

Teaching Note on
Josef Pieper's *Leisure the Basis of Culture*
An Integration of the Contemplative and Active Life

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I begin this course with an extensive exploration of what we mean by leisure, work, and their relationship. My thesis with the students, which I encourage them to challenge, is the following: *if we don't get leisure right we will not get work right*. Behind these words of leisure and work is the relationship between the contemplative and active life, which describes what we *receive* and what we *give*. I have found that Josef Pieper's essay *Leisure the Basis of Culture* to be a profound analysis of these relationships and while it is the most difficult text the students read during the semester, it tends to ignite in them the paradigmatic change they need.

Pieper argues that the key to the moral and spiritual crisis of modern society is the refusal to receive, to accept a gift. While hedonism presents its own problems in a highly consumeristic and sexually saturated society, the larger problem, Pieper maintains, is "the strange propensity toward hardship that is engraved into the face of our contemporaries as a distinct expectation of suffering." Could this propensity toward work, toward career, toward achievement, toward technological solutions, perhaps be the deepest reason for the "refusal to accept a gift, no matter where it comes from?" Have we lost the ability to receive gifts? Have we deluded ourselves that everything is acquired, earned, and achieved? Perhaps the most difficult modern problem is this inability to receive, a sign of pride which has been seen as the most dangerous of the seven deadly sins.

I find for the most part that my students have a strong sense of working and giving themselves through their work. They have been brought up on heavy doses of careerism and athleticism in an increasingly technological culture. What they find most perplexing about Pieper's essay is this notion of *receiving* as leisure and how this notion of leisure is actually the ground of their giving, their work. What enables us to give authentically, in a way in which we do not exhaust ourselves, in ways that we don't give away ourselves too cheaply, in a way that we "find ourselves," is premised on how we receive.

For many of my students, they feel an increasing alienation from those habits of receptivity or leisure, from silence, prayer, Sabbath, worship, and forms of service where they are with the poor rather than just doing things for them. The lack of habits of leisure/receptivity is increasingly forming how they look at work, business, and the world.

There are few better than Nietzsche to explain the person who cannot receive. His "noble man" or "superman" is one who regards "*himself* as determining values . . . he *creates values*," he does not receive them. This notion of the person as only creative, active, constructive, distorts the place of the person within the cosmos as well as overrates the role of our own achievements and work within our lives. It is in this receptivity/leisure that we begin to understand that the human

situation “calls not for a resolve but for a rescue,” a rescue that can only be received. When we take by force those things that should only be received, we violate the divine image inherent within us. This refusal to receive is found in our origins, in the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, when God commands them not to eat “of the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:16-17). The moral law is given by God which we can only receive. We cannot take it, manipulate it, or create it; we can only receive and accept it. If we take and achieve when we should rather be accepting and receiving, we distort our place within God’s order and our actions will increasingly be characterized by alienation, distrust, loneliness, and ultimately despair.

Leisure the Basis of Culture was published in 1947 in Germany post World War II reconstruction. At a time of rebuilding, leisure does not seem to be what is needed, but Pieper explains that this is precisely the time to take leisure seriously, since it is the time in which we can begin to understand what we are building for. In a similar way, as students, most of whom are seniors, are beginning to move into their careers, work not leisure is foremost on their minds. Yet, leisure is the basis to how they will understand their work if they can receive it. In this teaching note, I lay out the handouts I use in class to help students connect Pieper’s ideas to their lives. I lay out several notes:

1. **An Introduction to the Meaning of Leisure:** Since leisure is such a strange and old word to students, I give them a definition of what it means according to Pieper and how it has been used within the Western tradition.
2. **Seeing Things Whole: *Ratio* (Reason) and *Intellectus* (Faith).** The modern academic problem is that faith has become alienated from reason/*ratio*. To see all knowledge as only *ratio* marginalizes theological discourse from the university and eventually reduces reason to empirical reasoning which eventually marginalizes philosophy, literature, and the humanities in general.
3. ***Acedia*:** When we see the world only dependent upon reason or *ratio*, and increasing instrumental reasoning, we begin to experience *acedia*, the sin against leisure.
4. **Proletariat:** The predominant anthropological understanding of the modern person is increasingly the worker who is bounded by the process of work.
5. **Feast:** At the heart of leisure is festivity, which is the basis of leisure and of culture, and if we fail to see our feast as worship, and participate in false worship all the technological advancements and legal regulations will fail to save our culture.

My strategy to teaching Pieper is the following:

1. Provide study questions for each reading (see syllabus).
2. In class we go over the questions with students leading the conversation and with me providing clarification.
3. At the end of these discussions I hand out the following essays, except for the first essay, which summarizes the main points as well as expands upon Pieper’s text. The first essay is given to them in class the day before we read Pieper as an introduction to the text. Because students often have difficult reading Pieper, I find that an introduction the class before can mitigate their frustrations.
4. It takes me about three 100 minute classes to get through *Leisure the Basis of Culture*.

AN INTRODUCTION TO *LEISURE*

“We are *not-at-leisure* in order to *be-at-leisure*” (Aristotle).
“Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest” (Jesus)
“Our hearts are restless until they rest in you oh Lord” (Augustine)
vs
“Work for the sake of work” (Modernity)

Leisure Defined: Leisure is an attitude of mind and a condition of the soul that fosters a capacity to receive the reality of the world [memorize!] “Leisure has been, and always will be, the first foundation of any culture.” “Leisure is not the attitude of the one who intervenes but of the one who opens himself; not of someone who seizes but of one who lets go, who lets *himself* go . . . (Pieper, 32). It is an attitude of the mind, a condition of the soul of being in touch with one’s true self, the self understood as a created and redeemed being within a world that has meaning. “The essence of leisure is not to assure that we may function smoothly but rather to assure that we, embedded in our social function [of work], are enabled to remain fully human. That we may not lose the ability to look beyond the limits of our social and functional station, to contemplate and celebrate the world as such, to become and be that person who is essentially oriented toward the whole of reality.” Properly understood and practiced, leisure enables us to become more whole because it engages the fundamental questions of our being: origin (where did I come from), destiny (where am I going) and present (who am I). It is precisely because leisure embraces this wholeness that it helps us to be authentically free to be who we were meant to be, not merely free to do whatever we want.

Traditions of Leisure in Western Civilization:

1. Greek/Latin Education: “Leisure in Greek is *skole*, and in Latin *scola*, the English ‘school.’ The word used to designate the place where we educate and teach is derived from a word which means ‘leisure.’ Plato’s Academy was a genuine religious association where one of the members was appointed to prepare the sacrifice.” How do we look at school? Is it more like work or a means to get us good work? Why does school understood as leisure sound so strange to us? Have we become so influenced by the world of work that our education has become simply an extension of our economic system and it has lost a sense of its deeper cultural purpose?

2. Judeo/Christian Worship/Sabbath: In this tradition, the contemplative act and the Sabbath are seen as core acts of leisure since they give real rest. Augustine starts off the *Confessions* “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you oh God.” To rest from work in the Judeo-Christian tradition means that the time of rest is reserved for divine worship: “certain days and times are set aside and transferred to “the exclusive property of the Gods.” *Holidays comes from holy days.* The word Sabbath comes from the verb to rest. Rest, however, does not mean “do nothing,” but to be in a state that gives rest to the restless heart (contemplative prayer). Only the person in a total work mentality sees “being” at rest as “doing” nothing. Psalm 46:10 “Have Leisure (be still) and know that I am God.

3. Other Traditions on Leisure: African, Asian, Native American, Latin American, etc.

Categories of Leisure (culture):

- ***Religious*** (religion/church): Soul—unity—contemplation, *prayer*, worship, Sabbath
- ***Philosophical*** (school): Intellect—truth—*insight* of the nature of things and not merely distraction; conversations which challenge us to be more than who we are. Leisure—*scola*—school.
- ***Social*** (family, volunteerism, civic engagement, etc): Development of community, formation of the person. Will—goodness—engaging those on the margins.

- **Aesthetic** (music, art, film, drama, nature, etc): Affection—beauty—overwhelming *awe and wonder* of creation—nature (the Rose).
- **Other**: nature, sports, sleep,

Three Elements of Authentic Leisure: 31ff

1. **Leisure is a form of silence—stillness**, a receptivity where one stops and allows reality to present itself to you. How much of your day is silent? Do you have any silent time? Silence is necessary to apprehend reality—silence not only from things but in things. It is not noiselessness but the soul’s power to receive the whole of creation and not merely its parts. For only the silent hear! “The wise man seeks the silence that deafens every fool.” This is why Pieper states “Unless we regain the art of silence and insight, the ability for non-activity, unless we substitute true leisure for our hectic amusements, we will destroy our culture—and ourselves.” Leisure is not an escape through consumption and amusements. It is an open confrontation with ourselves. “Leisure allows one to steep oneself in the whole of creation” by opening oneself to the mystery of Being. Prayer, contemplation, meditation, reflection, all require silence (stillness) because they are acts of reception. Leisure allows one to receive the gifts of wisdom on which no amount of human labor can attain by itself.

2. **Leisure is a form of celebration, of festivity (object 33)**. “It affirms the basic meaningfulness of creation and one’s sense of oneness in it.” Celebrations or feasts are easy, delightful, and require no exertion. “*In leisure man, too, celebrates the end of his work by allowing his inner eye to dwell for a while upon the reality of Creation. He looks and he affirms: it is good.*” When God created the world, he rested from his creation and said, “It is good.” It is only in leisure that one can tell whether work is good or not.

- Distortions of Leisure as Celebration: the commercialization of Christmas, the decadence of Mardi Gras; the trivialization of Easter; etc. Ask yourself what is celebrated (what is affirmed and seen as great worth) in each of these instances contrasted with what is celebrated in its theological meaning. Worship indicates what we find most “worthy.”

3. **Leisure is non-instrumental**: It is a time in which we produce nothing in the sense of economic utility. Leisure provides us the time to look beyond our productive, social function and be oriented toward the *whole of reality*. Contrast the careerist who sees leisure in instrumental terms to his own personal and economic advancement or the bureaucrat or proletariat who sees leisure in terms of a social function. Leisure for them is a function of work in which to be refreshed *for* work, and not *from* work (e.g. Cardinal Van Thuan).

What Leisure is not! (because it is a condition of the soul not necessarily an external thing)

1. Leisure is not just a result of external factors. It is not just spare time, a holiday, a weekend, etc. It is not non-activity, but “attitude of the mind and condition of the soul.”
2. Leisure is not merely a break from work, so as to re-energize us to go back to work (sharpening the saw). Leisure does not exist for the sake of work, although it certainly has implications for work. Rather work exists for the sake of leisure.

CHAPTER II: SEEING THINGS WHOLE

The Integration of *Intellectus* (faith/receptivity) and *Ratio* (reason/activity)

Faith without reason tends toward superstition, fundamentalism, and fatalism. Reason without faith tends toward an inhuman efficiency, instrumentalism, and lack of community. Both distort reality. The more significant danger in business is that reason without faith leads to the illusion that all my knowledge depends upon me—that I am at the source of this knowledge. This tendency leads to pride, which then disfigures reason and strengthens vice.

“Science without religion is blind, and religion without science is lame” (Einstein).

“Secularism and fundamentalism exclude the possibility of fruitful dialogue and effective cooperation between reason and religious faith. *Reason always stands in need of being purified by faith*: this also holds true for political reason, which must not consider itself omnipotent. For its part, *religion always needs to be purified by reason* in order to show its authentically human face. Any breach in this dialogue comes only at an enormous price to human development” (Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 56).

Most of us are or will be involved in intellectual work. The fact that we are going to college, we are partially preparing our minds for this feat. Also, as we go from an industrial to an informational to a knowledge based economy, workers are increasingly becoming intellectual workers and not just manual workers. An important question, then, is how do we understand *knowledge*—can we know, what can we know, and how do we know? This is called “epistemology.” For Pieper, knowledge is more than intellectual work and he uses the terms *ratio* and *intellectus* to help us understand the difference (read pg 9 concerning the rose, further analogy—lover looking into her lover’s eyes vs. the optometrist’s looking into her patient’s eyes). If we were to translate these terms for today, we might want to use the words faith (*intellectus*) and reason (*ratio*) (see John Paul II’s encyclical letter *Fides et ratio*; see also Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in veritate*, 30).

1. Two Kinds of Knowing:

a. *Ratio/Reason/Achievement*: “human knowing consists essentially in the act of *investigating, articulating, joining, comparing, distinguishing, abstracting, deducing, proving*” (as well as observation, measuring, counting, comparing/contrasting, defining/distinguishing, surveying, experimenting, weighing, discursive, logical thought, abstraction, technical). To know is to work (intellectual work). Unlike animals, we are able to think and not just respond. It is characterized by the discipline in which you study such as marketing, entrepreneurship, finance, journalism communication, education, biology, etc. This type of knowledge results into skills through the learning of various techniques, developing skills, and utilizing formulas. It entails a certain intensity that results in fatigue. Kant’s definition of knowledge: human effort that earns knowledge. For him, knowing “is *activity*, and nothing but *activity*” nothing but *ratio*. While Pieper recognizes the importance of *ratio*, to equate knowledge only with *ratio* has damaging implications.

b. *Intellectus/Faith/Receptivity*: “*Listening-in to the being of things*” faith, intuition, simple apprehension, contemplation, prayer, meditation, insight, grace, gift (leisure). *Intellectus* is the spiritual or “superhuman” way of knowing, of *seeing the whole* (insight of the unity of knowledge, unity of the person). No matter how perfected you become in your discipline, work or *ratio*, there is something unsatisfying, something incomplete. *Ratio* can only take us so far in what we can know. But this incompleteness of *ratio* is not simply grasped by further discursive reasoning. It comes through a purely receptive (leisure) vision. It is received not acquired.

Hence, it is not work as we tend to understand work. It is a form of contemplation that is characterized as a receptive act. This type of knowledge entails “humility” since what is said is “I receive,” not “I achieve.” Here, the insight is that my knowledge is not my own. I cannot look to myself as its source. It is this type of knowledge that moved Aquinas to silence and where he came to the conclusion that his own work in comparison to this *intellectus* was “all straw.” It is a kind of knowledge that brings the person to a profound sense of humility. While rare, many people have an experience of the whole in their life, a momentary grasp where “everything” makes sense. This kind of knowledge is a *participation* in a reality which I cannot grasp, but rather it grasps me, where I do not possess truth, but truth possesses me.

2. Integration of these 2 Kinds of Knowing: *Complementarity, Integration and “Mutual Interplay” of ratio (reason) and intellectus (faith):* The Catholic intellectual tradition rests upon a conviction of the unity of knowledge through the dialogue of faith and reason. On the one hand, faith enhances reason, it does not replace it. Faith prevents reason from being hijacked by its instrumental and empirical dimensions; it opens reason to ultimate questions, questions of value, purpose, and meaning. On the other hand, reason enriches faith by protecting it from fideism and superstition, deepening our insight into the implications of faith in the world. Benedict XVI explained that theology is subjected to new interrogations in a world tempted, on the one hand, by a rationalism which follows a false idea of freedom unfettered by any religious references and, on the other, by various forms of fundamentalism which, with their incitement to violence and fanaticism, falsify the true essence of religion. The role of faith also has a moral dimension, since as “a spiritual force that purifies reason,” it searches for justice, freeing the person, “from the ever-present risk of being ‘blinded’ by egoism, by interest and by power.”

Real understanding for Pieper, then, is a mutual interplay between both *ratio* and *intellectus* (18-19). “The process of knowing is the action of the two together.” (11) “The mode of discursive thought is accompanied and impregnated by an effortless awareness, the contemplative vision of the *intellectus*, which is not active but passive, or rather *receptive*—a receptively operating power of the intellect” (11-12, note the definition of leisure here). Pieper is responding to Kant’s assertion that all knowledge is attained from the work of the knower. Kant describes the operation of reason entirely in terms of factory production—inputs and outputs. All knowledge is *produced* as a result of the work of the mind. He argues that “the mind could affirm no more of reality than the sense data presented to it, and could not know the world in itself but only as it appears to us” (Richard O’Connor). This is why for Kant the more difficult a thing is the more virtuous it is when you master it since you are exhibiting your talents. It is the Hercules syndrome (the self-created person).

For Pieper as well as Aquinas, true knowledge and understanding *participates* in the reality of the world. While effort in knowledge and virtue are a necessary condition, the effort is not the only cause of true knowledge and authentic virtue. This can only be given as a gift (*intellectus*) since we participate in goodness and truth, rather than acquire it.

3. Alienation of *Ratio* from *Intellectus*: The danger according to Pieper is when we view our knowledge, particular our knowledge in the university as only *ratio*, which alienates it from *intellectus*. The *ratio*-minded person tends to pursue “things as an act of aggression, to steal their secret from them and then to place them under inspection as if they were antiseptically

prepared microscope slides” (31-32). This attitude of knowing creates in the knower the driving principle of progress for its own sake. The knower is the creator of the known and thus is not bound by any moral principle, which is always seen as a limitation. This occurs when one allows no room for authentic leisure. This is of particular danger for the “careerist” who sees work in “individualistic” terms, in self-made terms.

To see all knowledge as only *ratio* marginalizes theological discourse from the university and eventually reduces reason to empirical reasoning which eventually marginalizes philosophy, literature, and the humanities in general. This is the danger for universities where pressures exist to make the curriculum practical in terms of one’s career. If universities operate only on the premise of *ratio* knowledge, then students are encouraged to see their talents, their property, and ultimately their lives as simply their own to be made by their “own unaided effort and activity” (13). To deny the *intellectus* dimension of our knowledge is to say “then knowledge includes nothing which is not due to the effort of man, and there is nothing *gratuitous* about it, nothing ‘in-spired,’ nothing ‘given’ about it” (13).

This impetus to preserve the integration of both *ratio* and *intellectus* is a strong argument for comprehensive universities such as St. Thomas. A critical question is: “What are the necessary conditions to experience *intellectus* or contemplation in a world when you are rewarded only for *ratio*?” Here, one begins to see the importance of cultural institutions (universities, schools, families, churches, etc.) An education in the liberal arts will help students to habituate their minds to this kind of knowledge. Yet, universities have all too often produced individuals with big *ratios* but small *intellectus*’ (odd way of putting it I know). *Intellectus* requires a breaking through of narrow interpretations of specialized disciplines and beginning to “see things whole.” It is about discerning connections and the deeper realities that seem hidden from us.

4. Implications for Leadership:

a. So what does this understanding of *ratio* and *intellectus* mean for the leaders? Jim Collins’ notion of 5th level leader: resolve (*ratio*) and humility (*intellectus*). In order to “see the whole,” the leader cannot reduce work or education to only *ratio*, *techne*, formulas, or any other purely material consideration. Without leisure, silence, sleeping on it before deciding, taking it to prayer, the Sabbath, etc., the leader will only see a part and miss the whole (common good, human dignity, community of work, collaboration with God’s ongoing creation).

b. Example: Former Tyco CEO Dennis Koslowski (currently imprisoned on fraud) who, in justifying his multi-million dollar salary, stated, “the way I calculate it, while I gained \$139 million [in stock options], *I created* . . . \$37 billion in wealth for our shareholders.” This CEO actually believed that he was the major cause of the creation of wealth in his company, and failed to *see* the extraordinary social achievement it takes to create wealth. Once we suffer from the illusion that our knowledge and accomplishments are our own, it is one small step away that we come to believe that our salvation is our own (read summary of argument on 14, note relationship between knowledge and virtue, 15).

5. Exercise: Using Pieper’s distinction of *ratio* and *intellectus* evaluate UST’s mission statement. *Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, the University of St. Thomas educates*

students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely and work skillfully to advance the common good.

CHAPTER III

ACEDIA (SLOTH/IDLENESS)

From the Greek *akedia*, indifference, *a* (absence) + *kedos* (care).

The sin against the Sabbath.

Definition: *Acedia* is one of the seven capital (source or spring) sins (sins from which other sins follow). It is considered the vice of leisure. If one wanted to gain deeper insight into the diseases and dysfunctions of organizational life, these sins/vices would be a good place to start. These sins and their contrary virtues are:

- pride [humility],
- greed/avarice [justice and liberality],
- lust [chastity],
- envy [brotherly love],
- gluttony [temperance],
- anger [meekness]
- *acedia*/sloth [leisure].

Dante considers these sins as offenses against love, and groups them accordingly: *Perverted Love*—Pride, Envy, Wrath/Anger; *Insufficient Love*—*Acedia*; *Excessive Love of Earthly Goods*: Avarice/Greed, Gluttony, Lust. Mohandas Gandhi described the seven deadly sins in the following way:

- Wealth without work
- Pleasure without conscience
- Knowledge without character
- Commerce without morality
- Science without humanity
- Worship without sacrifice
- Politics without principle

Acedia is a “deep-seated lack of calm which makes leisure impossible.” It is a restlessness that does not mean only inactivity as commonly understood, but rather, as Kierkegaard noted, a “*despairing* refusal to be oneself.” This refusal can take the form of a couch potato or a workaholic. Theologically, the person refuses “to be what God wants him to be, and that means that he does not want to be what he really, and in the ultimate sense, is.” This definition confronts the all too often modern idea that we can be whatever we *want* to be. What we want to be is too often a false self that fails to discover what we are created to be. In psychological language, we create masks, false selves, that disable us from allowing the real person to come through.

Acedia results from failing to ask what things ultimately are. Instead, the person afflicted with *acedia* tends to default to personal preference, to individual choice, to market forces, “to whatever floats your boat” when important and meaningful questions arise. Such emotive and relativistic forms of logic are an intellectually lazy way to resolve important questions. It is lazy, that is, intellectually and spiritually lazy, because it flees reality rather than engages it. Emotivism and relativism are failures to marvel at the ordinary and to experience its mystery, which results in the modern problem of boredom—a symptom of *acedia*. One manifestation of *acedia* is found in the denial that our lives have meaning, that we have been created and destined for a particular purpose (insufficient love).

Acedia is often translated as sloth, a laziness that is expressed in the failure of having a work ethic or economic ambition. It is important to realize, however, that this idleness has more to do with a spiritual and intellectual laziness than physical inactivity. *Acedia* is important to understand because it points to the source of the problem and not merely to its effects, which can range from inactivity and depression to overwork and naïve optimism. As a capital sin, *acedia* indicates where other faults such as idleness and overwork come from.

Acedia then does just not mean “idleness” as we understand it, but more accurately it means *restlessness*—the refusal to receive, which denies our Creator’s command to rest in Him who has made us. *Acedia* neglects the fundamental Judeo-Christian insight that our restless hearts are only put to rest in He who is the source of rest (Augustine) and violates the Third Commandment (Keep Holy the Sabbath—“The soul’s resting in God” [30]) and ignores Jesus’ invitation “Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest.” So the two principal violations of the 3rd Commandment (some have it as the 4th) are overwork (careerism) and the wrong kind of leisure (consumerism).

1. The Problem of the Overworked Careerist: The increasing modern expression of *acedia* is “workaholism,” often found in what we call careerists, or what Pieper calls the *proletariat* (or Adam I who is alienated from Adam II). The careerist will often rally others to work harder and smarter and use the phrase “Work and don’t lose hope.” But hope in what? He will work for greater shareholder returns, larger market share, higher productivity, and even “service,” but he will have lost any sense of greater purpose for what it is all for. By refusing to hope in what he is made for (*acedia*), he refuses himself by not becoming what he was created to become—an image of God destined for the Kingdom, who is called to humanize the world. For “an individual in the last stages of despair can, by reason of the natural and cultural forces in the penultimate regions of his soul, appear to others and even to himself to be an ‘optimist’. He has only to seal off the innermost chamber of his despair so radically that no cry of pain can escape to the outer world” (Pieper, *On Hope*, 49). While diligence and industriousness are important virtues for any kind of work, they become vices when these habits serve as means to escape oneself through excessive work, leading him or her to crowd out all other dimensions of his life. *Acedia* produces boredom not in work, but in everything else but work. There is the deepest curiosity in every technical aspect of work, but a failure to wonder about him or herself not just as a businessperson, entrepreneur, accountant, or teacher, but as a human being who is part of a larger world sharing a common destiny with others.

2. The Problem of an Amusement Culture: When leisure is totally restricted to entertainment and consumption, it fails to do precisely what it is supposed to do—provide a deep rest that results in peace. When people are consumed in a substantial amount of entertainment, they are far from relaxed or rested. Rather, they become restless, dis-eased, or tired. Too much sleep makes one tired, sluggish, and apathetic. Too much entertainment makes one bored, restless, and anxious. This lack of leisure in its deepest spiritual receptivity results in *acedia*. “[F]or only someone who has lost the spiritual power to be at leisure can be bored” (54). All of this is not to say that entertainment is inherently bad. Rather, it is to say that this form of leisure will not provide rest by itself. Leisure understood only in terms of entertainment lacks meaning that is satisfactory to the human heart and mind. It lacks meaning, since much of it lies on the “pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain” principle. Leisure understood in these terms essentially leads to boredom, an idleness which refuses to engage reality. This refusal either makes people complacent (the couch potato) or leads them to search for more exotic leisure activities or to overwork.

Leisure as silence, celebration, non-utility as the antidote for *Acedia*: So for Pieper, the opposite of *acedia* is not merely work so as to keep busy “but rather the cheerful affirmation by man of his own existence, of the world as a whole, and of God—of Love, that is, from which arises that special freshness of action, which would never be confused by anyone with any experience with the narrow activity of the

‘workaholic’”(29) (see “24-7”). Because we strive for wholeness (holiness), we must aim toward “grasping the world as a whole and realizing [our] full potentialities as an entity meant to reach wholeness.” Our life is a *participation* (not a consumption) in this wholeness, an openness to a mystery that I cannot control or manipulate. This is why most people find amusements by themselves ultimately unsatisfactory. They are unable to satisfy that human capacity for wholeness. Amusements/entertainment do not have the capacity to put me in a place connected with mystery. Rather, when amusement is the principal form of leisure, it deadens the soul, anesthetizes the mind, perpetuates restlessness and fosters self-absorption. Authentic leisure, however, as that capacity of the soul to *receive* the reality of the world, has a transcendent dimension to it that helps me to participate in a reality beyond myself, but in such a way that the self is ennobled. Three critical practices of leisure are the following (31ff see first handout on leisure):

1. Stillness/Silence/Solitude: leisure as “non-activity,” as receptivity, as receivment, as “an inner absence of preoccupation, a calm, an ability to let things go, to be quiet.” Such stillness, silence, letting go (vs the refusal to receive) prepares one to *accept* reality, a reality that recognizes “the mysterious character of the world.” “Be still and know that I am God” (Read 31).
 - a. Practice: Silence (meditation), Prayer (contemplation), Spiritual reading
2. Celebration/Feast: affirmation that the world is good (origins—Genesis), that we see our end and where we are going (destiny), and that we are loved and are called to love (presence)—this is true festivity (vs meaninglessness)
 - a. Practice: Sabbath, worship, funerals, weddings, religious festivals, etc.
 - b. A common line in our culture is “I am spiritual but not religious.” While this line confronts the stagnation and dryness too often present in the institutional church, it is fundamentally an anti-institutional and highly individualist and privatistic statement. This phrase stands in tension with Pieper’s notion of feast which is at the heart of the religious impulse—that leisure at its center is a communal and public act, not simply a individual and private one. Religion comes from the *religio* which means “to connect.” To say I am spiritual but not religious often translates that I don’t want to be connected with others, such as the church and I want to be the determiner of my own leisure.
3. Non-instrumental (vs instrumental reasoning)
 - a. Practice: Right Intention (Read 34-35). “It is impossible to ‘achieve leisure’ in order to stay or to become healthy, not even in order to ‘save our culture’! Some things can be approached only if they are seen as meaningful in and by themselves. They cannot be accomplished ‘in order to’ effect something else” (Pieper, “Leisure and Its Threefold Opposition”).

Summary: Leisure is only possible when people are at one with themselves. This is only possible when they understand what is the meaning for their lives, can celebrate “real” goodness and can see God’s meaning and vocation for them. This is attained through leisure, most perfectly through worship. Hence, work becomes perfected in the perfection of leisure. Authentic leisure enables people to see how work is GOOD, just as God on the 7th day looked at his work and said “It is good.” Benedict XVI explains this connection by stating “that the biblical teaching on work finds its coronation in the commandment to rest.” To rest in God is not to escape one’s work, but rather an invitation to live out in our work “in a new way — as a consequence of a light which allows one to appreciate that this existence has divine dimensions which previously had been hidden.”

Chapter IV: Deproletarizing the Worker

(or decareerizing the professional/businessperson)

THESIS: There has been a “monstrous momentum” of the Worker, the proletariat, the careerist, which has significantly altered Western civilization to such an extent that its spiritual and moral characteristics are being threatened. In order to deproletarize the worker or more specifically to our situation, to decareerize the professional/businessperson/entrepreneur, space (physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual) and time (moments in a day, week, month, year) must be provided for leisure.

PROBLEM: We need to be careful of over-investing ourselves in our work—an increasing problem for those in professional life today. Professionals invest such an extensive amount of time and energy in their work communities that not only are their other communities such as family, church, civic, suffering from neglect, but they increasingly view themselves more as a manager, lawyer, entrepreneur, vice president, engineer, etc. than as a Christian, father, wife, parishioner, etc. In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, Christopher Bartlett and Sumantra Ghoshal, rather than resisting this problem, acquiesce to it: “Institutions like churches, communities, even families, which once provided individuals with identity, affiliation meaning and support, are eroding. The workplace is becoming a primary means for personal fulfillment. Managers need to recognize and respond to the reality that their employees don’t just want to work for a company; they want to belong to an organization. More than providing work, companies can help give meaning to people’s lives.”

The problem with this perspective is that a community of work cannot replace other communities, especially a family and religious community. The family and the Church are primary institutions that give meaning in terms of our origin, destiny and identity. A corporation and the work it gives does not have resources to “give meaning to people’s lives” let alone make itself an authentic community. This will come from the culture (leisure is the basis of culture), and especially the community in the culture that is bounded by a love that helps people to love their neighbor as themselves, not simply on an occasional or instrumental basis, but as a lifelong project. Yet, this ability to love, which is the basis of all authentic communities, will not occur without a restoration of transcendence, of a “receptivity,” a grace that moves us from our own particular self-interest and narrow notions of the good. We all have the innate capacity to love, but many of our loves tend to be a momentary burst of good will that fades when the emotion wears off. The possibility for a community of persons to exist in an organization where work is meaningful remains doubtful without a strong culture that returns the larger society to a religious-moral view of the human place in the cosmos and society.

Q. DEFINING PROLETARIANISM/CAREERISM: those who are fettered or chained or bound to the process of work (same definition of careerist—see Lewis’ article 24/7). “To be bound to the working process is to be bound to the whole process of usefulness, and moreover, to be bound in such a way that the whole life of the working human being is consumed” (42). Process of work means the all-embracing attitude in which things are understood and used for the sake of the public need (proletariat) or for the sake of the individual’s economic and psychological gain (careerist). For the careerist, the process of work, including all those leisure activities such as liberal arts education, is to serve his or her work goals. “‘Proletarianism’, thus understood, is perhaps a symptomatic *state of mind* common to *all* levels of society and by no means confined to the [so-called] ‘worker’ . . . so it might be asked whether we are not all of us proletarians [or careerists], consequently, ripe and ready to fall into the hands of some collective labour State [or corporation, or one’s very own company] and be at its disposal as functionaries . . . In that case, spiritual immunization against” this seductive appeal must be sought not in the state or corporation but in leisure (culture). Like leisure, Pieper defines proletarianism as an anthropological and spiritual phenomenon, but unlike leisure, the total work mentality of the proletarian is a disease that corrupts rather

than nourishes the soul. Yet, this spiritual disease is often caused by external pressures, although ultimately it resides in the soul.

Q. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES FOR BEING BOUNDED TO WORK PROCESS, FOR BEING A PROLETARIAT OR CAREERIST?

1. Economic coercion (external): lack of property ownership, particularly productive property and sub-living wages (two major issues we will examine later in the course) (42). The person who “has nothing but his work,” that is, no property, no stored up wealth, will always be forced to sell his working-power” (42). The two sources of income for people are their labor and their capital/property. Labor without capital creates greater instability.

2. State/Corporate coercion (external): Particularly for careerists, the pressure to perform within the corporation creates conditions of longer work hours.

3. Spiritual impoverishment (internal) often caused by cultural corruption “in this context everyone whose life is completely filled by his work (in this special sense of the word work) is a proletarian because his life has shrunk inwardly, and contracted, with the result that he can no longer act significantly outside his work, and perhaps can no longer even conceive of such a thing” (43). The workaholic can be defined as that person who is bored by everything but work.

The last two are often interrelated with each other—“The total-working state [or corporation] needs the spiritually impoverished functionary, while such a person is inclined to see and embrace an ideal of a fulfilled life in the total ‘use’ made of his ‘services’” (43). It has been reported that McKinsey’s HR strategy (for companies like Enron) is to hire highly driven insecure people with high IQs. The insecurity will guarantee a high degree of identity with the career and the IQ will enable the skill and knowledge necessary to guarantee results.

Q. HOW DO YOU DEPROLETARIZE THE WORKER?

1. Pay Just Wages and build up a wide distribution of property/capital: a wide distribution of property distributes rather than concentrates economic power.

2. Limit the State and the Corporation: Sabbath, feast days, mandatory vacation days, etc.

3. Have a Robust Culture that has a profound and deep notion of leisure that is not instrumental to the political or the economic and that has the capacity to overcome internal poverty. Numbers 1 and 2 above create the conditions to deproletarize the worker, but it is only a culture that has leisure as its basis that can actually lead the person out of a proletarian existence. *Only a culture with an understanding of leisure that can simultaneously enlarge ones scope of life beyond the confines of useful work* (separation) and transform the meaning of work to a vocation can deproletarize the person. In other words, have an understanding of leisure that can stand on its own and not be instrumentalized to work, such as “sharpening the saw” is critical to society that allows the person to flourish. But not any old form of leisure will do. Leisure must also have a quality that it is able to engage work (see pg 46 on Catholic social thought and its relationship to the honorarium/wage and liberal/servile distinctions). For example, liberal education as leisure must be able to engage with the “servile arts” (professional education) (47) in such a way that work can be understood as a vocation or calling that goes beyond job and career. In order for one to more freely express his or her vocation at work, it is important that the 3 conditions above are met. These conditions help the person to see the importance of work where the wage is seen as an honorarium (work as non-exhaustive—46), where work is not only an objective activity but a subjective one as well, etc.

This solution to deproletarianize the worker brings us back to the main question of Pieper's book: "With what kind of activity is one to occupy his leisure?" Not any kind of leisure will do. The forms of leisure to deal with are: liberal arts, contemplation, spiritual life, feasts/celebrations/liturgy—forms that help us to remember who we were created to be. And as we will see in chapter V, at the heart of leisure is the feast, and at the heart of the feast is the religious impulse. What is the one "Institution" that forbids useful activity on particular days so as "to prepare . . . a sphere for a non-proletarian existence?" (47) The church, synagogue, and other religious institutions are crucial to this authentic understanding of leisure. Without them, there is little chance the culture, such as families and education, will be able to do this on their own.

Note how Pieper is trying to get at the internal dimension of leisure and the vision that it fosters of how we "see" ourselves and how we "see" the world. This is why the following quote makes sense: "The most important change that people can make is to change their way of looking at the world. We can change studies, jobs, neighborhoods, even countries and continents and still remain as we always were. But change our fundamental angle of vision and everything changes—our priorities, our values, our judgments, our pursuits. Again and again, in the history of religion, this total upheaval in the imagination has marked the beginning of a new life... a turning of the heart, a 'metanoia' by which men see with new eyes and understand with new minds and turn their energies to new ways of living" (Barbara Ward, 47). People indeed have to see with new eyes and understand with new minds before they can truly turn to new ways of living. The question before us is how do we see? Do we see things whole or merely as disconnected parts? What will allow us to see things holistically, deeply, profoundly, spiritually, morally? (leisure) "In the fullest sense of the word spirituality [leisure] is not an alienation from the world, but an inner activity which relates us to and reconnects us with reality in its process of becoming (cf. the original meaning of religion, *re-ligare*, reconnecting). In this regard it contributes to overcoming the syndrome of disconnection and objectivization which is typical for modernity, its process of differentiation and the types of instrumental rationality that are the typical expressions of it" (Verstraeten).

CHAPTER V: FEAST/CELEBRATION AS WORSHIP

“To have joy in anything, one must approve everything” (Nietzsche).
“Culture lives on religion through divine worship. . . [where] man gains his true worth, and recovers his upright posture.”

Can we have a true feast, celebration, or leisure without divine worship? Can we have a flourishing culture without God? And can we really have a just economic and political world without leisure understood at its core as worship? Can we understand our work without understanding true life-giving leisure? Of course we can, says the contemporary world, so long as we are balanced, moderate, careful, and enlightened. According to Pieper and the Christian tradition that he is articulating, the answer is clearly no. In this chapter, we come to the climax of Pieper’s argument in understanding leisure as the basis of culture.

To provide some context to this, Tracy Rowland writes the following: “In his book ‘The Spirit of the Liturgy,’ Benedict made the point that the sole purpose—not the major purpose, but the sole purpose—for the liberation of the Jews from Pharaoh was that God wanted them to be able to worship according to his prescriptions. Thus, I would say that for Benedict the most important question about any culture is, where does liturgy stand within this culture? Is it the highest good? Are we dealing with a liturgical city? Or are we dealing with a culture which is driven by economic factors? Who are the gods of this culture? What is the dominant vision of the human person? How are the sick and vulnerable treated? Concretely, it is of little benefit to Christians to live in a culture where any kind of liturgical expression is permitted, if, like the Jews under Pharaoh, they are being forced to work like slaves just to provide shelter and food for their families and have no time for prayer and leisure, that is, no time for God, in lives dominated by the quest for physical survival. In the same work, Benedict said that law and ethics do not hold together when they are not anchored in the liturgical center and inspired by it. . . . Karl Polanyi expressed the position well when he wrote that a ‘natural order’ is one in which the economy is embedded in social relations, rather than one in which social relations are embedded in the economic system, making society a mere adjunct to the market [see venn diagrams]. By making the test that of the place and nature of liturgy within a culture Benedict is also taking a very Augustinian position. Augustine would say that what we adore is a sign of what we love, and what we love is a declaration of our membership card of one of the two cities—the city of God or the city of Man.”

Leisure, for Pieper, is that power that has capacity to both limit economic and political forces and to direct these forces to the common good. This power of leisure lies in its ability to create the conditions of the soul that fosters the capacity to receive the world as a created and redeemed reality. This is only possible through contemplation, silence and ultimately through communal worship (liturgy/Sabbath), the heart of a festival, “the most festive of festivals”—the cult. At the heart of any culture, then, is religion, where the cult, the worship is expressed. Why is this the case for Pieper?

A festival is a good time! What makes *time good*? At the heart of this question is celebration, which is that radical affirmation that the world is good, that it has order to it. The celebratory dimension of a festival is the time in which we take *to see* and to affirm our end, which penetrates ordinary reality. A feast is the celebration that creation is good by affirming the Source of this goodness. “To celebrate a festival means: to live out, for some special occasion and in an uncommon manner, the universal assent to the world as a whole.” A feast must repeat the original affirmation of the world, “It is very good.”

Pieper explains that “[w]hoever refuses assent to reality as a whole, no matter how well off he may be, is by that fact incapacitated for either joy or festivity. Festivity is impossible to the nay-sayer. The more

money he has, and above all the more leisure, the more desperate is the impossibility to him. . . . Festivity lives on **affirmation**. . . . [and] there can be no more radical assent to the world than the praise of God.” This is why an important aspect of the feast is Joy: the response of a lover *receiving* what she loves—should be distinct from nervous laughter or forced fun. This is why festivities should begin with liturgy so as to signify the affirmation of reality as created and redeemed.

This Christian notion of festival competes with an increasingly *instrumental* or utilitarian notion of feast. The feast day in the world of “total labor” is the break from work for the sake of work (Labor Day). One rests so as to be more productive at work. The feast day is subordinated to work. No longer is the feast or any leisure justified on its own merits, but on the amount of utility it provides. Yet, religious feast days, such as Christmas or Easter, exist not to give us breaks from work, but to participate more deeply in the life of God’s self-revelation and consequently our self-understanding. Often our restlessness or boredom (*acedia*) at church results from seeing liturgy as another form of entertainment. “Mere time-killing and boredom gain ground, which are directly related to the absence of leisure, for only someone who has lost the spiritual power to be at leisure can be bored” (54). To say that “I am bored” reveals more about me than about the situation. It is this lack of leisure that prevents us from giving ourselves, from sacrifice, to that which will give us rest.

Two Crucial Elements to a Festival, to Christian Worship: Celebration and Sacrifice.

A. The Christian Incarnational/Sacramental Element of the Celebration: The Affirmation of the Order and Goodness of the World. In a festival, we see reality beyond its physical and functional appearance toward its invisible and profound meaning. Think about a wedding (sacrament), birth (baptism), death (funeral—the Irish really celebrate death—this does not mean that festivities are always fun), Sunday service/mass, Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter as well as other feast days—they are celebrations precisely because they help us participate more deeply in a way of seeing the order and goodness of the world (they make the invisible visible). Yet, Christmas, Easter, Memorial Day, etc., “cannot be celebrated festively unless the celebrant community still draws glory and exaltation from the past, not merely as reflected history, but by virtue of a historical reality *still operative in the present*. If the Incarnation of God is no longer understood as an event that directly concerns the present lives of men, it becomes impossible, even absurd, to celebrate” festively since there is no reality on which to call something good beyond our own perception or opinion (see *On the Waterfront*—ongoing crucifixion, Eucharistic real presence, seeing reality).

B. Sacrifice/Gift—What do we give our lives to? And do we give ourselves away too cheaply?: Pieper explains that divine worship is where our real wealth (abundance or overflow) resides. “Wealth” stems from the Middle English *welthe*, an extended form of *weal*, implying “condition or state of well being.” What makes us well *re* will depend upon how we *respond* to the goodness of the world. The answer for Pieper and the Christian tradition resides in our ability to give of ourselves—to sacrifice. A *person* “cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (*Gaudium et spes*). This is why sacrifice, a voluntary offering freely given, has always been a critical part of religion and its celebratory acts. The liturgy is not only a celebration, but also a sacrifice. Sacrifice is the living heart of worship, the free act of self-donation. The festival, which is a celebration of goodness of this world, has its heart in sacrifice. The authentic festival is one that taps into the nature of who we are, namely, that our fulfillment is related to that which we *give* ourselves, to that which we sacrifice ourselves. For it is only in giving that one receives. What an authentic feast makes clear, and what worship orients us toward, is that our sacrifice is given to that which is of most “worth.” For too often we give ourselves away too cheaply. We misplace our inherent desire to give of ourselves, and devote ourselves to objects and persons who should

not and cannot handle our self-gift (idolatry): to work, to sport, to consumption/amusement, to spouse, and so forth. This is why “culture lives on worship. . . ‘in festive consort with the gods,’ man regains his true worth, and recovers his upright posture” (57).

The paradox of sacrifice, of what we give, is faced at death, namely, we can only take those things we have given and those things we have hoarded remain. Or as Jesus explains, he who gains his life loses it and he who *gives* his life gains it. As God has shared with us, so we share with others. If, however, we fail to share God’s gifts, our resources, our talents, our very selves, the gifts given corrupt the gift holder. What many cultures recognize is that we cannot develop in any integral way unless we give back the gifts that have been given to us. It is simply the way we are made. Marriage, for example, is somewhat inconceivable without this notion of sacrifice, since our efforts, somewhere along the way, will always be seen as unequal.

Pieper’s Radical Claims in Chapter V:

1. The heart of leisure is the festival;
2. The most festive form that festivity can possible take is worship—the radical assent to the world that it is created and redeemed by God (an uncomfortable claim since it does *not* reduce religion to a private sphere of opinion and emotional preference, 50). “Culture lives on ‘worship’” (57), since it is in worship where we are refreshed and re-created regaining our true worth as persons. It is the place where we are most profoundly reminded of who we are.
3. There can be no deadlier more ruthless destruction of festivity [and culture] than the refusal of ritual praise by replacing it with amusements, games, sport, circuses [Gladiator, 53], casinos, false festivities (Labor Day, Brutus Festival, 51, etc.), that is, festivity without God. Without worship to keep alive the affirmation of the inherent goodness of creation, work becomes “a bare, hopeless, effort, . . . without inner satisfaction” [54-55], since it is in worship, leisure, that “man regains his true worth” [57]. Without authentic worship, work can become its own “cult” as expressed through the total work mentality [55].
4. Worship, festivity, the Sabbath is not an escape from work. In a paradoxical manner, it is only in our detachment, “withdrawal” (60) from work that we see our deepest meaning of work. Benedict XVI explains this connection by stating “that the biblical teaching on work finds its coronation in the commandment to rest.” To rest in God is not to escape one’s work, but rather an invitation to live out in our work “in a new way—as a consequence of a light which allows one to appreciate that this existence has divine dimensions which previously had been hidden.” Worship, particularly in terms of its sacramental meaning, is not an escape from the world, “rather it is the arrival at a vantage point from which we can see more deeply into the reality of the world.” This *sacramental/incarnational* view of worship reveals that spirit pervades materiality, grace perfects nature, faith informs reason and worship makes one’s work holy, which is why from a Christian, and in particular, a Catholic perspective, the Eucharist is the most profound expression of Sabbath since it is where we see most deeply and most profoundly “the work of human hands,” the bread and wine are transformed into the real presence, a presence that has the power to redeem the world (see *On the Waterfront*: read pg 60). When Mother Teresa first went to Calcutta, she described her work not in terms of bringing Christ to the poor in Calcutta, but opening her eyes to see that Christ was already there. Where most people only saw despair, she saw Christ’s love reflected in the poor, because she saw Christ in the Eucharist. In a similar way, when we go to work ,whether in a police station, a school, a small business, government office, or a major corporation, we do not bring God into work; rather, God is already in our work. The question for us is whether we have the eyes to see God at work in our work? We live in a culture that makes it very difficult to see Christ’s real presence in our work, a culture that not only fosters distinctions but

divisions and walls between public and private, spirit and matter, faith and work, church and state, body and soul, and so forth. These distinctions privatize religion by eliminating its public significance.

5. Finally, that our ability to be authentically human depends upon this festivity, this worship, which is a recognition that the human cannot save itself. And today, in this age, we are drawing down upon the moral capital that has been built up by a culture that understood leisure. Today, our total work world, a world of careerism, a highly technological culture, is depleting the moral capital of culture (55-56), since it fails to make space and time for leisure.

Conclusion: What do we do? (57)

- 1) Practice Receptivity (over achievement): The first thing to do is to un-do, to do no-thing, to receive, to accept grace. "...[t]he effort to regain a space of true leisure, to bring about a fundamentally correct attitude and 'exercise leisure,' . . . consists in the fact that the ultimate root of leisure lies outside the range of our responsible, voluntary action. The fullest harmony with the world, to be precise, cannot come about on the basis of a voluntary decision" (58). It's about "receiving" not achievement.
- 2) Practice Right Intention (over instrumental rationality or "logical confusion"): From this *receiving* we begin to see the world as it is, rather than only what we can get from it. Leisure cannot be done for the sake of other goods namely good health, family stability, etc. It must be done for its own sake. What is the ultimate justification of leisure? "not in order to" (58) not even to save our culture. "The celebration of God's praises cannot be realized unless it takes place for its own sake. But this—the most noble form of harmony with the world as a whole—is the deepest source of leisure." (58) It is not to have, or to do, but to be. Authentic leisure will more often than not *result* in healthier and happier lives, but if it is *intended* for this reason, one instrumentalizes the relationship with God that leisure offers.
 - To do the right deed for the wrong reason is the greatest treason (T.S. Eliot).
- 3) Practice the Liberal Arts (over careerism): Education
- 4) Practice Silence (over the drunken monkey): Prayer
- 5) Practice the Sabbath (over consumerism): Worship
- 6) Practice going to the margins (over self-indulgence).

"If we don't get leisure right, we won't get work right; if we don't get the Sabbath right, we won't get Monday right; if we don't get the culture right, we won't get the economy or politics right." While we are born to work, we are destined for an "endless day of celebration" [60].