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# Frames of Leisure: Theoretical Essay

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**Abstract** This essay tries to delineate some of the general frames that define leisure. A frame marks a border between inside and outside. It signals a particular cohesiveness of what is inside as well as a marked difference towards the outside. In the case of leisure, these frames such as time, space or forms of exchange are not hard but are determined by both subjunctive and extraneous factors. Their malleability and contested nature is the common theme of this book. The purpose of this theoretical inquiry thus is not to define the multiple historically changing forms of human leisure, but the constitution of the framework within which they are pursued. While engaging with the rich Euro-American scholarship on leisure, for the delineation of this framework, this essay tries to overcome a Euro-centric bias in terms of theoretical concepts and historical sources. It focuses on case studies in different Asian historical environments in which new features come to light. Two examples stand out, the role of state and religious authorities in defining legitimate leisure, and the importance of the transcultural nature of leisure, which accounts for it being the major source for cultural innovation and social change.

**Keywords** leisure theory, government regulation of leisure, providers and consumers of leisure, gift economy, space and time of leisure

This essay tries to delineate some of the general frames that define leisure. A frame marks a border between inside and outside. It signals a particular cohesiveness of what is inside as well as a marked difference of this inside to what is outside. In the case of leisure, these frames are not hard but are determined by both subjunctive and extraneous factors. Their malleability and contested nature is addressed with the title of this volume of case studies, *Testing the Margins of Leisure*. The purpose of this essay thus is not to define the multiple historically changing forms of human leisure, but the constitution of the framework within which they are pursued.

While engaging with the rich scholarship on Euro-American leisure, for the delineation of this framework, the essay tries to overcome the Euro-American bias toward theoretical concepts and empirical data by referring to the case studies on leisure in different Asian historical environments in this volume and drawing on the discussions in which all of the contributors to this volume as well as a number of other Asian scholars took part.<sup>1</sup>

The frames presented here take up the critical questions about a methodology that considers the Euro-American experience as the natural representative of humankind's common experience. They are not a polemical counterpoint but rather a first effort to draw on a much broader base of evidence to develop general conceptual frames for leisure that take up the key elements from all sides. As it turns out, the Asian experience—some cases of which are documented in this volume—highlights not only the pertinence for Asia of some of the conceptual generalizations made on the basis of Euro-American data, but also the importance of issues not addressed in these generalizations.

We were faced with strong horizontal and vertical asymmetries in the research we could draw on. On the horizontal axis, there is a regional asymmetry, with comparatively little published empirical work on Asian leisure. On the vertical side, between theoretical and empirical research, the asymmetry is even sharper, as most studies of Asian leisure simply draw on a selection of theoretical concepts offered by studies on Euro-America. Our own essay here might be seen as a first step to address these asymmetries on the conceptual side. Its arguments, the reader should be warned, are presented as straightforward propositions for the sake of economy and provocation. They should be read, however, as so many hypotheses in need of much further research for their veri- or falsification. The best this essay can hope to do is to help set the stage for further research that overcomes the asymmetries.

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1 We have especially benefitted from the critical input of the two other editors, Robert Weller and Eugenio Menegon. While much of the potential merit of this essay is due to these discussions, the ultimate responsibility especially for those parts that might not hold up is, needless to say, with the authors of this essay.

## Space and time

### SPACE

Leisure creates its space. This space is set off by “heterotopy” as a different space of its own against other spaces, but no space is intrinsically tied to leisure. Such a destination depends on the subjunctive mode<sup>2</sup> (of playfulness) among those engaged in leisure pursuits in that space.<sup>3</sup> Competing uses of space such as ritual (as in Robert Weller’s study), work (as in Sarah Frederick’s study), war, or state coercion (as in Tim Oakes’s study) also largely depend on the subjunctive mode of the participants. Temporal or permanent spaces of leisure are framed by markers (architectural features, decoration styles), which set them off against other spaces. Availability of and access to leisure spaces varies with social rank (including race) and gender, with higher ranks and males, as a historical rule, being privileged.

The appropriation and transformation of spaces for leisure purposes may be temporal (playing ball on the street), seasonal (using the town square for a fiesta), or more permanent (playground, summer palace). More permanent leisure spaces might historically be public, such as the Roman arena, or exclusively for rulers and their entourage, such as the Summer Palace or the Yuanmingyuan garden in Beijing, the Kashmir summer residence for the Mughal, or the Caspian Sea retreat for the Safavid rulers. They might be hidden within, or be attached to, places for official functions, such as the “peasant village” Le Hameau in Versailles, which allowed the ladies of the court to circulate in a protected bucolic environment, or what is known as Qianlong’s Garden in the Forbidden City in Beijing. In modern times, more permanent leisure places might be publicly accessible venues such as the Tivoli, the sports arena, restaurant, theater, museum, or the seaside resort of modern tourism. They also might be private spaces such as the urban living room, the exclusive club, the courtesan house, or the backdoor gambling site.

The relative strength of leisure’s claim to heterotopy is reflected in its low standing in the hierarchy of pursuits when its space becomes contested. Youths playing soccer on the street have to make place for cars

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- 2 The notion of “subjunctive” has been developed for ritual by Adam B. Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). It avoids the notion of “subjective” as being too tightly connected with the historically specific development of individual “subjectivity.” It takes up earlier discussions of leisure space and time not being an objective fact, but constituted on a “discursive level” that is predicated by historical conditions such as social formations. See Chris Rojek, *Decentering Leisure. Rethinking Leisure Theory* (London: Sage, 1995), 1.
  - 3 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949); and Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961). Originally published in 1938 and 1958 respectively in Dutch and French.

with people going about serious purposes. A sports stadium will become a mass shelter or mass prison in times of crisis.

The subjunctive mode is not intrinsically unified in its take on a given leisure pursuit, but might involve different elements for different participants. For a king, it might be to get away from the rigors of protocol; for a courtier, to have an informal occasion to be near the king; for a member of the *nouveau-riche*, to display his wealth and standing; for an ostracized schoolchild, to be accepted by the group to play; for young people to find love; and for a shady character to find the weak spots of potential victims.

From a perspective outside its frames, leisure tends to set its own rules and does not necessarily obey rules imposed from outside by the state or social convention. This “anomic” potential of leisure (see further down) might be realized by rejecting a space, time, or practice of leisure that has been determined by authorities to be acceptable and desirable and opt for another, as discussed by Tim Oakes, or to accept the legitimation of a space/time/practice for leisure, but infuse its pursuit with implications that might be critical of the authorities legitimizing it in the first place, as studied by Catherine Yeh.

This anomic potential becomes more pronounced in private or secluded spaces such as the home, a gambling den, or a gathering place for users of illegal drugs. This is in part due to their being regarded as private and of no concern for public order, and in part due to the difficulty of regulating such spaces.

## TIME

Leisure creates its time. Leisure time is set off as a different time of its own, against other times (daily routines such as work, state affairs, religious practice, study, sleep), but no time is intrinsically destined for leisure.<sup>4</sup> The definition of a time span as leisure depends on the subjunctive mode of participants, a mode that is conditioned by the anticipation and expectation of pleasure in a leisure time that has been sanctioned (Sundays, holidays) or is considered safe from outside controls. A frustration of such an expectation—a regular experience associated with boredom, empty time, disturbing interference from outside, and hectic activities<sup>5</sup>—will lead to the search for other occasions rather than the abandonment of leisure pursuits.

Leisure time is marked in its temporality through symbolic gestures (whistle at the beginning of a game, going somewhere else for a time on holidays). These gestures reflect the sociable nature of leisure as they establish a common frame, and they mark the period when rules and

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4 Rojek and others have been instrumental in showing that the earlier assumption by sociologists (Dumazedier among others) that there were time/spaces intrinsically devoted to leisure were ill-founded.

5 See Ralph Glasser, *Leisure—Penalty or Prize* (London: Macmillan 1970).

routines accepted for other time/spaces do not apply. As this subjunctive mode is at the core, the “free” time someone has who is unemployed, sick, or rich does not in itself qualify as leisure time, while the busy time of someone who enjoys his paid or unpaid concentrated work without a feeling of alienation might very well qualify as leisure, as discussed by Robert Weller.

Depending on historical context and individual occupation and rank, leisure time is more concentrated in specific time periods (evenings, weekends, holidays, early childhood and old age, winter) and it may depend on institutional arrangements (public/religious holidays, labor rules). The time-span theoretically available for leisure generally depends on the time left after securing the means for survival. This means that individually it depends on wealth while collectively it depends on the level of productivity. The latter changes over time and is different for different environments. This means that the time-span available for leisure is historically conditioned. With modernity, increased leisure time has become available to a much larger segment of the population in developed and developing states.

Given the anomic potential of leisure pursuits,<sup>6</sup> state and religious authorities see the need and assume the right to regulate the times (and spaces) for the legitimate exercise of these pursuits, sometimes differentiated for different classes of people.<sup>7</sup>

The relative weakness of leisure's claim to heterochrony reflects its low standing in the hierarchy of occupations when it is contested. It will have to cede its claim to higher-ranking claims (state, religion, workplace, individual work priority) especially during crisis modes when its subjunctive support also tends to weaken.

## SPACE/TIME

Leisure space/time attempts to create a temporary/local utopian environment. Across the world and with a variety of specific rationales, people have developed narratives of utopian time/spaces, in many cases paired with their dystopian counterpart. These utopian time/spaces reflect on the pleasure associated with leisure by being permanently characterized by it. The dystopian counterpart, whether it is a form of hell, prison, war, or life outside of Eden, is above all characterized by the severe restriction or complete absence of leisure. The narratives about

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6 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (1965), trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

7 Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers etc., with some Proposals for Remediating this Growing Evil* (London: Millar, 1751), has provided a detailed history of these state regulations in Rome and England. For the PRC after the Cultural Revolution, see Jing Wang, ed., *The State Question in Chinese Popular Culture*, special issue of *positions: east asia cultures critique* 9, no. 1 (Spring, 2001).

these fantasy worlds connect them in a projection of ultimate justice to earthly leisure by largely linking the post-mortem fate of an individual to the moral pitch of the type of pursuit engaged in during leisure times while alive.

The narratives about paradise show in a pure form the aspirations people associate with their earthly leisure times, namely a space/time with "autotelic" pursuits that have their end in themselves, without the social (hierarchies), economic (creation of surplus), political (asymmetries of power), and psychological constraints (gender, age, values) of "normal" life, at least for a time. State authorities follow the same logic on the opposite end by penalizing activities that are largely associated with anomic forms of leisure through a pale image of dystopian hell in the form of a system of prisons and forced labor accompanied by the controlled elimination of the time/space of leisure for the inmates. The voluntary forfeiture of the time/space of leisure in an ascetic religious life is advertised as an investment in the moral economy that will secure the permanent enjoyment of leisure in paradise.

## "Autotelic" and "heterotelic" pursuits

### AUTOTELIC CONSUMPTION OF LEISURE

Leisure pursuits of the consumers of leisure have their aim (telos) in themselves (auto), they are "autotelic." This sets them off against pursuits that are driven by the aim for a positive or negative ulterior (hetero) aim (telos) such as getting a salary for making tires; they are "heterotelic."<sup>8</sup> While leisure pursuits may have benefits such as improved skills which might translate into status improvement, as discussed by Sarah Frederick and Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, or lead to professional advancement, or even result in a product (Weller), and while they may have downsides such as injuries, drunkenness, addiction, or legal prosecution, these results are not driving the leisure pursuit itself.

Participation in leisure pursuits is voluntary. The voluntary nature of leisure is based on its autotelic nature. Imposed participation in leisure undercuts or undoes the pleasure associated with it and removes the pursuit from the field of leisure.

Leisure lives off the surplus value of heterotelic pursuits. This is true for space, time, and expenses, most evidently in people saving money from their work to pay for leisure expenses. In social reality, however, the leisure of one—such as a member of Veblen's leisure class—might come

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8 This argument goes back to an observation by Herbert Spencer. It has been more recently explored for animal behavior in Rick W. Mitchell, "A Theory of Play." In *Interpretation and Explanation in the Study of Animal Behavior*, vol. 1: *Interpretation, Intentionality, and Communication*, eds. Marc Bekoff and Dale Jamieson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 197–227.

from the surplus of someone else's heterotelic occupation—such as the added value of the labor of people in his employ. The consequence of these asymmetries in access to disposable added value is an asymmetry in the quantity and quality of leisure that is at the disposal of different individuals for example as a consequence of inheritance or power asymmetries.

The consequence is that leisure has to defend itself against charges of being self-indulgent hedonism, that it is a waste of resources economically and a lack of commitment to communal benefit morally.

In the moral economy, leisure has to be deserved, and in the money economy, it has to be earned. The ensuing defensive posture shows up in claims even by plutocrats to have once worked hard and for the public benefit to deserve extensive and luxurious leisure as well as by claims that, autotelic as they may be, many "rational" or "serious" leisure pursuits objectively contribute to culture, education, to developing the mental and bodily potential of those engaged in them, and to restoring body and mind after heterotelic exertions.

The subjunctive expectation of the pleasures associated with leisure pursuits in turn puts pressure on heterotelic occupations to match its pleasures or to be infused with leisure elements. This is especially true if a high degree of engagement and creativity in these heterotelic pursuits is considered desirable. On the individual side, this tension between the autotelic pleasure promise of leisure and the heterotelic need to secure a livelihood might lead to a conscious choice of a type of heterotelic pursuit that promises a high degree of pleasurable identification even though the material rewards might be relatively low or unstable. Scholars, writers, and artists of the kind discussed by Robert Weller and Lai Yu-chih often pride themselves on having accepted this bargain. On the side of employers and patrons ranging from Ming dynasty merchant patrons of painters to Count Esterhazy's patronage of Viennese composers, as well as to universities, research institutes, noble courts, Google, or Microsoft, encouraging this kind of creative engagement has taken the form of offering environments with a maximum affinity to autotelic leisure pursuits (such as "pure research") and of reducing the visibility of the underlying asymmetrical social relationships (such as those between a patron and his "guest") as well as the pressures coming with it.

The dividing line between auto- and heterotelic pursuits is not hard, as either one might be the way to the other. Learning the piano as a leisure pursuit might end up in a career as a professional musician, or it might be the way to acquire the sophistication and taste to qualify for entry into elegant leisure environments, while being a professional musician might in turn lead to membership in a class committed to serious elegant leisure. These real and potential trajectories are discussed in the studies by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Sarah Frederick.

## The economies of leisure: The gift and money

Leisure involves two sets of actors, those doing the heterotelic work of providing for the consumption of leisure (entertainers, servants), and those in the autotelic consumption of leisure. The first operate in a money economy with the second, the second in a gift economy among themselves. The gift economy has been mostly treated as a precursor of the money economy,<sup>9</sup> and the money economy as simply facilitating reciprocal exchange. The gift economy, however, is not simply an element of the deep past, or of societies without a money economy. It continues to play an important role to this day in a close and tense relation with the money economy. Gifts are bought as goods in the money economy, but they are then transformed into gifts geared towards the time/space of leisure.

The gift economy of leisure operates with a pretense of equality. This pretense is crucial for the enjoyment in consuming leisure. The equality is most clearly articulated in the voluntary (although often ritualized and reinforced by expectations) exchange of gifts.

Leisure marks one of the points of transition between the two economies. A visibility of features of the money economy in the gift economy of leisure would undercut the egalitarian pretense, and with it the pleasure. The tense relationship between money-bought goods and services on the one side and their gift form on the other shows up in practices designed to prevent the money economy from visibly interfering with leisure pursuits or in the transformation of money-bought goods and services into gifts. As examples of preventing interference from the money economy, one might mention paying for drinks or a dinner out of view of one's guests; ritual banter among Chinese about the privilege to invite others; the British routine for groups of beer-drinking men in a pub to invite each other in turn for a round with the payment coming after drinking is finished; invisible "public" financing of leisure venues such as playgrounds or parks; or accounting for Chinese courtesan house services by the majordomo in a separate process at another time and space so that the make-believe of an egalitarian gift relationship between patron and courtesan is maintained.<sup>10</sup> For the transformation of products from the money economy into those of the gift economy, the manifest form is the elaborate gift packaging in shops or at home.

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9 Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés primitives" (1923-1924), has laid the foundations for the anthropological study of the gift economy. Since its publication, sociologists and economists have joined in what has become a wide-ranging and highly diverse discussion.

10 There are many other areas where the gift economy prevails, such as relations between lovers, within a family, or with divine authorities and their earthly representatives. For the latter, see Rudolf G. Wagner, "Fate's Gift Economy: The Chinese Case of Coping with the Asymmetry between Man and Fate," in *Money as God? The Monetization of the Market and the Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics*, eds. Jürgen von Hagen and Michael Welker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 184-218.

For the providers of leisure, supporting the gift economy aura of leisure has the additional benefit that real money becomes “funny money,” giving goods and services a subjunctive value rather than a hard market-determined goods/price relation, an issue discussed by Robert Weller. This subjunctive value is skewed in favor of the provider. The use of services and goods as gifts replaces most of the parameters valid for regular purchases in a market (usefulness, price/material value ratio, competition) with others (luxury, difference to everyday goods and services, beauty, rarity, packaging, finish, reflection on the taste and standing of the donor) while securing a momentary monopoly to the provider.

Inserted into the time/space of leisure, money itself changes character. It acts as a fun-enhancer in the same way as playing for points does in a friendly squash game. Examples are gambling or playing Majiang or Poker for money. The normal constraints (cost/measurable benefit relation) are giving way as money assumes a new identity in the leisure environment (pretense of immeasurable wealth/time/space, which takes away the penny-pinching of the regular money economy).

The anonymous abstract reciprocity of the money economy contrasts with the personalized reciprocity of the gift economy. Situated at the interface between the two, leisure providers may assume that the reciprocity implied in leisure economy exchanges serves their particular interests better than pecuniary remuneration. This is especially true if what they aim for cannot be bought with the money they might earn. Eugenio Menegon’s case study in this volume shows that the aim of the Catholic missionaries in gifting and maintaining leisure goods for the Qing court and high officials was not to exact a price that would leave them a profit, but primarily to have the court and the officials reciprocate with the toleration of their missionary efforts. In a similar strategy, a Chinese courtesan might go out of her way to woo a particular patron in the hope that he might buy her freedom and make her his second wife.<sup>11</sup>

On the other end, as studied in this volume by Rudolf Wagner, a provider might emphasize the commercial nature of his leisure products to shield himself from suspicions that he is distributing propaganda material at prices subsidized by religious groups or a foreign power, which would deprive his print products of their pleasurable nature and with it, their market success.

## The social relations of leisure

Leisure is social. Leisure pursuits privilege sociable engagement. This sociability is most evident in temporary gatherings for feasts, parties, or celebrations and in the establishment of more permanent leisure venues for many participants such as theaters, casinos, tourist resorts, sports

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11 Catherine V. Yeh. *Shanghai Love. Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 110–118.

arenas, the public squares discussed by Tim Oakes, or the malls discussed by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner.

Leisure favors egalitarian sociability. The social relations prevailing among leisure participants are set off against the hierarchies prevailing in other space/times. They are performed on an assumption of equality among the participants. While this equality does not in principle include providers and professional service staff, for whom providing leisure is work, the principal entertainers (such as courtesans, singers, or literati enjoying patronage) will be included in the make-believe of egalitarian sociability. The commercial element of the relationship with the patrons will remain out of sight.

The pretense of egalitarian sociability comes under stress if in real life the social distance is too great. For state rulers and their entourage, for example, it is well-nigh impossible to shake off the stiff hierarchies separating them outside the leisure time/space. This is the Midas touch of power, and it makes for the difficulty of figures such as rulers to establish a true leisure time/space for themselves and for their ever-renewed efforts in this direction.

To enhance the semblance of egalitarianism, participants make efforts to give it symbolic expression, for example through leisure attire or informal speech that will visibly contrast with the hierarchized official dress and speech codes. A classic case of the former is the change from the starched woolen official dress to the easy flowing silk dress worn by third-century Chinese literati in their private leisure space, as visible in depictions of the "Seven Sages from the Bamboo Grove." The spillover of leisure dress (jeans, sneakers) into modern work places and venues of elegant leisure such as opera performances, a spillover pioneered in the United States, signals the pressures on heterotelic pursuits mentioned above, and the tendency to stress the egalitarian rather than the hierarchical element in leisure pursuits.

Space, time, and content of leisure are negotiated on the assumption of equality among participants. Infractions will undercut or undo the pleasure aspect of leisure. The result of the negotiation is not a dependent variable of power, money, or cultural capital, although all three may come into play if accepted by the participants. This acceptance hinges on those disposing of any one of these three to maintain the voluntary character and the pretense of equality.

## Leisure and social change

Leisure is the most suitable platform to test and adapt social change.<sup>12</sup> The time/space of leisure is the privileged environment for the "new." Free from the restrictions of heterotelic activities, leisure facilitates playful pursuits of alternative roles, thoughts, practices, and values. Given the anomic

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12 This has been suggested by Nicole Samuel, "The Prehistory and History of Leisure Research in France," in *Leisure Research in Europe: Methods and Traditions*,

tinge of the leisure environment, these playful pursuits might go in many different directions, ranging from role-playing characters identified with foreignness, wealth, libertinage, or the criminal underworld, to breaking free from inherited concepts and forms to make scientific breakthroughs or cultural innovations.<sup>13</sup> Leisure is the privileged space for love-making.

Because of the openness of this environment and its commitment to the excitement of the new—both a function of leisure's not being bound by heterotelic constraints—leisure is a privileged contact zone that easily accommodates features from other cultures as well as from other groups (such as prostitutes, courtesans, stars, or royalty) that might otherwise be out of reach or acceptability in the estimation of the given participants. This openness and craving for the new and foreign will be most graphically seen on the elite level in imperial collections for leisure in courts across Eurasia, with their commitment to find the most refined and interesting objects from around the world; on the more popular level in the Tivoli or Disney entertainment parks, with their efforts to reach across the world for entertainment offerings; or in the pervasive presence of foreign performers, artists, and genres in leisure venues from the Mughal, Qing, Ottoman, or European courts to modern concert halls. The key role of leisure in facilitating innovation through transcultural interaction is addressed in most of the essays in the present volume.

Leisure's openness to the new is due to the fact that it largely sets its own rules. Leisure's autonomy is a function of its being an autotelic pursuit. The autonomy comes with the threat of anomy from the perspective of authorities regulating and/or monitoring the space/time/action outside the leisure realm (state, religious authorities, family, charities). This anomy expresses itself in all directions, from consensually breaking laws banning certain leisure pursuits to exploring innovative ideas and activities without heterotelic constraints. The consequence is that social change (cultural, technical, criminal) is largely generated in the subjunctive mode of leisure.

With the increased proportion of leisure time in recent history, innovations geared towards leisure have become dominant economic factors. The ten companies in the world's largest economy with the highest market value at present are without exception anchored in the leisure economy. This moves leisure pursuits to the center of the money economy, which in turn forces state and religious authorities to recalibrate their effort to regulate leisure. These efforts were originally based on the notion that the anomy inherent in leisure pursuits put them in constant danger of

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eds. H. Mommaas, H. van der Poel, P. Bramhan, and I. P. Henry (Wallingford: CAB International, 1996), 12.

13 While there are few studies about the place of leisure in transcultural interaction, its role in cultural innovation has been discussed, possibly beginning with the Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper's 1947 argument that leisure was the condition for both culture and religion, which joined the English-language discussion in 1964. Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis for Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru with an introduction by T. S. Eliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).

becoming economically wasteful, morally reprehensible, socially destabilizing, and legally questionable.

Given a changing understanding of the importance of leisure pursuits for the economy and for desirable innovation, states have begun to decriminalize certain pursuits originally criminalized (sexual practices and preferences, drugs for recreational use), while expanding prosecution of others (child pornography), and have largely stopped the regulation of times legitimately set aside for leisure. Highly invasive states such as the People's Republic of China have created a legitimate domain for leisure pursuits considered beneficial (consumption, health) while actively blocking or outlawing others and proactively promoting healthy leisure pursuits, as studied by Tim Oakes. In a similar manner, religious bodies have abandoned the moral opprobrium attached to leisure and developed forms of integrating "healthy" leisure pursuits into a religiously acceptable life, as discussed by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner. Many new religious groups or trends have begun to include consumerism ("shopping") in the activities offered by their centers as a way to attract newcomers to their religion, generate funds for their institutions, and keep people away from forms of leisure deemed unhealthy.

## The pursuit of leisure

Leisure has its own types of activity, but there are no intrinsic leisure pursuits. Any activity might be associated with leisure as discussed in Robert Weller's study, but only if it is subjunctively engaged with in that mode.

Leisure has its own behavioral, moral, and aesthetic code. This code is characterized by a conscious abandonment and even rejection of the strict rules (dress, language, body posture, gender relations, social hierarchies, sumptuary rules, consumption patterns, moral precepts) prevailing elsewhere, and its playful and temporary replacement with a separate code, which allows much greater leeway. Carnival is a classical example. The availability and access to such a leisure time/space in tense industrial, urban, or court environments might be instrumental for sustaining the viability of "normal" life.

There is a stratification of leisure pursuits for a given time and place that establishes, in the perception of elites and authorities, a hierarchy from elegant to crude. While loosely related to social hierarchy, the leisure hierarchy is not a dependent variable of social hierarchy as it comes with its own demands on qualification. In terms of participation in leisure pursuits of other social layers, there is conditional symmetry of access. Those in the higher echelons might participate in the leisure pursuits of those in the lower echelons by adapting to their behavior, while those from the lower echelons might participate in elegant leisure if they adjust their taste and behavior to its aesthetic standards. Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Sarah Frederick address these adjustment processes. The function of

these adjustments is not to disturb the egalitarian homogeneity of the group.

Leisure's tendency to anomy opens the way for different types of new norms. These might range from agreeing on rules for a friendly game to the development of a vast shadow economy of leisure by providers (such as gambling houses, brothels, or porn sites) that in many cases openly contravenes the laws and regulations presumably valid for all activities. Between these two extremes there are endless variations such as the illegal stalls on the public square, discussed by Tim Oakes, or the private parties attended by young Muslim men and women, discussed by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner. The shadow economy of leisure is often accompanied by efforts to protect its anomy by setting up spaces of leisure that are shielded from the enforcement of these laws and regulations. The shadow economy of leisure also comes with its own transcultural entanglements in its organization, personnel, finances, and contents. Notwithstanding its huge and growing importance, it has received little attention in specialized leisure scholarship.

The anomic tendency of leisure pursuits has in turn led to efforts by state and religious authorities to delegitimize at least this aspect and to proactively promote behavioral models, values, and venues deemed compatible with social order, to infuse, to use their own terms, leisure with "civilizing" or "healthy" features. The studies by Tim Oakes, Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, Robert Weller, and Catherine V. Yeh in this volume address these efforts.

The delegitimation of leisure pursuits does not only pertain to the lower orders. The most extreme case might be the nearly total delegitimation of leisure pursuits of the ruler as incompatible with his government duties in the normative canon administered by Chinese scholar-officials.<sup>14</sup>

Leisure is the time/space where many of the otherwise accepted and/or enforced social rules do not apply or are seen as not applying. This is true for sexual relations or drug use, including alcohol. These tend to be handled more casually in this time/space. It is also true for a much wider range of activities such as gambling, reading, or viewing salacious works or works focused on violent action.

With the growth of urban centers with workers and industries, cohabitation within the same urban space of people from different classes became the norm. The anomic element of leisure activities among the participants (especially of the lower orders, but not restricted to them), among the providers (the gang-and-lawyer-ridden shadow economy of leisure that is pushed out of the mainstream commercial activities by the liminization and/or outlawing of many leisure activities), and among petty criminals prowling the pockets of unsuspecting revelers, led to efforts to contain and civilize this space-time. We see these efforts in the studies of

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14 Anne Behnke Kinney, "The Anxiety of Leisure in Early China," *The Chinese Historical Review*, 23, no. 2 (2016): 96-103.

Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Tim Oakes. In urban centers, this came with a new institution with its own transcultural career: the urban police. The 1829 Police Reform Act (Peel) typically targeted London (with the exception of the City, where local government strongly objected to power being taken away), and it was from here that the new institution of police gradually spread to other urban centers. In one of the first essays suggesting the establishment of such a police force, which was written by none other than Henry Fielding (the author of *Tom Jones*) in 1751, a police force was proposed as an instrument to prevent robberies, gambling, and unregistered accommodations for travelers, prostitutes, and refugees from prosecution, but also to regulate and civilize the leisure behavior of the urban working people. This institution for regulating and controlling came at the same time as efforts in England to replace leisure reading of "scrap books" of questionable morals mostly among working people. The scrap-book format had already been used by people such as Thomas Paine (*Rights of Man*, 1791, *Age of Reason*, 1793–1794, *Agrarian Justice*, 1797) to spread revolutionary ideas. Betterment advocates such as the Clapham Sect in London set out to crowd out such salacious or incendiary works with healthy and edifying tracts, and with compendia of "useful knowledge" such as the Penny enterprise from the Chambers brothers in Edinburgh. At the same time, the "rational leisure" advocates in England, Germany, and elsewhere, discussed by Tim Oakes, were pushing for healthy bodily exercise and the public venues needed for it, an idea of guiding leisure that had its own international career.

Leisure has its own aesthetics associated with particular literary and artistic forms. Leisure aesthetics is characterized by asymmetry and irregularity as opposed to the symmetry and regularity in the aesthetics of political and religious orthodoxy. The Jesuit missionary Jean Denis Attiret (1702–1768) writes in his 1743 description of the Yuanming yuan garden in Peking, which became the model for the layout of environments of leisure in Europe (gardens, parks), "on admire l'art avec lequel cette irregularité est conduit [one admires the artfulness in which this irregularity is executed]."<sup>15</sup> These aesthetics leave their imprint on the genres associated with leisure, such as ritual music versus music for entertainment; documentation and essay versus poetry; or official political or religious portraiture, with its emphasis on symmetry, versus painting and drawing for leisure enjoyment.

The taste in leisure aesthetics is stratified with the claim of the upper classes to have more refined tastes and forms of behavior. As discussed in the studies by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Sarah Frederick, acquisition of these tastes and forms of behavior is a relatively stringent condition for members of the lower echelons to be accepted in the upper classes. Among the successful strategies for the foreign-owned Shenbaoguan in Shanghai

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15 See Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 32, no. 1 (1933): 1–20.

discussed by Rudolf Wagner was the explicit association of most of its print products with leisure and the merger of traditional aesthetic forms (ink painting, calligraphy) with modern technology such as lithography.

Leisure is signaled by particular styles and goods. The architectural frames and/or interior decoration of spaces of leisure will have their own markers. The foodstuffs and drinks of leisure time/space are set off against the daily fare. The difference may be marked by palatial luxury, or by Arcadian simplicity, but it will be marked.

## Agency in leisure

The commodification of leisure products and services gives ultimate agency and responsibility for their consumption to the customer. As leisure goods and services are not needed for the regular livelihood of the consumers, the customer's subjective freedom to make use of them (or not) is absolute. This translates into the formalized deference to the patron of the providers and the advertisement language for leisure products. The deference to the ultimate agency of the patron diffuses irritation about the fact that many leisure products are marketed by huge and wealthy enterprises that may otherwise be seen as imperialistic and exploitative.

This deference is particularly relevant for leisure goods and services that have crossed national and cultural borders. Their commodification publicly and visibly counters the assumption underlying many postmodern as well as nationalist critiques that the agency in their spread is with the providers rather than with the patrons, and thus counters apprehensions about a cultural or leisure goods imperialism that is mainly intent on spreading its own "foreign" agenda in values and ideology. The focus on the purchasing authority of the patron and the interest of the provider to make money clears the goods and services of the suspicion of being subsidized products designed to transmit an outside agenda that, if spelled out, would actually be rejected by the customers. Lai Yu-chih's and Rudolf Wagner's studies explore this aspect.

Leisure is a gendered time/space. While there are leisure spaces and times more strongly frequented by men or women respectively (soccer, massages), in time/spaces with joint activities, the egalitarian utopia of leisure gives women more prominence in determining content than in other decision-making fields. This is also due to a division of labor prevailing in families or the ongoing path-dependency on such a division.

Both men and women contribute with their heterotelic work to make leisure possible. But as in most societies natural (childbirth), physical (strength), and ideological (patriarchy) factors have led to women being in charge of providing the immediate leisure conditions for the family while men are in charge of securing the surplus needed. As a strong path-dependency prevails even after some of these causes have become irrelevant or nonexistent, women are seen as more attuned to

the conditions for pleasurable leisure, as shown in the films discussed by Sarah Frederick. In this limited sense, leisure time/space has a closer affinity to women.

## The historicity of leisure

Human leisure is subject to historical change. Although aspirations to leisure are a constant among higher organisms, human leisure changes over time. These changes involve the standing of leisure in the hierarchy of values, the proportions of time and energy people are able to invest in it, shifts in the places and times primarily associated with leisure, the role of leisure in the overall economy, the degree of professionalization among both providers of leisure and those engaged in its pursuits, the importance of leisure pursuits for the articulation of identity, the range of access to leisure pursuits for different segments of the population, the development of the roles of state and religious authorities in regulating leisure, and the size as well as the importance of the grey economy feeding the anomic as well as mostly illegal trends in leisure.

In the process of such historical changes, the relationship of the space/time/practice of leisure to space/time/practices in other realms (religion, politics, or gainful work) or in other domains, such as in foreign cultures or the past, changes as well. This change not only affects the relative proportions of these domains and their interaction as distinct entities, but impacts the character and standing of these other domains such as work (see above) and religious activity, as discussed by Robert Weller.

The entrance into the leisure time/space is marked by the transition from the subjunctive to the subjective mode. With the growing importance of leisure in modern times and increased spillover from leisure routines in clothing, behavior, and social relations to other realms, the subject that makes its leisure decision based on subjective preferences enters these other realms. It does so not as a neophyte, but with the substantial routines acquired during leisure pursuits, and it encounters others who are familiar with the same routines from their own leisure pursuits.

The big historical shifts in leisure history follow those in the productivity of labor. The move to sedentary agriculture brought one such shift. It reset the calendar for leisure time and freed a segment of the population for other pursuits (religious, political, military, commercial), which included a larger share of time and means that could be devoted to leisure pursuits.

The second big historical shift came with the move to industrialization. Its key features are urbanization, monetarization, commodification, and "democratization." The key variable for leisure is urbanization. Although for all forms of modern leisure earlier precedents can be found, these

four produced a qualitative shift. Premodern urban centers such as London or Kaifeng prefigured these modern developments. Samuel Pepys's (1633–1703) diary gives a lively protocol of the leisure activities of a Restoration Period London urbanite without the credentials of nobility, going to the theater often several times a week, and seeing there the King as well as ladies of ill repute. A similar situation will be found in the suburbs of Cambaluc during the Yuan or in Paris under Louis XIV. The definition of leisure aspirations for the general populace, as well as many practices in provider/patron relations in modern times, are modeled on these pre-modern precedents.

Urbanization concentrated the overwhelming majority of the population in urban centers. This made entertainment enterprises sustainable year round, allowed for a broad professionalization of providers, and provided broad access to leisure activities for the urban populace. Monetization was part of the urbanization process, as it brought large swaths of people into the money economy and established access to goods and services for all who could pay. Commodification hinges on monetization, as it transforms the previous barter and gift economy, which stratified access to leisure goods and services. Democratization—used here not in a political sense but as a shorthand for access to leisure time/space and goods not based on social hierarchies—is a consequence of the previous factors. The studies by Lai Yu-chih, Catherine V. Yeh, and Rudolf Wagner discuss this transition.

History does not stop during these long periods, and developments are not homogenous for different regions as well as segments of populations. During the sedentary agriculture phase, it took a long while until an entire class developed that lived off the agricultural surplus and focused its heterotelic activity on administration (state), securing divine protection (religion), management (trade), and security and power projection (military), while having the largest share of leisure time. In the same manner, the inner dynamics of industrialization led from a draconian separation of labor time and leisure time to a dramatic decrease of the former relative to the latter.

Given the ensuing change of the character of work altogether, state and religious authorities have moved to come to grips with this development by adjusting their standards and strategies. This shift is visible in the recognition and acceptance of the primordial economic importance of leisure pursuits, which has moved them from being economically wasteful and morally questionable to a largely recognized anchor of the economy and individual identity. This is most clearly visible in economic statistics, where two new items have appeared: leisure and service industries, with the latter partly connected to providing leisure. Scholarship has followed this shift through an increased focus on leisure research and has tried to conceptualize the new situation with terms such as “post-industrial age.”

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