

Recovering the World: Varieties of Philosophical Experience

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Abstract

Philosophical issues are at the core of leisure studies and have gained increasing attention. Unfamiliarity with contemporary discussions of philosophic activity, however, limits the effectiveness of teaching and study of these issues. Two contrasting approaches to philosophy, the Platonic and the historicist, are outlined here, along with their consequences for the philosophical analysis of leisure. Adopting the historicist approach, this essay suggests means by which students may become more fully engaged in exploring the philosophical aspects of leisure.

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The philosophic analysis of leisure raises fundamental questions, ranging from the interpretation of classic texts through the role of freedom in leisure to the provision of services to various publics. Such questions require treatment not only in professional journals and meetings, but in the classroom as well. Accreditation standards for recreation and leisure study curricula call for study of the philosophical foundations of leisure. This can, and should, recur throughout the curriculum, particularly in light of the national debate on curriculum reform and content (see, e.g., Boyer, 1987, esp. ch. 7; Wilshire, 1990). Nowhere are these questions more pressing than in students' attempts to answer questions about the human meaning and value of leisure. Such meaning has ethical, political, civic, and aesthetic dimensions; the very advocacy of leisure has distinctly valuational tones, accentuated by the dominance of work and economically grounded values in our society. A philosophical thread can thus be seen to run through leisure studies, for questions of the types suggested above are most, and perhaps only, approachable through philosophic inquiry.

Few of us in leisure studies have, however, been trained in philosophical thinking. This is not where the field finds its roots currently, despite regular appeals to the ancient philosophic heritage of the concepts of leisure, play, and recreation. Difficulties can thus arise when we confront philosophic questions or attempt to bring our students to some understanding of the philosophic implications of leisure in contempo-

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rary society. Too often we operate with an artificial conception of philosophy. There is a certain naïveté in our appeals to the philosophic heritage of leisure to legitimate our interest in leisure or our place in the academy. At the same time, our use of philosophic sources remains narrowly focused. There is a strong predilection in the field for what Rorty (1984) calls “doxographical” rather than substantive sources: too many of our references are to summations of what has been said, rather than to the saying itself and to the context in which it occurs. However understandable, the field remains unfortunately isolated from recent developments in philosophy, which mirror the broader intellectual and academic tumult around us.

These recent developments range across a considerable landscape, but most call into question the traditional image of philosophy as in some sense an ordered discipline pursuing universal, timeless truths about the world, the human place in it, and the conditions of truthfulness. Several themes are available to present to a leisure studies audience the unfolding of current discussions about philosophy. One might focus on criticisms of the ethnocentric and gender based nature of the philosophical canon, criticisms now being raised with increasing persistence in a literature too vast to summarize (but see Grossberg, Nelson, & Treichler, 1992). One might examine the energetic debate on modernity/postmodernity (here see, e.g., Madison, 1988; Rosenau, 1992; White, 1991). One might also review the communitarian / universalism discussion in ethics and justice (accessible in Rasmussen, 1990). One might turn to the conflict between what I will term the Platonic and historicist views of philosophy. Any of these may serve to thematize the contemporary philosophic landscape, but I have chosen to explore the Platonic/historicist axis because it cuts across the other possible choices and thus is at the center of the argument over the nature of the philosophic enterprise. Some awareness of the history of philosophy is required, however. The following section therefore attempts, in a necessarily condensed manner, to outline the Platonic tradition and its influence. It is against this influence that what I will be calling Nietzschean historicism reacts, as detailed in succeeding sections. Pursuing this debate alerts us to shortcomings in the ways we use and teach philosophical aspects of leisure studies. The world in which leisure occurs is different, depending on which philosophic approach one takes. Since I side with the historicists (something to be declared up front), I will try to show by way of conclusion how this approach generates questions contributing to a greater philosophic understanding of leisure.

The Platonic Tradition

Philosophy is a human invention. It is a creature of the western historical tradition rising in ancient Greece (for considerations of African and Asian influences, see Bernal, 1987; Frankfort et al., 1946). What is recognized in the west as philosophy emerged at a particular historical juncture, the transition between archaic and ancient Greece. This collision of cultural forces was, loosely stated, between the mythic-epic tradition best represented by the Homeric poems and their continuation in classical Greek tragedy on the one hand, and the -re-Socratic philosophers, Socrates, and Plato on the other (on this transition, see Hatab’s lucid discussion, 1990: see also Bames, 1982; Euben, 1990). At stake here was the way in which the world is to be understood, and

thus what set of ideas was to guide human activity. In mythic and epic thinking, the world was conceived as an agon (contest) with chance and fate, either of which could fall suddenly on even the best and most virtuous human being. The epic virtues, starkly portrayed in the Iliad were those of a warrior culture, traits of character best able to withstand the buffeting of the capricious gods and unknowable Fates. Emergent philosophical thinking gradually left chance and fate behind as anything more than rhetorical devices or metaphors. It devalued epic virtues, substituting reason, justice, and right conduct as the virtues more appropriate to a new age of civic rather than heroic human beings. In this triumph, however, what came to be the dominant philosophical approach forgot its historical origins and set itself against historical understanding. Philosophy claimed then to rise above history and change, and this set it on a course that has made all the difference in the western intellectual tradition.

Plato comes at the end of this cultural contest. Many of the highest cultural achievements of the Greeks were already past. The presence of the sophists, teachers of rhetorical skill intended to advance a particular interest rather than to make human beings wise or good, can be seen as part of Greece's cultural decline, for the sophists promoted the notion of contest but without the heroic virtues previously associated with agon. Socrates and Plato were no strangers to hotly fought content, as the dialogues demonstrate (the Gorgias might be most illustrative of the sharpness of dialogical combat), but they had in mind a universal end, namely, true knowledge. Out of the stimulus of his attacks on the sophists, Plato created an approach to philosophy (and knowledge generally) that remained largely unthreatened for perhaps two millennia, and remains today among the dominant western intellectual traditions. Even its opponents have necessarily to cast their arguments in its terms, with resulting difficulties that will be noted below.

Plato's achievement was the location of truth in an eternal unchanging realm, a realm of absolute being untainted by transience. This realm was set in contrast to a temporal world, a world of shadow images from the eternal realm diluted by the weakness of human perception and understanding, a world of shadow and at best partial being. The Platonic philosopher's quest is to escape the shadow world, to achieve, in however limited a fashion, true knowledge, which by its very nature lies in the eternal realm. This realm is constituted by the Ideas or Eternal Forms perhaps most familiar from the Republic. The doctrine of the Ideas is complex, but its understanding is necessary to the argument advanced in the remainder of this essay. In A. E. Taylor's summary (1922), there is "a supraphysical world of entities, eternal and immutable, and it is these unchanging entities, called by Plato the Ideas, which are the objects with which the definitions and universal truths of exact science [including philosophy (jlh)] are concerned." Things in this world, a table or a bed, examples Plato mentions in the Republic (596a), are in fact "approximate and imperfect resemblances of the corresponding conceptual entities from which they get their various class-names" (p. 39; see also A.E. Taylor, 1936, esp. pp. 286-89). That is, an earthly table is called such, indeed, is such, only to the degree it partakes of the characteristics of the Ideal table in the "supraphysical" realm. It is that realm which is real, not the lesser and imperfect earthly world of our senses.

With this doctrine. Plato set philosophy on a course which remains powerful (and powerfully attracting) today. This thinking occurred not in the sense of Whitehead's oft quoted remark that all (western) philosophy is a footnote to Plato, but in the sense that Plato gave a particular shape to the cosmos in which human beings conceive themselves to be living and thus, trying to know. Plato did so by locating truth external to human beings, indeed external to their limited experience of the world. By their inherently finite temporal nature, human beings are, in Plato's view, necessarily precluded from ever knowing the Ideas, though a few philosophically gifted might achieve a more elevated knowledge.

Although of course no comprehensive survey is possible here, the persistence of the Platonic construction of the cosmos and the human place in it can be demonstrated by a cursory overview of the western philosophical canon. Aristotle's unmoved mover resides outside human experience. The Thomist synthesis of Aristotelian and Christian influences posited a divinely inspired great chain of being, the origin and goal of which lies in God outside the human world. Descartes located truth in a nature external to human being, the res extensa; human intellectual activity dis-covers, uncovers, the eternal rational principles along which God ordered the cosmos. Hobbes, more extreme than Cartesian rationalism, followed the same lines of reasoning to the materialist conclusion that the divine order is expressed in laws of geometric motion to which human beings are subject as effects of external causes. Locke's perceptual psychology placed truth in the external objects of fallible human perception. Reacting against Hume's radical extension of this notion, Kant continued the Platonic tradition by assigning truth to a noumenal world closed to human experience through the unknowability of the Ding an sich (thing in itself). We find traces of Platonic influence even where they would be least expected, for example in empirical science. If the book of nature is in essence readable, it is so only by illuminating ordering principles independent of human existence (though the refinements of subatomic physics offer a partial exception to this). If the claim of openness to human knowledge is a departure from Platonic influences (but not yet a complete break since empirical knowledge is always only probabilistic and approximate), the source of truth remains steadfastly external to human beings. Even as empiricist and positivist philosopher attempted to narrow the task of philosophic thinking, they left unchallenged this inheritance from Plato.

The Platonic tradition is immensely powerful in western philosophy. Yet obviously, Plato's thinking is not exhausted by the doctrine of the Ideas. It is an interesting question whether Plato himself could be accurately called a Platonist in this sense, or whether he became such only in the eyes of posterity. There are many other sides to his thinking that have been partially eclipsed by the elevation of the Ideas to his central doctrine. Sallis (1986), for example, emphasizes the dialogical nature of Plato's thinking, while Hunnicutt (1990) points to the role of play in the attempt to raise human beings above doxa, false opinion and shadow truth. Nor was the doctrine of the Ideas static in Plato's thought, for it changed over the course of his thinking. Nonetheless, Plato held always to some version of it, and the aim of his thinking was always the truth represented in the unchanging, eternal Ideas. Perhaps we need to keep in mind Kant's remark about Plato (1965, p. 310), that it is frequently the case that those coming after a thinker have a

better understanding of her/his thought than he/she did. If this is so, then it is not unreasonable to give the label "Platonic" to the tradition which locates truth outside human beings who may come to know it only imperfectly, and to include at least partially in this tradition the thinkers named above (cf. Rorty, 1982; Rorty radicalizes his position in 1989). Each of them conceives truth in the Platonic fashion, as an independent realm external to human being if not the natural world, an unchanging hyper-reality whose principles may be discoverable through but not created by human activity.

Stating the Problem

The Platonic tradition has been emphasized because it is to it that the bulk of philosophical discussion in leisure studies appeals. Underlying these appeals is the assumption, sometimes tacit, sometimes open, that there is something timeless about the truths or values philosophy illuminates, that it in some way can be used to legitimate our interest in leisure, that it in fact can yield some enduring standard against which to assess contemporary leisure. Yet philosophy clearly fails this test. It has not produced such standards, nor will it. To demand that philosophy do so fundamentally misunderstands the philosophic enterprise and leads to dead ends.

To understand how this is so, we could examine any number of issues that have been raised philosophically in leisure studies: freedom, rights, justice, and so on. But it seems to me more fruitful briefly to consider Aristotelian leisure since it occupies a prominent place in the field's heritage. The substantive interpretation of Aristotle is not the issue. It is rather the expectation that some ultimately correct interpretation can be achieved, that this will have both clarifying and legitimating effects, and that once this interpretation is achieved the matter is closed. But what standards are to be applied to determine "correctness" of interpretation? How is "correct" to be defined? Do we weight Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics, and thus take contemplation as the meaning of Aristotle on leisure? Or do we weight Book VI and the Politics, thus taking practical wisdom and civil action as his meaning? The Platonic tradition leads us to search for one finally correct understanding of Aristotle on leisure. Doing so, however, creates difficulties for the philosophical study of leisure and its teaching. In the present case, given the dramatic cultural and societal differences between ancient Greece and ourselves, we are left with the question of relevance: what meaning can the "correct" interpretation of Aristotle have for us even if we were to achieve it? Answering this question from the Platonic perspective presents us with several undesirable choices: dogmatically asserting the importance of a true understanding of Aristotle and thus of one interpretation over another, treating the whole question as of antiquarian interest only, accepting as arbitrary all such philosophical discussion and choices, or dismissing the entire matter as meaningless. None of these choices offers a satisfactory basis either for further philosophical inquiry into leisure or for answering our students' queries about what is to be gained from it.

One effect of the Platonic tradition has been to create a search for the "end of philosophy." Many thinkers, including those named earlier, conceived this as their task, to bring philosophy to its end by establishing the "true" method of revealing the eternal realm, making the world transparent to human vision and thus rendering philosophy

ended beyond confirming the results of the method. Plato; Aristotle, Aquinas. Hobbes. Locke, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Carnap, Frege, Russell, Moore, the younger Wittgenstein: each conceived himself to have brought the long Platonic quest to an end, though philosophy and the world were understood dramatically differently in each case. But each “end” seems only to have begotten new questions. Given this welter of apparently incommensurable “ends,” it is understandable that students might throw up their hands and dismiss philosophical inquiry as a trivial, if occasionally stimulating, enterprise.

The Historicist Challenge

By the start of the nineteenth century, the rationalist elements in philosophy, summarized in Kant’s phrase as “pure reason,” were no longer satisfying as a foundation for further philosophical inquiry. The same lack of closure noted above led many to question whether philosophy could survive as a meaningful enterprise without some new basis. Historicism was a response. It came in two versions, the one earlier and continuing the Platonic tradition, the other later and utterly rejecting it and the notion of “foundationalism.”

Although I will be concerned here with the later version, to develop an adequate understanding of historicism, and the continuation of the Platonic tradition, it is necessary to outline the earlier as well (on which generally, see Mandelbaum, 1971). This initial version of historicism is epitomized in the thought of Hegel and Marx. Both argued that truth emerges historically through human activity, and that this truth manifests itself differently at different moments in this process (on Hegel, see Plant, 1973; C. Taylor, 1975; on the relation between Hegelian and Marxian thought, see Bernstein, 1971, Pt. I; on Marx, see Avineri, 1968. for a general introduction). For both, the process was dialectical and represented the inevitable working out of historical laws through human activity but whose sources and ultimate goals were external to human beings. For Hegel, this was the development of *Geist* (spirit); for Marx, it was the unfolding of materialist, laws of production and social organization. In both cases the truth being worked out in history remained external to human beings, its truthfulness independent of them. The first version of historicism, then, was the idea of an inexorable historical process culminating in the realization of a good reflecting an external standard. History approached in this way could indeed come to an end.

The second version of historicism (which I will call Nietzschean) carried philosophy beyond Platonic thinking by understanding truth not only as realized historically, but as completely and totally the product of human activity, without reference to anything beyond the immediate historical needs of a particular form and organization of life. Friedrich Nietzsche made this leap in a burst of originality reaching back beyond Plato to the earliest wellsprings of western thought and reaching forward to the most contemporary developments in philosophy. Evoking poetic imagery, reveling in the power of metaphor and parable—all foreign to the developed Platonic tradition—Nietzsche challenged the assumption there could be any truth external to and independent of human creation. Nietzsche is a great wearer of masks, whose most basic argument is that truth, too, wears masks, those of its historical eras and, even more so, of the purposes

of the human beings who proclaim it (on Nietzsche, see Nehamas, 1985; Schrift, 1990; Strong, 1988; Thiele, 1990). There is no truth aside from these historical, human truths, no eternal and external truth awaiting dis-covery. The images of truth we believe we see, however shadowy, are in fact no more than images of our own historical era, our own historical needs.

It is difficult to imagine a more direct challenge to the Platonic tradition. Against the Platonic claim that “knowledge is to be seen as correct representation of an independent reality,” an “inner depiction of an outer reality” (C. Taylor, 1987, p. 466); against “the Platonic urge to escape from the finitude of one’s time and place, the ‘merely conventional’ and contingent aspects of one’s life” (Rorty, 1982, p. xix): against these Nietzsche argued that, in Rorty’s words. “there is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not an appeal to such a criterion, no rigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions” (p. xlii). Nietzsche has been followed in this vein. with greater or lesser fidelity, by some of the most innovative twentieth century western thinkers such as Heidegger, Derrida, Fink. and Foucault. and has influenced many others, including Dewey, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Rorty, and C. Taylor.

An important issue must be raised here. Nietzschean historicism is frequently criticized as relativist or nihilist (see, e.g., Megill’s balanced account, 1985; Rosen, 1969). But this can be so only from the perspective of the Platonic tradition, which postulates some absolute standard of truth external to human beings. Relativism and nihilism matter philosophically only if one has already to some degree committed oneself to the Platonic construction of truth. They matter very much socially, politically, and ethically, of course, but it is not at all clear the Platonic tradition yields a more satisfactory basis for human action. As C. Taylor (1987, pp. 471-472; suggests, the “epistemological tradition” (his term for what I have been calling, after Rorty, the Platonic tradition) has resulted in a web of misunderstandings about human activity. Externalizing truth impoverishes human being and activity, leading to three undesirable consequences which Taylor terms the disengaged self, the atomistic subject, and atomistic individualism in society (cf. C. Taylor, 1991). Human beings are far more active in constructing their worlds than the Platonic tradition allows, rendering it largely unable to deal with the consequences of carrying externalized standards over into such creative activity. If the thinkers of the Nietzschean version of historicism appear relativist or nihilist, it is because they believe themselves forced to carry on their critiques of the Platonic tradition from well outside it. The vocabulary of “Philosophy” is so encrusted with Platonic elements that no one remaining entirely within it will be able to make an entirely effective statement. Among Nietzsche’s great insights (and he was perhaps the first to have it fully) was that language shapes the worlds in which we live, that language does not merely describe an external reality but in fact creates it. Each in their own ways, thinkers working in the Nietzschean version of historicism follow out the consequences of this insight. Doing so entails accepting the necessity of a new vocabulary, or multiplicity of vocabularies. for to remain in the traditional Platonic vocabulary is also to remain in the reality it creates. No wonder then, that the Nietzschean historicists, seen from within the traditional vocabulary, appear destructive, relativist, and nihilist.

Recovering the World

The Nietzschean historicist critique of the Platonic tradition is an attempt to reclaim their world for human beings as an arena of creative activity, in which the arena is itself the creation of human activity. Within this critique, human beings become fully part of the worlds they are engaged in creating, rather than being marginalized as able to know only imperfectly an externally grounded reality that includes their own bodies and minds. Although there are disquieting aspects in some variants of this approach (see Megill's telling criticism of Heideggerian passivity, 1985, chs. 3 & 4; and Bernstein's powerful statement on the same issue, 1991, ch. 4), there is also much that deserves attention.

As Rorty (1982) stated, "the issue is one about whether philosophy should try to find natural starting points which are distinct from cultural traditions, or whether all philosophy should do is compare and contrast cultural traditions" (p. xxxvii). A "natural starting point" outside "cultural traditions" would legitimate the Platonic claim that there is an external standard of truth. Rorty (p. 202) suggests that knowledge can thus be taken either as in some fashion representing reality or as coping with it. This means we have two ways of asking about a problem (p. xxxiii). We may ask, first, what the essence of the problem is, what it shows us qua the essence of human being and vocabulary would produce such a problem. Thinkers working in the second, Nietzschean version of historicism believe it is the latter question which most profitably rewards philosophic attention.

At issue is the foundationalism underlying the Platonic tradition. Rorty (1982, but cf. 1989) wishes simply to "eliminate epistemological (i.e., foundational] problems by eliminating the assumption that justification must repose on something other than social practices and human needs" (p. 82). C. Taylor (1984) argues that "Foundationalism is undermined because you cannot go on digging under our ordinary representations to uncover further, more basic representations" (pp. 18-19). For Taylor, it is not possible to separate what we think from the background against which we think it. The "task of reason" becomes that of "articulating this background, 'disclosing' what it involves" (1987, p. 477). Bringing to the surface what has been submerged or suppressed, we become more fully in possession of the human present, allowing us in turn to address Rorty's question regarding what sort of people would represent their world in this particular fashion.

The Nietzschean appeal to history is thus far more than insisting on accuracy in describing earlier times and earlier thinkers, what Rorty (1984) calls "historical reconstruction" (see Skinner, 1969, for a definitive statement on this approach). It is equally a rejection of the foundationalism entailed in positing universal laws of historical development. It is in fact a form of therapeutic thinking, akin to Nietzsche's genealogical approach (see Foucault, 1984), aimed at uncovering and restoring the images informing the practices rising from a particular way of thinking. These images are usually buried deeply within the practices themselves. Although such images continue to govern the practices genealogically, that is, in

their original impulse, there is no pure historical descendance because historical change transmutes and transforms the original images and practices until they become barely recognizable in the present (here the notion of a Platonic tradition may serve as an example). To act within this present, we must think historically, genealogically.

The historicist approach to philosophy may be seen as a process of recovering from historical forgetting (C. Taylor, 1984) Platonic foundationalism, when carried over into human practices, entails forgetting the historical antecedents of these practices so they may be accepted as the natural order of things. Plato makes this explicit in his construction of the ideal polis in the Republic: it will be achievable only if human beings are unaware how artificial it is. To overcome domination by the images hidden within the Platonic tradition, so that human thought and activity may range freely in their creative powers, it is necessary to undo historical forgetting, from which follows that philosophical inquiry must be historicist. Noting that there is a range of clarity in human practices, C. Taylor (1984) suggests that “the inarticulate end of this gamut is somehow primary. That is, we are introduced to the goods, and inducted into the purposes of our society much more and earlier through its inarticulate practices than through formulations” of them (p. 23). Practices stand out originally in bold relief against their backgrounds, but fade as they themselves become part of the background of the given. This is historical forgetting. To “understand ourselves today,” writes Taylor, “we are pushed into the past for paradigm statements of our formative articulations. We are forced back into the last full disclosure of what we have been about, or what our practice has been woven about” (p. 26). Doing philosophy is the ongoing articulation of the forgotten, of what has drifted into inarticulateness, and thus a recovery of the origins that linger embedded in the contemporary.

The question of method is raised here. How does one do philosophy? This question is itself, however, a carryover from the Platonic tradition, for to insist on a specific privileged method is already to enter the Platonic orbit. The Nietzschean resistance to a specific declared method is something critics of Nietzschean historicism find utterly maddening, even when they sympathize with the appeal to historical thinking. This split is illustrative of the problems of relativism and nihilism mentioned earlier: from within the Platonic tradition some method is an essential attribute of philosophy, while within the Nietzschean tradition methods must take shape around the questions asked, rather than allowing the method to form the questions.

Rorty is perhaps the most accessible, and Derrida and Foucault the most extreme, examples of thinkers altogether wary of any hint of methodological foundationalism in their thinking. Rorty’s resistance to a privileged method can be seen in his rejection of the most recent “end” of philosophy, the approach which went under the once fashionable name of “ordinary language analysis” and arose out of the later Wittgenstein (1958), Austin (e.g., 1962), and Searle (e.g., 1969). Rorty challenges the claim that philosophic problems find their genesis in the language used to describe practices. Following Derrida to an extent, Rorty (1982) urges that language “is not a device for representing reality, but [is] a reality in which we live and move” (pp. 86-87). He argues that “‘our language’ is just one more name for a device that is supposed to let

us jump the Cartesian gap between mind and its *object*" (p. 33), and is thus part of the Platonic tradition.

Still, Rorty does not dismiss language altogether. For him, to be "hermeneutical" or "interpretive" means to look for "a vocabulary which might help" in illuminating our practices (1982, p. 199). To attain such a therapeutic vocabulary requires "a study of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the various ways of talking which our race has invented" (p. xl). The Nietzschean thematic becomes evident here. We will not, says Rorty, find human understanding "out there" in the correct representation of some external truth. Human understanding must rather be created by a sort of *poiesis*: human understanding "is to be reached, if at all, by acts of making rather than finding-by poetic rather than Philosophical achievement" (p. xxx). This will be a work of synthesis, bringing together strands in western thought whose current artificial separation is perhaps best represented in the highly specialized division of labor in the modern university. Such a work of synthesis requires a fundamental reorientation of inquiry: "To be an intellectual, rather than simply to 'do research,' is precisely to reach for some such synthesis" (p. 77). The role of the "new intellectual" is to "increase" humanistic culture in ways that will give "a sense of some new alternatives, new contexts, new languages" (p. 222), thus resisting the temptation to reduce the new to the old, the insistence "upon a canonical list of problems or methods," "a canonical vocabulary in which problems are stated" (p. 218).

Rorty's work has the virtue of distilling out the issue before us, which is a confrontation "between those who think our culture, or purpose, or intuitions cannot be supported except conversationally [i.e., the Nietzschean historicist position, which is Rorty's own], and people who hope for some other sorts of support [i.e., the Platonic tradition]" (1982, p. 167). He refers to "a spirit of seriousness" that pervades our efforts to understand our world (a thought not dissimilar from Nietzsche's reference to the "spirit of gravity" which clutches at Zarathustra in Thus Spoke Zarathustra), a spirit that exists only "in an intellectual world in which human life is an attempt to attain an end beyond life, an escape from freedom into the atemporal" (p. 87). Such a world is of course a creation of the Platonic tradition. Rorty thus offers us "a fundamental choice ...between accepting the contingent character of starting points, and attempting to evade this contingency" (p. 166). To accept contingency means also accepting that our only reference points lie in our inheritances from and conversations with other human beings.

Learning Philosophy Is Doing Philosophy

The Platonic/historicist opposition is one of the most prominent fault lines in contemporary philosophy, and its implications for other fields of inquiry cannot be ignored. Having traced the outlines of this dispute, the question remains how it affects the teaching and study of the philosophic elements in leisure studies. The answer is, I think, embedded in the heading for this section: learning philosophy is doing philosophy. The Platonic tradition makes it difficult to learn philosophy because it makes it difficult to do philosophy. The welter of "ends" to philosophy and the tangle of different definitions, arguments, and counter-arguments in the understanding of leisure call into question

the possibility of achieving the sort of “Philosophical Truth” which underlies the Platonic tradition. Students’ frustration with this tradition is not merely a matter of undisciplined thinking or lack of exposure (though both are surely major problems in the contemporary university). It is more a matter of sensing that this tradition fails to measure up to its own aspirations and is not easily translatable into the questions students ask. If philosophical inquiry is to be grounded anywhere, it must be in the lived experience that is questioned and, through this questioning, opened to broader experiences and questions. Contingency is among the most powerful forces in contemporary life, not least among our students. No tradition of thought that denies the importance of the contingent and transient is likely to be satisfactory for people whose lives are permeated by them. Paradoxically, through the Nietzschean historicist openness to contingency and transience, these forces can, become more comprehensible and thus lead to a fuller, firmer integration into the world of lived experience..

Incorporating this perspective into the teaching of philosophical aspects of leisure studies is not necessarily easy, but it has the promise of vastly increasing students’ facility with philosophical issues and thus enabling articulate philosophical advocacy for leisure as a fundamental human experience. Building on the notion that learning philosophy is doing philosophy, and drawing on the Nietzschean historicist blending of contingency in human life and thinking, let me suggest three paths to engage students with the task of philosophical learning. Discussion requires separate treatment, but these paths necessarily intersect and reinforce each other.

The first path is to recognize that doing philosophy is a discursive, discussional process. In this sense, philosophy is dialogical. but with the aim of extending the conversation rather than bringing it to an end, of matching it against the contingencies of human experience rather than subordinating it to a “higher” end. One immediate implication of this characterization of philosophical inquiry is that barriers to conversation must be eliminated, which entails the surrender of professorial authority in the class room. So long as students perceive the instructor as a final arbiter of ideas, conversation will be constrained. If the process of discussion is central, then the instructor must participate as an active partner in it. Equality of participation is necessarily limited by the need to provide background for the development of student thinking and to maintain direction, but the instructor must always be visible as a fully engaged partner in thinking. The historicist approach to philosophy denies the possibility of final answers, and indeed of final questions (which suggests the need to replace one time summative evaluation with repeated formative evaluations, making the necessary evil of grading developmental rather than additive). It is the instructor’s responsibility to avoid presenting her/his own ideas as finalized, but must rather show them always in the process of development, refinement, and extension. Modeling such engaged inquiry also means working with the students’ ideas, treating them with respect as original contributions to the conversation. Modeling by the instructor does not imply domination of the discussion. It is the students’ ideas that are to be the focus because these ideas arise out of the students’ own lived experiences. The responsibility of the instructor is to provide a bridge between these ideas and the field of leisure studies in its broadest context.

Building this bridge is a process of undoing historical forgetting, the second path of teaching philosophy informed by the historicist stance. Historical forgetting occurs culturally and personally. Undoing it is a process of recovering the world through understanding more completely how it came to be the way it is, what ideas and values underlie it. Among the repeatedly most startling realizations I have as an instructor is how limited and narrowly focused most of my students' experiences are. For example, their time frames are very limited: what they take as historical givens are in fact the results of events only over the past twenty-five years or so. This myth of the given must be broken down before their own ideas will develop freely. It is not that their existing ideas must be refuted or discarded, but rather that the students (and the instructor along with them) must explore these ideas genealogically. Take, for example, the blossoming interest in commercial recreation and tourism. There are, of course, institutional reasons so many leisure studies programs have rushed to incorporate these fields: enrollment (read "money") talks. But the process of leisure commercialization is intimately connected to major transformations in western society (see, e.g., Polanyi, 1957; Plumb, 1982). What our students see only vocationally (and we at times only in survival terms) requires significantly greater philosophical scrutiny, based on changes in conceptions of human personality and activity accompanying industrialization. Since our present conceptions were not always operative, the question becomes what has led to them. Undoing historical forgetting illuminates the contingency of the ideas with which we work. Recognizing this contingency is liberating because it restores to us a sense of the humanly possible rather than externally limiting human activity.

A third path for engaging students in learning philosophy is to shift the focus from texts to be mastered to questions to be answered. This follows out of the Nietzschean historicist position articulated above, and is the natural complement of the preceding two points. Texts embody authority and finality, qualities reinforced by the tendency to treat texts ahistorically. Teaching to texts leads students to adopt a utilitarian expectation that mastery of what a text "says" is sufficient. The ability to provide a quotation or citation for every statement is treated as the mark of learning (not only in students' work, but also in our professional literature). Clearly texts can be an integral part of learning about the philosophical issues involved in the study of leisure, but they must always be secondary to developing the ability of identifying the important questions remaining unanswered. Students must treat texts as partners in philosophical conversation rather than as sources of sanctioned answers.

It is not just that everything is questionable. This is too easy an approach which often leads to a dismissive attitude or a misplaced search for concreteness elsewhere. Rather, it is a matter of approaching texts and ideas with the respect they deserve as products of human thought, as attempts by human beings to understand their world. This entails questioning out of a desire to understand how it is such a text came to be written, such an idea to be thought, and how either can be incorporated into one's own ongoing thinking. Two themes discussed earlier have immediate bearing on the sort of questioning thinking raised here as a means of learning philosophy by doing philosophy. These themes are those of recovering the images which informed the original impulses of our practices (C. Taylor) and stating the issue in terms of what kind of people, using what

kind of vocabulary, would see the world in a particular way (Rorty). Bringing these themes together generates a series of questions that students should be encouraged to ask and, however partially, to answer.

What presuppositions underlie seeing the world in a particular way? What must people believe for that way of seeing to make sense? People do not willingly believe nonsense, so we must credit their views with having made, to them at least, sense. How would this be possible? How, for example, could Aristotle have associated leisure and freedom in a hierarchical society based on a slave economy and the subjection of women?

What presuppositions underlie one's own seeing of the world? The critical exploration of other ideas must be turned to our own thinking. What is it we seemingly take for granted? How did it become "the given," either in our own lives or in our society? How and why did work become the predominant western arena for the expression of human value? (What carry over is the-- from that to the inclusion of commercial recreation in our leisure curricula? Why is so much leisure activity in the west economically based and valued? What does it mean to say one studies at the university in order to further one's career aspirations? What is the notion of a career in the first place? We must realize that if Aristotle's world is alien to our own, so is ours to his. How would he make sense out of what seems natural and given to us?

What are the consequences of seeing the world in a particular way? What sort of place does the world become when the given is retrieved from historical forgetting and trade clear to us? What are the implications for human activity, our own most particularly? Understanding the original impulses informing our practices, in what way have those impulses been changed by subsequent developments? What sort of world has it become? How do these practices change through our understanding them in their disclosure?

What contradictions become apparent between this newly illuminated world and the world in which one believes oneself to have been acting? What are the implications for one's actions in the various roles one fills? Can the contradictions be resolved, or do they require one to reconfigure one's understanding of what one should be doing?

Finally, what alternative ways of seeing exist and what sorts of activities are consistent with them? What sorts of people would see the world in these alternative ways? Do they contribute, in short, to making the world a better place?

Conclusion

The historicist conception of philosophy does not seek for final answers. Nor should its teaching. Just as the world is work in progress, so are we and our thinking. Leisure itself, and its related phenomena of play and recreation, is constantly in flux. When we attempt to force artificially concrete interpretations on leisure, when we postulate fixed definitions and meanings, we in fact violate the spirit of the phenomena as

well as make claims to false knowing. The Platonic tradition represents a sustained attempt to bring the conversation about human activity to an end. But such a false end leads only to disillusionment with all ends. This represents a danger to inquiry and in fact to society, for either one then abandons the search for any intermediate stance from which to act, or one seizes on an ultimate stand supported by false certainty. Both choices end the conversation that is philosophy and, more generally, human inquiry. Indeed, one means of defining philosophy is as a human conversation that must be protected against premature or forced closure (see Bernstein, 1983, p. 205 and Part IV generally). The preceding discussion is intended to defend this conception, and to suggest how our students (and ourselves) can become more fully and more ably involved in the conversation. Without such involvement, others will continue it for us, and this entails risks we are not entitled to run.

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