experience. I quote from Huizinga: "In play there is something at play which transcends the immediate needs of life and gives meaning to the action." Someone else wrote, "The study of nuclear physics is child's play, compared to the study of child's play." I would agree.

If we analyze play, then we find evidence for the significance of leisure and recreation. Every language of man that we know anything about employs or has employed a symbol representing play and playing, while only a few languages have a symbol for leisure and even fewer for recreation. What this means, then, is that play has been a phenomenon of man throughout the centuries to which significance has been given. Man as a species is a player - homo ludens. Play existed before culture, for animals also play. We can study play, for we can observe it as something distinct from other forms of behavior. We can see it commence and can observe its closure. We as individuals know when we are playing and when we are not. Harlow, and his colleagues from the University of Wisconsin, through their famous studies of primates have demonstrated what happens to monkeys who are denied play. A title given to one of their articles is "Pity the Poor Monkey." Zoologists are just now beginning to concentrate on the study of play in animals. Darwin recorded his findings on play more than a century ago which leads us to hypothesize that the impulse to play was an element in the phylogenetic development of man that contributed to his survival as a species, for it is inherent in all of us to play, not only during childhood, but throughout life. Plato said that the best in man was his play, for when playing he was the most human - that is, creative.

I believe that play is the significance of recreation and the epitome of leisure as consistent with those ancient Greeks who gave us the concept in the first place. It is also consistent with their concepts of education - the playing mind. These statements may be somewhat unsettling to a few of you, for the word play carries powerfully strong emotive overtones in this country. Such is due in large part to traditional misconceptions and errors in reasoning. For some, it would be almost incomprehensible that play was more than the frivolities of children and purely nonserious passing of time in purposeless activity.

In my reasoning, play must be the essence of recreation and what we are seeking from leisure. It is the impulse to play that drives us to be free from conformity, to be free from compulsion and to be our own creative selves. Play is self-revealing of the inner self. Play starts with infancy, but is not confined there. It expands if encouraged and nurtured and is amplified by extending dimensions as we grow older. In my opinion creative genius and zest for living, as such, are in the satisfactions of a playful life of self-discovery.

I see play as a functioning system of self-discovery, for my theory of play is the dynamics of self-discovery. If play is the phenomenon of human kind, and the dynamics of self-discovery, it is what we may find in recreation and seek from leisure. It can be the leisure ethic profoundly affecting educational processes. Without play and all that it entails, recreation is aimless, leisure is a dilemma with which I cannot deal logically or rationally. With play at its core, I see leisure as an ideal state, an ideal

experience, a "peak experience" to use Maslow's term. I see leisure as the epitome of the play experience. Leisure, therefore, is not a static condition, but an action system.

In analyzing play as a system of self-discovery, I have identified nine different components that make up the system. The input comes primarily through interaction with environment, synthesized by the imaginative processes, the output is action, and the outcome is stimulation of the pleasure centers of the brain. When all nine components are present and identifiable, we can state that play is taking place - that it exists and can be observed through the manifestation of its components - that the player is experiencing recreation - if you please - and if you like - finding satisfaction in leisure. I believe without question that play is necessary for mankind, as necessary as any primary nourishment.

As components of the play system the first and most basic is freedom, that condition where one is not in servitude to extraneous or imposed dictums, other than those necessary within the play system itself. It is instructive to find in the English etymology of the word freedom, that it originally meant love - love that existed in the household of the lord of the manor as opposed to those who were in bondage or subject to servitude. I know of no writings or records of observation that do not immediately note that play is the essence of freedom.

The second component within the system is challenge - that state in which we seek to encounter something - to change it from its former appearance or condition, thus mastering it. Challenge mastered enhances our self-image and gives zest to our actions. It is a necessary element of discovery and the outcome is a sense of identity and self-worth.

The third component is success - that state of accomplishment which enlarges our world of concepts, extends our horizons and life dimensions. It is the feeling of "I did it-" "I was an indispensable part of what took place." It ranges in intensity from the successful completion of a puzzle to the rapture of an astronomer who finds a new star.

Fourth is form - that state of order, of time, space, structure, of definition of territory, which gives shape to play. It is more than rules, but includes rules which are mutually compatible and subject to change at the will of the player or players. Form involves ethical standards, but not imposed by nonplayers. Form gives unity to the action, beyond haphazard manipulation. Yes, contrary to traditional belief, play must have a goal, direction and purpose in and of itself, but not necessarily a social purpose.

The fifth component is rhythm - that which is compatible with the player's own unique biological rhythm. In rhythm, there is tension and release which gives a flow to activity. Observing play behavior, one becomes

aware that there is a progressive rising and falling of tension until it reaches a peak and then more often than not there is a dramatic decline into closure. It is the reason for the leadership principle that if we are to induce repetition of activity, it should be terminated at the height of enthusiasm. In the free play of young children and animals we may observe the introduction of variation to keep play in process.

The sixth component is chance - the necessary component of the unexpected. We must not know fully what the outcome will be of our actions. Play, recreation or leisure would not be worth our interest if we could predict the outcome with certainty. It is the uncertainty which tantalizes, the hope yes, the faith - that the gods will smile kindly on us to our own self-delight. Chance cannot be faked - it must be real and it is closely akin to the components of success and challenge. Our mathematical system of laws of probability come from investigations into this necessary element of play and its phenomenon.

Seventh, is negotiation - that component that brings about form. We must negotiate with material objects and/or with persons to arrange conditions under which play can occur and be held in action. It results in decisions of priority, of give and take, and is easily recognized in the play of bartering as one sees in foreign market places.

Eighth is privacy. It is that component of play which protects the self - of doing what appeals to oneself with out fear of censure or intrusion. In it we find the necessity for solitude, or if we please, our uniqueness. It may be that secret intent found in strategy, or again it may be that secret place in the woods where dreams know no bounds, the child's treehouse or the adult's study - the privacy of thoughts, the in-world as opposed to the out-world, the in-group as opposed to the out-group - the hidden meaning. Players are not required to explain the reasons why. Play needs no justification. Play has no morality, it can be neither good play nor bad play.

Ninth, and finally, is the component of pretense - that gift of imagination and the stuff from which inventors bring out of their tinkerer's workshop their mechanical and scientific discoveries. It is the intensified component of play for the poet, the artist, the dramatist and others. It is that "what if" quality - and final success in bringing about something from out of one's own self that had not heretofore been experienced in the same form. Our first clocks, automobile, airplanes - *ad infinitum* were first toys. It is that component of play that allows us, yes, encourages us to make what we will, fashion at our own behest, and act out according to our own pleasure - the expression of our selves. In play, and this is extremely important as a tool in education and in rehabilitation, there can be no failure. If there is failure, play cannot function. This is the factor in play with which psychologists are particularly interested. The player is aware that he is playing, therefore, there is no self-deceit or need for it.

All of these components are necessary if play, recreation, or leisure is to occur. We cannot bypass any one of them. The system cannot operate if one of these components is absent. Granted, they occur at varying levels and intensities according to the individual, the conditions or circumstances in which play takes place. As I see it, the goal of education for leisure is to enhance opportunities in which the play system can operate. The outcome will be self-discovery for the participants, and self-discovery is the peak experience in pleasure. By self-discovery, I do not mean self-analysis, and by play I do not mean sports and games. Games may or may not be play - they must satisfy the play system to be play. On the other hand, the play system can operate in most phases of life if all the components are present.

Some of you may be thinking - cannot all of those components be found in work? I agree, and do not hold that work is the opposite of play, recreation or leisure. Indeed, much of our so-called work is play, is recreation - can be leisure. It is my expectation that we will come to view leisure in the days ahead as a functional social system, not as time - free time or any other kind of time. Leisure is not the absence of something, but rather is an action system in and of play. Leisure is play and has its own identity. I would like to coin a new phrase - and I would like it to be known as the works of leisure, just as we speak of the works of art. In the last two centuries work has been made into a myth. Legitimately, the word comes from the Greek erg, or unit of energy applied to produce change.

If work is not the opposite of play, recreation or leisure, what is the opposite? I have come to the conclusion as I have observed play that conformity is the opposing system. It is that state in which we cannot be free, whether it be conformity to physical necessities, or conformity to orthodoxy of manners, customs, or controls. We cannot exist as a society, or as individuals without degrees of conformity. We must conform to moral codes and those standards which are imposed upon us in a functioning society. In no way can all life be play or leisure. The test, however, is to know the difference and to experience the distinctness.

By such a model of play and playing, recreation and leisure, it is necessary that we put to rest the notion that this action or this activity is a leisure activity or recreation activity, or play and some other activity is not. It is not the activity we set as a criterion or model, it is the system that is operating. Just as your home stereo is an electronic system that will not play - unless the components are activated. Leisure is not a list of activities, nor is education a list of facts. Leisure is the play action system and the outcome is pleasure in self-discovery.

Galileo found it in his tower laboratory, Fulton found it in his artist workshop building a model for a steamboat, and Einstein wrote that he found it with his violin and in the company of minds at play. I strongly suspect that recreation and park professionals find it in public service and social

interchange on their jobs. I see what I believe is the play of scientists in their secluded places of work in which they construct their experiments and test their hypotheses. Sometimes as I view cities from afar, I see grown-up boys building tall edifices and intricate communication systems much as they may have done as little boys with their toys. When I see green meadows and open spaces being torn by bulldozers, I am reminded of boys who must make their mark on the smooth sweep of beach sand or producing tracks in new blown snow. It is the human condition to create or produce something stemming from himself as the cause. In it there is play.

Whether or not I have opened up a legitimate avenue for thinking, I do not expect you to decide from this short presentation. Put your minds to work, for we have need in our field for a leisure ethic - for standards with which we evaluate our functions as well as our product. We are beginning to witness what might become a full-fledged social movement in education, a renaissance, if you please. I have been visiting so-called free schools for the past number of years including Summerhill, and I must admit that I thrill to see the courting of play by educators. There may be a marriage in the offing. It is through play that the child learns about himself and his relationship to environments. When some psychologists assert that the child learns more in the first five years of his life than all the rest of the years combined, it may well be that it is during those years that we sanction and nurture play. Experiments by comparative psychologists have demonstrated that the brain mass and weight of a rat can be increased by a rich environment of play materials. There is a volume of writings to support my contentions of the relationship of play to learning. We may well be on our way to a leisure ethic through play. I care not what the label is to be, but it should be atune to self-discovery if we are to educate for leisure.