Leisure

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Although the theme of these papers is 'Contemporary Moral Problems' my paper is partly about Aristotelian ideas. I had originally intended to apologize for this, but I find there is no need: many other contributors have found Aristotle to be timelessly relevant, as I myself have.

The Everyday Concept of Leisure

Let me begin by explaining what I take the concept of leisure to be, in ordinary thinking. It is natural to oppose leisure to work, and define it as 'that time when one is not working'. But this would not be appropriate for all senses of 'work': where work is equivalent to effort or struggle or undertaking a demanding task, it is quite compatible with leisure. Thus a person can speak of spending leisure time *working* in the garden or say of a strenuous hill walk 'That was hard work'. The kind of work which is contrasted with leisure is, rather, what is referred to when a person says that *his* work does not leave him much leisure, or that he has now stopped working and is a man of leisure.

We might assume that the sense of 'work' which is to be opposed to leisure is that of 'gainful employment'. But we should not jump to this conclusion, for at least two reasons. First, a housewife or househusband is not regarded as being at leisure when looking after children or other dependants, although he or she is not paid for doing this. Secondly, and conversely, a person can earn money through what is nevertheless called a leisure pursuit: if, for example, his hobby is making something which he then sells, or playing in a band at local functions. Leisure is typically contrasted, then, with work in the sense of 'occupation'—what is mentioned in answer to the question 'What do you do?' when asked of a new acquaintance. But although work in this sense is often contrasted with leisure, it would not be right to say that a person's leisure consists of all the time he does not spend on his occupation: for example, time spent sleeping or getting one's food is not normally regarded as leisure time. The reason seems to be that leisure is concerned with choice and opposed to necessity. Time spent on earning a living, or on eating and sleeping, is not leisure time because it is necessary for subsistence. Again, time spent looking after dependants is not leisure time because it

is spent meeting obligations; it is time which one is not free to choose to spend otherwise. Time spent on lucrative hobbies, however, can count as leisure time insofar as they are an optional extra, subsidiary to one's main source of income.

The conceptual connection between choice and leisure is borne out in many familiar ways. One is that the same activity, apparently with the same role in a life, can be regarded as a leisure activity by one person and not by another. Thus one person might describe daily visits to his elderly parents by saying 'I spend quite a lot of my leisure time with my parents', another by saying 'I don't get much leisure—I have to spend a lot of time visiting my parents'. The difference seems to be that the first person regards visits to his parents as something he freely chooses to do, the second as something laid upon him. A second familiar point is that a person can choose to spend extra time and care on preparing and eating meals, or on clothes and toilette, and if he does, these activities can be spoken of as in part leisure activities, as when someone says 'Cooking is one of my hobbies'. (In this sphere, needless to say, an activity which one person or group regards as an extra or pastime, such as baking one's own bread, is regarded by another person or group as a necessity of life.) Thirdly, an activity can cease to be a leisure activity through a change not of attitude but of circumstances: thus a person who earns money by a leisure activity will start to regard it not as part of leisure but as a second job if he begins to need the money to meet financial commitments.

I suggest, then, that the best everyday definition of leisure is: that time which a person can use as he chooses, which is free from necessity and obligation. This definition, however, is by no means unproblematic. For example, it might be objected that on this account anyone who chooses his job, or anyone who chooses to work when he need not, is at leisure when he is at work. The same might be said about looking after one's children whom one chooses to have. To this I think I can reply that a job, paid or not, does not become leisure simply through being chosen initially: this is because a job, once entered upon, usually involves obligations which cannot be avoided at will.

Where an occupation or some aspect of it is *not* structured and leaves scope for individual choice, the usual antithesis between work and leisure breaks down and we can speak of being at leisure in one's work. For example, an artist who is given money by a patron to enable him to practise his art as he sees fit, without any strings, might say 'At last I have the leisure to do good work'. In the same way an academic might say that in the vacation he has the leisure to do 'his own work', meaning the research which he himself chooses to undertake. Conversely, a person who volunteers to take on a demanding job such as the secretaryship of his tennis club might claim that he has less leisure as a result;

quite appropriately, given the highly structured and committing nature of the post, even though it is not only voluntary but also connected with his leisure activities.

Can we say that leisure time is time spent not only as one chooses, but also with pleasure? This is certainly mistaken: a person can derive pleasure from his work and fail to derive pleasure from a holiday, party or game. We might try instead to say that leisure activities are those done *for* pleasure, thus leaving room for the possibility that pleasure may not be obtained. But this seems to be either uninformative or wrong. There is one use of the phrase 'for pleasure' which seems more or less to mean 'as a leisure activity': that is to say, it means 'not as a matter of employment or other necessity'. To say then that leisure activities are carried on 'for pleasure' in this sense of the phrase is not informative. But if it means 'in order to get pleasure', it does not exactly apply to all types of leisure activity: for example, to the person who sets about studying the history of his district because he feels he ought to know about it. It may be, of course, that leisure activities *should* be carried on 'for pleasure' in the sense of 'for the sake of pleasure'. To this question I shall return.

The Problems of Leisure

What are the 'contemporary moral problems' about leisure? We have millions of unemployed, who are sometimes described as having 'enforced leisure'. We are also told that because of increasing automation we will never get back to a state of almost full employment; there will be less and less work to go round, and so (other things being equal) greater and greater leisure, which might be more equally shared out than at present but will continue to increase overall. These situations, actual and possible, raise many questions about leisure. (1) What is the proper place of leisure in life: what is leisure 'for'? How should it be used? (2) What training is appropriate to equip people for leisure? (3) What is the optimum amount of leisure from the point of view of the person whose leisure it is? (4) What is the extent of our *entitlement* to leisure? I shall touch briefly on this fourth question at the end of my paper. The bulk of it will be concerned with a discussion of two possible answers to the first question, each of which implies its own answer to the second and third questions.

It might be objected, however, that my account of the everyday conception of leisure implies that the first question does not make sense; if leisure is the sphere in which there are no obligations, can we speak of using it properly or improperly? The answer is that we can

claim that there can be better or worse ways of spending leisure without implying there is an *obligation* to spend it in the better ways: we can for example say that a person's happiness, welfare or self-development is bound up with better ways of spending leisure. Similarly, if society undertakes the task of trying to equip people to spend their leisure well, this need not imply a claim on its part to have the right to *dictate* how people are to spend their leisure; it may rather be an acknowledgement of the duty to foster its citizens' welfare in this respect.

It is true that *one* natural answer to the first question (the answer which is perhaps implied by the scope of what is nowadays known as 'the leisure industry') is that it does not matter how people spend their leisure, so long as they enjoy themselves. But even this minimal answer has some implications. Training for leisure, on this view, is teaching people how to enjoy themselves, which will, if unemployment is going to continue at a high rate, include introducing them to things which they can enjoy doing without needing much money. And the optimum amount of leisure will be the most one can have without ceasing to enjoy it—without getting bored; the enforced leisure of unemployment will therefore be too much leisure for anyone whose training has not equipped him to be able to enjoy it on limited resources (this is not of course the only thing wrong with unemployment).

In what follows, I shall not say more about this 'minimal' or 'pure enjoyment' view of the place of leisure. I shall consider two other views both of which claim in effect that it *does* matter how one's leisure is spent: the *instrumental* view, according to which the proper use of leisure is to enable a person to work, and what I shall call the *Aristotelian* view, according to which the proper use of leisure is the practice of activities worthwhile in themselves. Before I turn to a more detailed discussion of these views, however, I should like to touch on a possible challenge to the common factual assumption which brings questions of leisure into prominence: the assumption that increased automation will bring decreasing employment. It might be said that there is a great deal of work such as caring for the old, the mentally ill, the chronic sick and so on, which will always be available because it cannot be automated, and which is not done adequately at present: why should increased automation not bring about a change in the *type* of employment we take up rather than a decrease in its amount, with a greater proportion of people taking on this kind of work? The answer, I take it, is that in theory this could happen and no doubt it should, but it is not very likely to; partly because society is unwilling to pay for these services. But the existence of these tasks which need doing and which are inadequately done is not without relevance to the theory of leisure, as I shall eventually hope to indicate.

The Instrumental View of the Role of Leisure

According to the instrumental view, leisure has value only insofar as it is useful to the worker, refreshing him and enabling him to continue working. It is work which is of more immediate value: in his work a person develops his rational and creative faculties, strengthens his character through discipline and effort, makes his contribution to the community and establishes his own identity and place in society.

It might seem that if leisure and work are conceived in this way the answers to what I called the second and third questions are clear-cut. Training for leisure will involve learning which kinds of leisure activity are most conducive to good work in various different spheres and being initiated into these activities. It may be, for example, that physical exercise during leisure enables an office worker to sit at a desk for long hours without fatigue, or that drama releases a social worker's bottled-up emotions which would otherwise be vented on irritating but innocent clients. The optimum amount of leisure, on the instrumental view, is that amount which enables a person to do his best work; if he has more than that, he has too much. Moreover, a person who does not work at all (for example, an unemployed person) leads a pointless existence on this view, since leisure has no value apart from work: a general increase in leisure is to be welcomed only if we think people at present have insufficient leisure to enable them to work properly.

But these answers are not as obvious as they seem, because the instrumental view, as stated, rests on a confusion. In opposing work to leisure it seems to be concerned with work as *employment*. But the virtues which it attributes to work belong not to work as employment but to work in different senses (such as 'putting forth effort', 'undertaking a task', 'producing an end-product') which are perfectly compatible with leisure activities, as we saw at the beginning. Moreover, the 'virtues of work' may be *more* evident in some leisure activities than in some jobs. Thus, for example, the possibility of developing one's talents in creation may be very difficult to realize in modern, highly mechanized industry, but a person who makes something in his leisure time can plan the project from start to finish. There is the possibility of character-building in the adoption of demanding projects, such as training for a marathon or building a boat. There is the possibility of contributing to society in very direct ways: for example through political activity or local government. Finally there is the possibility of acquiring through leisure a better kind of identity, one which does more justice to the whole person, than that which relates only to employment. A person's job, unless he is very lucky, relates only to some aspects of his personality, but through his choices in leisure he can redress the balance and acquire a more balanced identity.

If leisure is viewed in this way, as an opportunity for contribution and self-development comparable to employment, a well-spent leisure can be regarded as valuable even by those with a strong conception of the usefulness of work. For the suggestion is in effect that well-spent leisure is leisure spent in voluntary work. Training for leisure, on this 'voluntary work' view, becomes training in 'doing things properly' and in awareness of the possibilities of voluntary services of all kinds, and society can help people to use leisure in this way by providing some of the structure within which these activities take place.

The champions of work might now object that the virtues I am attributing to leisure belong not to leisure as such but only to *well-spent* leisure. This is true, but as I have tried to show the virtues of work do not belong to employment as such either, but only to satisfactory employment. It is true that one's job has to be done, whereas the worthwhile activities of leisure do not. But it does not follow that the qualities making a job *worthwhile* are guaranteed and the qualities making leisure worthwhile are not. The difference is that the quality of leisure, according to the 'voluntary work' account of it, is to a greater degree under the control of the person whose leisure it is than the quality of paid work is under the control of the paid worker. As a matter of contingent fact it may be the case that leisure is often not worthwhile, given that people are weak, lazy and undiscriminating. But this is precisely where training for leisure is relevant.

If we are to give an account of an ideal of leisure in terms of voluntary work, however, careful qualification is needed. The word 'voluntary' here, though it implies 'non-employed', does not simply mean 'unpaid': as we saw earlier, some unpaid work, such as looking after one's children, is essentially *non*-leisurely. Rather 'voluntary' means 'non-obligatory' or 'non-mandatory'. But as we have already seen, a voluntary undertaking which involves a very structured commitment can be seen not as part of leisure but as an encroachment on leisure. There is thus a tension inherent in the 'voluntary work' conception of leisure, a tension which is heightened insofar as this ideal of leisure is looked on as something which people *ought* to pursue: if an ideal approaches obligatoriness, it begins to lose its status as an ideal of *leisure*. The 'voluntary work' conception of leisure, in other words, tends to slide into the view that people should *replace* leisure by voluntary work, an idea to which I shall return at the end of the paper.

A related objection to this 'voluntary work' conception of leisure is that it seems to leave no place for what are after all the activities most closely associated with leisure: games, parties, holidays. But this is only apparently true. These things (I shall use the term 'amusements' to refer collectively to them) will still be needed as refreshments, to enable a person to continue to pursue his worthwhile activities. In other

words, just as the employment-relative view of leisure saw leisure as a means to the end of work in the sense of employment, so this more structured and positive view of leisure construes amusements as a necessary means to the successful use of leisure as voluntary work. But insofar as leisure allows more choice and variety than jobs usually do, there may be less need of relief from it.

So far I have considered an instrumental view of leisure, and criticized it on the ground that the values which it attributes to work can also be found in an appropriately spent leisure. This rehabilitation of leisure in terms of 'voluntary work' had the advantage of restoring the possibility of dignity to the lives of those who do not work for pay. But precisely because it makes leisure into voluntary work, it might itself be criticized for losing sight of the *distinctive* value of leisure. Leisure, it might be said, is not an opportunity to work more satisfactorily; it is better than work and is the point of work. Aristotle said 'We work so that we may have leisure',[1] and so I shall call the kind of view of leisure which I shall now put forward the Aristotelian view, without wishing to claim that my account is true to all the details of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*.

The Aristotelian View of Leisure[2]

At first sight the notion that we work in order to have leisure seems paradoxical; one wants to retort that we *stop* work in order to have leisure. But the Aristotelian idea is that work is valuable as a means, because it provides the necessities of life and so enables people to have the leisure to carry out those activities which they choose and value for their own sakes. Work, in this context, is not necessarily paid work. The unpaid government official or housewife caring for a family is working to provide the necessities of life although he or she does not get paid. What distinguishes their activity from leisure is that it is valued for its *usefulness*, not that it is paid for: and therefore much of what counts as well-spent leisure on the 'voluntary work' account of leisure would not on the Aristotelian account be leisure at all, because it is activity valued for its usefulness. On the other hand, the Aristotelian view does not imply that all activities which are in fact pursued for their own sakes are rightly so pursued. What I earlier called 'amusements' are regarded as appropriate leisure activities by some people, but Aristotle

[1] Aristotle (1915) 1177b4.

[2] Aristotle discusses leisure, its proper content and its role in life, in (1915) X 7 and 8. Wilkes (1980) discusses the role of contemplation in Aristotle's doctrines.

holds that this is mistaken.[3] Amusements are too childish and unserious to be the point of life, and their proper role is as relaxations to enable us to work again, not as leisure activities valued for their own sakes.

Is this a satisfactory view of leisure? There are two distinct questions here. The first concerns the basic Aristotelian conception of the proper place of leisure in our lives, as that time in which people can do what they think worth doing for its own sake and which is properly spent only if their activities really are worthwhile. The second question concerns the content: what kinds of activity can count as worthwhile in these terms? I shall consider the question of content first and conclude by examining the basic conception.

The Aristotelian conception of the best way to spend leisure is basically an intellectual one, and indeed our words 'school' and 'scholar' derive from the Greek word for leisure. Aristotle derives this conception from a consideration of the function or characteristic activity of mankind: the exercise of reason. For brevity I shall accept without argument the validity of this approach, though clearly there are many difficulties to be raised about it. But Aristotle's own account of the content of an ideal leisure is much narrower than its basis would suggest. The one activity which is regarded as an ideal use of leisure is the *contemplation* of eternal, unchanging, necessary truths; and his main reason for holding this seems to be that this is the only exercise of a human being's distinctive endowment of reason which can be regarded as complete in itself, and not as a means to achieving any goal. We might well be sympathetic to the idea of contemplation as an essential part of leisure but feel there are things worthy of contemplation other than Aristotle's necessary truths, such as great works of art and the wonders and beauties of Nature. We thus arrive at a 'time to stop and stare' conception of ideal leisure, a view which has clear implications about the way to equip people to use leisure well and the need to provide them with the means to do so.

But this conception of leisure may strike us as unsatisfactorily *passive*. Why is it ultimately worthwhile to contemplate ultimate truths but not to discover them? Or to listen to a fine piece of music but not to write one? Aristotle's answer would be that if an activity is productive, it is a means to an end (the discovery, the article produced) and so is not itself ultimately valuable. But this claim involves difficulties, especially as regards leisure activities. If I paint a picture as a leisure activity, I do not necessarily do this in order to have a picture at the end. Very often the end is the means to the means in these cases: I produce a picture in order to spend a day painting, rather than spending the day painting in order to produce the picture. Moreover, the activity of painting is

[3] Aristotle (1915) 1176b9ff.

something which can be valued in abstraction from its result; for example, as an exercise of aesthetic capacities which are as distinctively human as reason. In the same way, the activity of finding out a truth might be seen as an exercise of human reason which is valuable in itself even from an Aristotelian point of view. We can thus expand the Aristotelian view to comprise intellectual and aesthetic activity whether contemplative, investigative or creative.

It might seem that by including productive activities in the content of Aristotelian leisure I have broken down the very distinction between the useful and the non-useful which in this conception marked off work from leisure. But this need not happen if we distinguish (roughly) between the productive and useful. Painting a picture is productive but not useful, because the picture does not fulfil a material need but serves as an object of contemplation; building a house, on the other hand, is *useful*, because the house is needed for human survival. This distinction is only rough, because houses can also be contemplated as works of art and pictures used as tests for eyesight; it has to be regarded as a distinction between common ways of seeing the two pursuits, not between the pursuits as such. But it enables us to preserve a conception of leisure as the proper sphere of the non-useful activities which have intrinsic value.

A second omission from the 'stop and stare' model of leisure concerns personal relationships. Clearly these do not belong only to leisure. But there are activities, such as walking, talking or drinking with friends, of which the main point is that they celebrate or further personal relationships. These activities are certainly carried out for their own sakes, so they are candidates for leisure activities, and they are thought of as typically connected with leisure. I do not propose to embark on a defence of friendship here. But I reckon that I do not need to do this, since no one denies its value: Aristotle's reason for preferring contemplation to friendship seems to be that contemplation is a safer bet because friends can let you down, not that friendship is not valuable in itself.

A third deficiency of the Aristotelian account concerns *pleasure*, which seems to be given less than its due. Are we to say that the activities of ideal leisure are to be pursued because they are noble and enjoyed as a bonus, or pursued because they bring pleasure? Aristotle favours the first alternative. But if we look at what we usually value in the sphere of personal relationships, or in the pursuit of the arts and sciences in leisure, I think we will conclude that it is more nearly right, though perhaps misleading, to say that we value the pursuit of these things for pleasure. What I have in mind is this: if a person says he walks in the country or listens to music or studies archaeology because he thinks it is a worthwhile activity, we are tempted to say that he is

missing the very thing that *is* worthwhile in such activities, which involves a spontaneous response to the things in themselves. This is even more obvious with personal relationships: a person who says that he forms friendships because he thinks friendship is worthwhile seems to leave out precisely the response to an individual *as* an individual which is what friendship is. Now to want to perform some particular activity or undergo some particular experience because of its own nature, not because of any principle under which it falls or value which it exemplifies, *is* to want to do it 'simply for pleasure'. Because the phrase 'for pleasure' has connotations of trivial pursuits, we resist it in this context, and prefer phrases like 'for the joy of it'. But the point is the same: pleasure in these ultimately worthwhile activities is not a bonus which is won when they turn out to be enjoyable, but an intrinsic element of their being the activities they are.

If this claim is correct, it has implications about training for leisure. We should not bring people up to think they must pursue the arts and scholarship and personal relationships *because* they are worthwhile, in the sense of being noble, worthy of a human being and so on. Such a policy is self-defeating, because the worthwhileness depends on their not being pursued for that reason, as we have just seen. Rather we must try to bring it about that they do these things simply because they want to, for pleasure, without any particular lofty thoughts about them. If we succeed in this we will have initiated them into activities which are worthwhile as well as pleasant.

I have now completed my sketch of the kind of content which might belong to leisure if it is to play the role of Aristotelian leisure: I suggest that it should be spent in the enjoyed contemplation of truths and beauties, the enjoyment of discovery and creation and the enjoyment of personal relationships. I now turn to a consideration of the general place in life assigned to leisure by the Aristotelian view.

The Role of Leisure in Life

The Aristotelian view of leisure is an attractive one from the point of view of present-day problems of increased leisure. We can say that the more leisure the better, provided people are able to fill it with worthwhile activities; and training people for leisure is initiating them into the kinds of activity which we have just been discussing. We might of course wonder whether everyone is capable of Aristotelian leisure. This might have been a difficulty for Aristotle's own austerely intellectual view of the content of well-spent leisure; but everyone is capable of some form of the kinds of activity which belong to the developed version of Aristotelian leisure sketched in the previous section.

But does such a view demote *work* too much? Suppose a person spends all his spare time on some useful voluntary work, such as Meals on Wheels. From the point of view of the Aristotelian conception, this presumably counts as work rather than leisure. But it seems like a very highly valuable activity, more valuable than many leisure pursuits. Or suppose a person has no leisure but devotes his life to some task, such as famine relief, which is obviously useful; does the Aristotelian conception of leisure mean that such a life is pointless, or make it unintelligible to say that such a person 'lives for his work'? To answer these questions we must look again at the Aristotelian arguments for the place of leisure in life.

The Aristotelian idea seems to be about both the intelligibility and the value of our pursuits. We cannot, says Aristotle, do *everything* for the sake of something else, or chains of means and ends would never stop; there must be some things which a person does simply for the sake of doing them.[4] Moreover, since ends are valued more highly than the means to them, these ultimate ends are the most highly valued things; and (unless *everyone* is wrong) they must include among their number those things which are truly of highest value. Now it might be thought (though I do not think that Aristotle himself argues in this way) that a person who has no leisure, who is always working for the well-being of others, has no activity which he carries out for its own sake; his work for others is done for the sake of a separate result, namely their well-being or happiness. It might seem, then, that his life ultimately lacks meaning and value, at least in comparison with the life of leisure.

But these conclusions do not follow. It is true that we cannot do everything for the sake of something else. But it does not follow that each person must do some things simply for the sake of doing them. For the last members of a person's chains of means and ends, those things for the sake of which ultimately he does everything else and in terms of which his life is intelligible, need not themselves be activities; they can be anything which can be wanted for its own sake. If a person can be said to want others' well-being for its own sake, he can be said to direct all his actions to that end. Thus when Aristotle says 'We work for the sake of leisure' perhaps it need not be one's own leisure for which one works: for example, the politician might dedicate his life to producing a world in which *others* can have leisure.

It is true that on this scheme of life what the politician values for its own sake is the well-being of others, rather than his life's work which brings it about. But he need not conclude that his useful life has *less* value than a leisured life. He might argue, for example, that if many leisured lives can be won through the work of one useful life then that

[4] Aristotle (1915) 1094a18–21.

useful life is worth more than any one leisured life, even though its value ultimately depends on theirs; and this is one way in which we might regard the value of the life of the statesman, the teacher who 'lives for his pupils' or the housewife who 'lives for her family'.

But it is not the only way. We can also value useful lives for their own sakes, if we can see the work done in them not only as useful but also as constituting an example of intrinsically valuable activity; similarly, the liver of the life can treat his work itself as his end in life, if he can view it as one of the kinds of activity which can be so regarded. Consider as an example a teacher who is teaching his class poetry. If he is asked why he does this, he might say 'So that they have something to enjoy in their leisure'. But if he is then asked 'Why do that? Why give them something to enjoy in their leisure?' he can say 'I do it to God's glory' or 'I see it as a duty' or 'I love the children' or 'I find it an intellectual challenge' or 'I find it fun'. Each of these descriptions of a useful activity is a way of depicting it as belonging also to a type of activity which people can practise and value for its own sake: worship, morality, personal relationships, intellectual endeavour, 'amusement' (in our previous sense). Earlier I suggested that productive intellectual activities, such as scientific research or aesthetic creation, can also be regarded as good in themselves, if we abstract from the result and consider the nature of the activity employed; I am now claiming that the same move can be made concerning useful activities.

I contend then that although work, in the sense presupposed by the Aristotelian picture, is useful and has a point and justification which lies beyond it, we can nevertheless understand the motivation of the person who devotes himself to his work, in one of two ways: either he wants the good *results* of his work for their own sakes, or he views his work itself as constituting an example of one or more of the kinds of activity which can be practised for their own sakes. Moreover, we can regard a way of life which is useful as valuable in itself by considering it under an appropriate description. (Of course, it can also happen that a person sees his work as pointless and lives only for his leisure, or that, while *he* values it for its own sake, other people think he sees it in a false light; for example, they may think that what he sees as a duty is not required, or even wrong.)

Now Aristotle himself acknowledges, by implication at least, that useful actions can also be seen as worthwhile in themselves. For the activity of a soldier who saves the city exemplifies the moral virtue of courage, and that of the statesman who governs it exemplifies the virtues of justice and practical wisdom; and he holds that the exercise of moral virtue is valuable in itself.[5] But he does think that activities which

[5] Aristotle (1915) 1176b7.

are not useful and which can be valued only for their own sakes are more valuable than those which are both useful and intrinsically valuable. Is this merely like a kind of snobbish objection to trade? I think we can see Aristotle's point more sympathetically if we link it to some of his claims on behalf of contemplation: that we can carry it out more continuously than we can do anything productive and that the life of contemplation is an unwearied life as far as human beings are capable of this.[6] Now activities which seek results, even if they can also be valued for their own sakes, are by nature *jerky*, shaped by a series of achievements or failures; and they include the conflicts arising from the need to make compromises to achieve a purpose. Pure intellectual contemplation is free from these hindrances. But so is the contemplation of beauty in art or nature; even if an aesthetic experience relates to something extended in time, such as a musical or dramatic performance, the experience itself is not a task, completed when the music or drama is over; we go on thinking about it, reliving it, perhaps repeating it, relating it to other things. Personal relationships, at their best, share this timeless quality; nothing is constructed or produced in them, they flow on inexhaustibly.

It is true that what I called productive leisure activities, such as discovering a new fact or creating a piece of art, are less pure cases of timelessness. But where these are *leisure* activities, where there is no need to fulfil a commission or earn a fee or find a vaccine for an epidemic, they share something of the quality; there is no schedule according to which an amateur painter needs to paint pictures like a housewife making meals, nor is there something which can be finished once and for all.

Timelessness, then, is one quality which Aristotle's contemplation shares with other elements in what I called the developed version of Aristotelian leisure. The other important feature which Aristotle mentions is that contemplation is concerned not with our own petty human needs but with the loftiest possible objects. This claim too can be paralleled by the true leisure activities, in so far as they constitute a quest for Beauty or Knowledge or communion with another End-In-Himself. Of course this sounds like (and is) pretentious *language* in which to speak of quite ordinary pursuits; and of course these things can be pursued in a fettered way through useful activities, as I have already said. But the naturalness of describing true leisure pursuits as 'getting away from everyday trivialities to something that matters' or 'being made to feel the unimportance of all my everyday anxieties' should make us see Aristotle's (admittedly narrower) ideal for leisure as less alien than we are apt to think it is.

[6] Aristotle (1915) 1177b22.

In this discussion of the role of Aristotelian leisure I have tried to do two things. On the one hand, I have sought to raise the standing of work (by which I mean in this context useful activity designed to meet needs) from the low level to which an Aristotelian style of argument might seem to assign it: I have suggested that a person who 'lives for his work' is not leading a pointless existence, and that work as well as leisure can be seen as valuable for its own sake. On the other hand, I have maintained that it is possible to show that the pure leisure activities which belong to my extended content of Aristotelian leisure have a special value which is not shared by the useful activities of work, and which can be understood in contemporary terms.

But are we *entitled* to some leisure of this kind, or is there at all times some useful thing which we morally ought to be doing (when we are not eating, sleeping or taking the amount of relaxation needed to enable us to work)? This moral question will arise for more and more people if the amount of employment continues to decrease. For instead of full employment plus just enough time for necessary relaxation, many people will have rather more time at their disposal, which they can choose either to treat as leisure or to commit to some useful piece of voluntary service, doing one of the tasks mentioned earlier which even in the most automated society will otherwise not get done. Can people claim to be morally *entitled* to the leisure which at last they can have, or must they be useful all the time? And does the answer depend on whether they make 'good' (i.e. Aristotelian) use of their leisure?

These questions are really part of the other huge question, whether morality must allow us some measure of life of our own despite the pressing moral claims of other people. I have no space to discuss this baffling question in general. But I will conclude by commenting in the light of what has already been said on two possible claims to a right to leisure. If it is claimed that we have a right to have the opportunity to practise activities which are worthwhile in themselves, then this claim can be rebutted by showing how useful activities can be seen as also worthwhile in themselves. But if the claim is that we all have a right to escape sometimes from the fret of practicalities and enter a realm of timeless values, then this must be seen as a demand for what I have called Aristotelian leisure.