



Culture and Creativity in Leisure Studies: A Philosophical Perspective

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This paper aims to provide the relationship between culture and creativity from the perspectives of theories in leisure studies. Leisure comprises three components: Free-time, leisure activities and leisure experience. During free time we choose to undertake tasks we select and to engage in activities we like. As such, we engage in positive, optimal, and meaningful experiences. I advocate that it is important for every person to have time and space for meaningful engagement in everyday, work and professional life. Leisure refers to time and space we spent in meaningful, peaceful, creative and cultural activities. In this paper, I also stress that viewpoints of leisure, selection of leisure activities, and leisure experience gains vary according to cultural contexts. Consequently, cultural communities express creative performances or creative abilities differently and lead to special features of cultural development and achievement.

Keywords: Leisure philosophy, Leisure experience, Intercultural studies, Culture, Creativity.

Classic Views of Leisure

Schöle

Etymologically the word of leisure comes from the Greek word “Schöle”, originally meaning liberated, free and unrestrained mind. From the same Greek word, the words “school” and “scholar” also originate. Leisure has a significant connection with education, study. Philosophers of the ancient times regarded leisure as a basic essential to carry out the cultural ideals in life (Goodale & Godbey, 2000) and as “the cultivation of the self” symbolically (Yeh, 2006, p. 29). Aristotle was held in reverence by many specialists as father of leisure studies in the West (Yeh, 2006, p. 26). In his book “Politics”, Aristotle states that happiness is never independent of virtue, and that leisure must be provided to facilitate the virtue cultivation. From Aristotle’s standpoint, the ultimate virtue is happiness. Aristotle regards leisure as the pre-requisite for happiness and the purpose of labour as well. “We regard happiness as depending on leisure; for our purpose in being busy is to have leisure, and we make war in order to have peace.” (Aristotle, 1962, p. 298) In Aristotle’s opinion “leisure is a condition or a state-the state of being free from the necessity

to labor"; "leisure is a state of being in which activity is performed for its own sake or as its own end" (de Grazia, 1962, p. 13).

From Aristotle's stand, there is interacting relationship among leisure, virtue, wisdom and happiness (Yeh, 2006, p. 38). Just like happiness, leisure is the purpose of its own. Contemplation is an ideal leisure activity, sacred and purely spiritual in pursuit of truth, through which, the highest wisdom and the absolute happiness can be reached. Happiness, the ultimate virtue, in other words, is the final goal of life. Leisure is not only the cornerstone for happiness, but also the goal of life and the ground on which human being exists.

Xiaoyao

The word "xiaoyao" (逍遙) firstly appeared in the China's first poet anthology, The Book of Odes, implying easy, unrestrained, carefree, calm, relaxed, liberated. The concept "xiaoyao" by Zhuang Zi (莊子), a Chinese philosopher in the ancient time, in the book titled after him, has been regarded as Daoism's wisdom of leisure, up to a certain extent parallel with the Western classic concept of leisure (Yeh, 2006, 47–48). In brief, the core of Zhuang Zi's concept of Xiaoyao is as follows (Wang, 1988; Li, 2000; Yeh, 2006).

Xiaoyao is, in a sense, inaction or no action. It does not mean "doing nothing", but accepting without interference the existence taking its procedure. The ideal state of Xiaoyao is a life without taking action but responding to the existence. Thus, an enlightened person responds, like a mirror reflects, to the worldly affairs – s/he does neither appreciate nor reject. S/He would never get obsessed and therefore is able to respond to the affairs without being affected. The ways to achieve Xiaoyao are by not considering the usage, by not expecting, by casting ego aside, by leaving behind. No sooner has "whether useful or not" been taken into consideration than the peace of mind is lost. The usage of no use is actually of a great use. Once the ego is no more there, the heart is spontaneously open to *the usage of no use*. It is possible to live freely by responding to the worldly affairs without being obsessed.

As long as there is expectation, there is at the same time also obsession, on which one becomes dependent. Therefore the enlightened abandon ego, the immortal neglect merit, the sages lose identification (逍遙遊). No expectation means demanding no fame, no merit, and furthermore, it implies transcending the ego to unchain the very self for merging into "Dao", the great existence. Leaving behind means to abandon. "Leaving behind the material, the cosmos, merging thus into the cosmos" (天地篇). The core of Zhuang Zi's concept of Xiaoyao is to pursue, by transcending the ego, a free mind and spirit to accomplish the ideal life, which people live leisurely in harmony with the existence.

In the Western tradition, leisure is an action of its own providing the circumstances, under which the ultimate truth can be explored. Leisure is then not only contemplation but also a self-accomplishment and self-realization, furthermore, a

symbolic source of happiness. In parallel, Zhuang Zi's concept of xiaoyao is to reach, by transcending the ego, the state of Daoism's inaction, absolute freedom in the spiritual harmony with the existence. Comparatively, the concept of xiaoyao is richer, as it goes beyond rationally and transcends the ego. Above all, leisure in the West and xiaoyao in the East are both experiences shared mutually by all human beings.

Musse

Musse und Kult (Pieper, 1965) by Josef Pieper (1904–1997) was published in German in 1948. It later was translated into English *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* is the scripture in the field of leisure science (Yeh, 2006, p. 76). In Pieper's opinion, a person can be at leisure, only if s/he recognizes his(her) own very original being and is united to it. Leisure is not a matter of course that occurs in the intervals between works, at free time, in weekend or on vacation, but essentially based on a certain spiritual state. Leisure is on contrary to labor from three points: Labor is activity, labor is fatiguing, and labour has social function. On contrary to labour being activity, leisure is "non-activity", unhurried and peaceful within, open to and content with occurrence. Leisure appears calm and quiet, and a calm and quiet manner is a prerequisite for comprehending the truth. Only those, calm and quite within, are able to hear; otherwise, unable. Leisure is a spiritual attitude submissive, open, conscious and meditative. Leisure is not to get involved, but to stay open; not to pitch in, but to maintain conscious.

The second point, contrary to labour being fatiguing, leisure is celebrating. The festival within the celebrator is exactly the core of leisure mentioned. Leisure is only possible when the authentic self of one's own is recognized and set in harmony with the existence. Leisure is originated from festival. Leisure is not non-fatigue, but contrary to fatigue.

The third point, contrary to labour with social function, leisure is not for any function. Leisure is not for preparation of the work to come, although much energy can be regained through it. Leisure is not just rest to regain energy for the new work. It is like meditation belonging to a higher category of important activity. Only under easy and relaxed circumstances, the true value of human being can be maintained (Pieper, 1965, p. 58). In general, Pieper was of the opinion that leisure is a mental attitude free, relaxed, open and conscious, and that leisure originating from celebrating affirms the value of life, supports the harmony with the existence, and that only in such an attitude the mystery of life can be discovered, and creativeness may occur.

Modern Views of Leisure and Culture

Leisure

Leisure as an academic study from the West is still new. It has been just some ten years since leisure study became a discipline in Taiwan's universities. The word for leisure in Chinese is xiuxian (休閒), comprising two characters xiu (休 means rest; xian (閒, free time. Xiuxian implies free time, entertaining activity and relaxation. Leisure has been given many definitions with approaches various in respects as follows:

Time

Leisure refers to the free time apart from work. Freizeit, leisure in German, is a combination of Frei (free) and Zeit (time). Arbeiten, work in German, includes house work, gardening, studying, etc. in addition to office duties. Time for eating, sleeping and other activities physically essential is not defined as leisure. Leisure, in brief, is the time that can be used freely (Brightbill, 1960, p. 4).

Activity

Leisure means activities with no connection with works and duties, namely travelling, singing, dancing, stroll, playing game or chess, etc. These activities can be attended after the fulfilment of all the duties for family or society. They benefit body and mind (Dumazedier, 1967; Yeh, 2006, p. 14).

Free Will

Leisure is doing activities consciously with free will, in comparison with learning and working to be done compulsorily. The freedom to make choice and to do things are certainly what people yearn for, nevertheless, it is still a kind of relative freedom (Godbey, 1985, p. 9).

Effectiveness

Leisure is with activities to release stress, to recover from tiredness, to regain energy, to promote spirituality and so on. Leisure is, by doing activity, to realize something significantly positive. *"Leisure is more than the illusion of freedom. It is more than a drug-induced mood. It is more than buying something on the market that is advertised as leisure. Leisure is taking action that does something and that has outcome for the actor."* (Kelly, 1990, p. 23) Leisure is a spiritual state pleasant, self-fulfilled, at ease, relaxed and free of restraint (Yeh, 2006, p. 14).

Social Sense

Leisure is, by doing alone or sharing activities in non-duty time, to build up social contacts and to better the social harmony. Certainly it has to be done with due respects to custom and law and without any harm to attendants, the public and environment (Goodale, & Godbey, 1988). By a very basic principle, leisure must accommodate personal health and the public welfare (Lundberg, 1934, p. 19).

All the definitions are able to present a certain picture in the relative respects, but not comprehensive in a general sense. Fan (2003) recommends the following definition for leisure: Leisure is during non-duty time doing activities consciously with free will and due respects to customs and law in order to benefit oneself physically and spiritually. In brief, leisure includes three important components: Free-time, leisure activities and leisure experience. In other words, during free time we choose to undertake tasks we select, to engage in activities we like, and thus always will bring positive, optimal, and meaningful experience.

Culture

Culture (文化, *wenhua*) emerges as one of the earliest terms in *Yijing* (易經): Observing how humanities transform the world (觀乎人文以化成天下). *Wen* (文) or humanities originally refers to the patterns of textiles, and *hua* (莊子) or transformation refers to the changes in the patterns. This expression highlights and clarifies the changing and changeable lifestyles. It entails the connotation of “managing culture for transforming teaching” (文治教化).

In the West the word “culture” originated from Latin “*Cultura*”; meaning cultivation, planting, and production. Later culture was used to mean cultivation of human body and mind. Formation of culture came from the continual survival of human beings, refinement of natural products, and cultivation of human minds. In this sense, the understanding of the West of culture is similar to the Chinese connotations of formation of humanities.

There are various definitions of “culture” in the literatures of the West and the East. The essence of culture, in summary, is a heritage which includes tangible material things and intangible spiritual aspects. Shen (1999) suggests a comprehensive definition of culture: Culture is the expressions of historical lifestyles of groups, and their creative experiences and products. Culture includes five elements:

- Ultimate beliefs – It is about human life and the world’s ultimate concerns, including humanistic beliefs and religious beliefs. Humanistic values refer to those arising out of basic human nature and the realization of which is part of the meaning of human life, such as truth, goodness, beauty, righteousness, love, freedom and equality.
- Cognitive systems – It refers to methods of recognizing self, nature and society, and producing a set of cognitive systems or also refer to worldview systems, and methods for the continuous development of such systems.

- Regulatory systems – It refers to the ultimate beliefs and cognitive systems and developing a set of behavioral regulations, including systems of laws and ethics.
- Expressive systems – Referring to architecture, sculpture, arts, music, historical heritage, folk arts, and other artistic products and literatures, through which ultimate beliefs, cognitive and regulative systems are generated.
- Behavioral systems – It refers to cultivation of behavior, gesture, and the development and methods of investigating nature and human beings.

Creativity, Leisure, and Culture

Human beings possess creativity, and with it science and culture emerges. Culture is a historical activity in which groups and individuals express their creative processes. Leisure can be regarded as the foundation of culture. Tan (2012) articulates that culture is flourished when creativity is experienced in leisure, and when leisure engages the time of the minds in imagination. According to Chen (2012), many new ideas emerge from leisure time when we are free, relaxed, happy and at peace, since our mind expands and reaches out. Human beings at the state of spiritual freedom, letting go, or at the state of relaxing is able to express their creativity, and through which they express the essence of culture. It is important for every person to have time and space for their meaningful engagement in everyday, work and professional life. Leisure refers to time and space we spent in meaning, peaceful, creative and cultural activities. Creativity, leisure, and culture are closely related.

The new Confucianist, Tang Jun-yi (1909–1978), regards culture as the mind's manifestation or the spiritual creation (Tang, 1953/1989, p. 188). Cultural activities and creation are all performance of spiritual ego and super ego (or all consequence of the ego's self-transcendancy). The creativity must be cultivated with the mind that is able to look on the worldly praise & condemnation as nothing. Similar to this mind are Zhuang Zi's concept of Xiaoyao and Pieper's "Musse", both referring to the state of mind open and free. Only at leisure, creativity may be brought into play; and culture, be developed.

Cultures vary, as people are aware of. The application of creativities on one aspect more than on the others', cause the cultures to differ, as Keyserling (1880–1946) recognizes. Keyserling recognizes that the soul of Europe manifests itself in objective science knowledge, the soul of India in the realization of psychological field, the soul of China in the concretization of ideas, the soul of Japan in the aesthetical understanding of nature. Every formula has its strength but also its specific limits. They do not have differences in their essential worth (Keyserling, 1990, pp. 744–745; Fan, 2007, p. 114).

The application of creativity leads the cultural development to certain aspects, on which more emphasis is put. From the viewpoint of leisure, we see people of societies with different cultural backgrounds setting times differently preferable, having partiality for different activities, expecting different experiences. Thus

cultures and creativities manifest differently.

Free-time

There are time concepts: calendar time, clock time, outer time, inner time and psychological time (Goodale, & Godbey, 2000, pp. 139–140). The psychological one is closely relative to the social culture. People of different times have different time concepts. The oldest one is based on the natural phenomena, like sunrise, sunset, rising tide, ebb tide. In the primitive society, work at sunrise, rest at sunset. It is rather interesting that the Chinese character “xian”, meaning leisure, contains a door and moon. Traditionally, houses in China are built with a quadrangle, where, when moonlit, people play chess and games, practice tea ceremony, share their appreciation of the beauty of the moon by night. This peaceful picture with details of playing, drinking and simply looking at the moon presents leisure time and activity. Nowadays, the time of labor has been much shortened, but the time in our mind seems to become shorter. Non-Japanese people make effort to adopt the Japanese professional dedication for higher efficiency in the industrial production. Life is a scene of hustle and bustle every day. People’s outlook on life has a strong influence on how time is managed.

Leisure Activities

Play is a very popular leisure activity, and also regarded as the origin of culture. Huizinga (1956) regards human being as player (*Homo Ludens*). In culture, ceremony, poem, music, dance, sport, law, knowledge, etc. are all tightly relative with play.

Preference for activity and choice of play more or less influence people’s cultural creation. In the ancient time Chinese scholars’ leisure activities mainly include playing of Gu-Qin (Chinese music instrument) and chess, writing calligraphy (with brush pen), painting, composing poem and songs, touring. Many beautiful art works are thus created and passed on till this date. So are the other forms of art created, namely the Roman architecture of hot spring Baths Spa and coliseum, the Indian Yoga and meditation, Turkish Sema ceremony, Japanese Wudo martial arts, etc. From our research on the development of Taiwanese tea culture, we come to the conclusion that Taiwanese tea culture is closely relative to the local people’s leisure activity (Fan & Tan, 2010).

Leisure Experience

The experience gained from the leisure activity can be individually different, as the personal motivation or mood is involved. For tour, the tourist’s motivation can be for returning to nature, shopping, exploring exotic culture, or even self-fulfilment (Fan, 2007). Although motivation and mood are personal, the mind

is often influenced by the culture, for examples, the touring habits, preference of sightseeing spots, aesthetic sense, etc. The experience of leisure is of help in inspiring creativity.

Conclusions

This paper aims to present the relationship between culture and creativity from the perspectives of theories in leisure studies. Josef Pieper (1965) claims that leisure is the basis of culture. Human beings possess creativity. Under the leisure condition, creative ability emerges, and through which culture develops. Viewpoints of leisure, selection of leisure activities, and leisure experience gains vary according to cultural contexts. Consequently, cultural communities express creative performances or creative abilities differently, and thus lead to special features of cultural development and achievement. The globalization has brought about the inter-cultural influence. Ten years ago, who could foreknow that the Japanese women soccer team would win championship in the world soccer game? Perhaps, in the future the cross-cultural studies may make greater effort in this aspect.

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