3

The Recreational Justification

In the Divine Comedy, Dante uses the image of a bow and arrow to represent not only physical movement but also mental movement or inclination. In Paradiso XIII, 105, Aguinas refers to "the arrow of my intention." In Purgatorio XXV, 17-18, Virgil sees that Dante is eager to ask questions and tells him to "discharge the bow of your speech." But the ultimate archer is God, as Beatrice indicates when she explains to Dante that they are ascending to heaven by "the virtue of that bowstring . . . which aims at a joyful target whatsoever it shoots." Arrows fly where archers aim; impelled by God, man's rational soul seeks its mark in union with Him, though it may not always fly straight or forcefully. Like the familiar medieval image of pilgrimage, the image of the bow and arrow is particularly apt for a culture and an author that perceive human life as a movement toward a goal that lies beyond. Both are teleologically oriented: you travel to get somewhere, you shoot to hit something. Deflection from the goal is error, hesitation truancy.

On occasion, Dante alters the image of bent bow and flying arrow in order to depict mental relaxation or breakdown. When he encounters Cacciaguida in Paradise, his ancestor is praising God in ways beyond mortal understanding; but the "bow" of the blessed soul's love becomes "relaxed" enough so that his speech can reach "the mark of our intellect" (XV, 43–45). In two other instances the relaxation of the bowstring im-

¹Par. I, 125–26. Trans. Charles S. Singleton, *The Divine Comedy*, 3 vols. in 6 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970–75). For commentary on the archery in this passage, see Singleton's notes to these lines and to line 119.

ages confusion or dereliction. Dante's breakdown when Beatrice demands a confession is compared to the breaking of a crossbow's cord when the force is too great and the consequent loss of power in the arrow (*Purg.* XXXI, 16–18). And when Marco Lombardo contrasts his generation to the corruption of Dante's, he does so by tersely noting that he "loved that worth at which all now have unbent the bow" (*Purg.* XVI, 47–48). For Dante, the bow ought always to be steadily bent; the target is heavenly felicity, and humankind must not slack in the effort to attain it. His imagery of bows and arrows, though not unique to him, is singularly appropriate to the directedness of the *Divine Comedy*, to its step-by-step movement from earthly confusion toward heavenly surety, to a place where the arrow of the soul can find its mark.

But not everyone in the Middle Ages had such an unyielding commitment to the tensed bow. In fact, the most popular image from archery throughout the period (aside from Cupid's arrows) makes a quite different point. In its most substantial and one of its most influential forms, it appears as an "old story" told by Abbot Abraham, one of the desert fathers whom John Cassian purportedly visited and whose wisdom he recorded, in the early fifth century, in a collection known at the *Collationes*, or *Conferences*:

It is said that the blessed John, while he was gently stroking a partridge with his hands suddenly saw a philosopher approaching him in the garb of a hunter, who was astonished that a man of so great fame and reputation should demean himself to such paltry and trivial amusements, and said: "Can you be that John, whose great and famous reputation attracted me also with the greatest desire for your acquaintance? Why then do you occupy yourself with such poor amusements?" To whom the blessed John: "What is it," said he, "that you are carrying in your hand?" The other replied: "a bow." "And why," said he, "do you not always carry it everywhere bent?" To whom the other replied: "It would not do, for the force of its stiffness would be relaxed by its being continually bent, and it would be lessened and destroyed, and when the time came for it to send stouter arrows after some beast, its stiffness would be lost by the excessive and continuous strain, and it would be impossible for the more powerful

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bolts to be shot." "And, my lad," said the blessed John, "do not let this slight and short relaxation of my mind disturb you, as unless it sometimes relieved and relaxed the rigour of its purpose by some recreation, the spirit would lose its spring owing to the unbroken strain, and would be unable when need required, implicitly to follow what was right."²

Abraham is explaining that even though monks may wish always to be solitary, occasional visits from their brethren have advantages for both body and soul: "unless the strain and tension of their mind is lessened by the relaxation of some changes, they fall either into coldness of spirit, or at any rate into a most dangerous state of bodily health" (c. 20). The purpose of the Conference as a whole, though, is to promote the renunciation of the world; the defense of recreation enters as part of an explanation why anchorites should remain in the desert with their brethren and not return to their homes. The image of the bent bow appears as well in the Verba seniorum, a collection of sayings of the desert fathers, this time imputed to St. Anthony. Anthony's relaxation takes the form of "conversing with some brethren" rather than petting a partridge, and he makes his point by asking the hunter to shoot a number of arrows. "The hunter said: If I bend my bow all the time it will break. Abbot Anthony replied: So it is also in the work of God. If we push ourselves beyond measure, the brethren will soon collapse. It is right, therefore, from time to time, to relax their efforts."3

The *Verba seniorum* and the *Collationes* were popular texts in the Middle Ages and gave the image of the bent bow, the mind that cannot survive continual strain, widespread currency.⁴

²Conference XXIV, c. 21, trans. Edgar C. S. Gibson, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, vol. 11 (rpt. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 540–41.

³The Wisdom of the Desert, trans. Thomas Merton (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1960), p. 63.

⁴Bruno of Cologne uses it to justify taking pleasure in the delights of nature in order to renew one's spirit for the contemplation of God; trans. R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (1953; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 168. The *Alphabetum narrationum*, an alphabetical collection of *exempla* for use in preaching, includes both the John and Anthony stories; see *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. M. M. Banks, EETS o.s. 126, 127 (1904, 1905; rpt. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1972), pp. 5–6, 274. John's version appears

That justifications of relaxation appeared for over a thousand years in the mouths of the desert fathers may seem an interesting historical irony, but it may also serve to indicate that even in some of its most ascetic moments medieval culture remained aware of the value of recreation. As V. A. Kolve has said, the story of the hunter's bow that needs release from tension "is one of the central images by which the Middle Ages understood the human psyche."5 Later we will see it invoked in specifically literary contexts, but for now it may stand as an introduction to the subject of this chapter: the idea of recreation and its pervasiveness in later medieval thought. The concept is independent of poetics; once we have examined it fully, we will see in the following chapter how literary criticism and advertisement appeal to it, as well as to the hygienic argument, not in an attempt to create a separate category of aesthetic experience but as a means of giving psychological and ethical value to the enjoyment derived from storytelling.

Aristotle and the Secular Tradition

To write a thorough history of the idea of recreation, from classical through medieval thought, would require a book in itself. The closest thing we have to that book is the first chapter of Joachim Suchomski's "Delectatio" und "Utilitas," which includes the idea of recreation in its survey of Christian attitudes toward jest and entertainment from the beginning of the Middle Ages through Aquinas. This chapter does not attempt to duplicate Suchomski's chronological survey but to consider some of the more important texts that influenced late medieval thinking on the subject. All the elements of the idea in its simplest form are present in the stories of John and Anthony, as they are in this verse from the immensely popular Disticha Catonis:

⁵The Play Called Corpus Christi (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 129.

under his name but is also cross-listed under the heading "Recreacio interdum vtilis est religiosis" (p. 447; see also the following entry). G. G. Coulton cites some other instances of the image in *Five Centuries of Religion*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923–50), I: 532.

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Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis, ut possis animo quemvis sufferre laborem.

Sumtyme among thi bysynesse Melle [mix] solace, gamen and ioyowsnesse, That thou may the lyghtlyker With mery thouht thi trauayll ber.⁶

The causal relationship between the first line and the second is the key to understanding the ethical sanction of recreation. Human labor and intention direct themselves to an end, but like the bow the mind and body cannot sustain the pressure of unrelieved pursuit of that end. Relaxation in the form of gaudia offers a temporary release, enabling people subsequently to return to their work and continue it more effectively.

To understand the connections between relaxation and recreation more precisely, and to see the recreational argument in its most fully developed form, we must turn to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and to the medieval commentaries on it. Here the earlier, highly limited ecclesiastical acceptance of entertainment becomes broadened and more tolerant; the influence of the *Ethics* helps shape a more liberalized view of recreation in the later Middle Ages, one usually expressed in secular, ethical terms rather than in explicitly Christian ones.⁷

⁶III, 6. Ed. Marcus Boas and H. J. Botschuyver (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1952), p. 159. The Middle English translation was edited by Max Förster in Englische Studien, 36 (1906), 33. Its three equivalents to gaudia are relevant to understanding some of the literary terminology we will encounter in the next chapter. The distich appears frequently: it is in Piers Plowman, B text, XII, 20–25; the Libro de buen amor, c. 44; and is incorporated into the Anthony story in the Alphabet of Tales (n. 4). We will see it often throughout this book. The stanza advising "recreacion" in the "Mumming of the Seven Philosophers," ed. R. H. Robbins, Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 112, is little more than an expanded paraphrase of the distich. For background material on the Disticha, see Richard Hazelton, "The Christianization of 'Cato': The Disticha Catonis in the Light of Late Mediaeval Commentaries," Mediaeval Studies, 19 (1957), 157–73.

⁷Cf. Suchomski, pp. 55-61. A full-scale history of the impact of the *Ethics*, not only on philosophy but on popular social and moral thought, remains to be written. For documentation of its appearance in academic circles, see Gordon Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: John Wiley, 1968), passim. Its broader diffusion occurred through such channels as encyclopedias like Brunetto Latini's *Trésor* and treatises on moral behavior. The Aristotelian mean emerges as a frequent locus of value in late medieval writing; for one specific case, not concerned with recreation but useful for its evidence of the *Ethic's* influence, see Thomas H. Bestul, *Satire and*

In the *Ethics*, which for the sake of convenience we may consider in the text preserved in the commentary of Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle discusses the relationship between happiness and pleasure, and among others one specific form of pleasure, amusement. He concludes that for a good man "happiness does not consist in amusement (non in ludo ergo felicitas)," even though many people seem to desire it. He explains the proper relationship between desire for entertainment and virtuous behavior by making the former an instrument of the latter:

to play in order to work better is the correct rule according to Anacharsis. This is because amusement is a kind of relaxation (requiei enim assimilatur ludus) that men need, since they are incapable of working continuously. Certainly relaxation is not an end (non utique finis requies), for it is taken as a means to further activity.

Hence, although "felicitas," the highest form of pleasure, involves delight, it is the joy that comes with virtuous activity, not the joy that comes with entertainment (cum gaudio, sed non in ludo).⁸

The commentary of Aquinas on this passage elaborates on Aristotle's reasoning; two points are pertinent to our interests. Aristotle's example of people's desire for amusement is that "tyranni" enjoy having witty people around them. Aquinas explains that Aristotle calls such "potentes" tyrants because they are more interested in their personal pleasures than in the public good. The fact that "princes devote their leisure" to amusements does not necessarily make recreation a cause of happiness. The shift from tyranni to potentes locates the discussion in the medieval world of princes and their entertainments, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, includes storytelling among other forms. Second, Aquinas stresses that such amusements ("delectationes ludicrae") belong to the category of bodily delights ("delectationes corporales") and hence cannot

Allegory in Wynnere and Wastoure (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), pp. 5–13. See also below, Chap. 5, n. 22.

⁸Nicomachean Ethics, X, 6. Trans. C. I. Litzinger, O.P., Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, 2 vols. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), II: 900-1. Text in *In decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum*, ed. R. M. Spiazzi, 3d ed. (Turin: Marietti, 1964), L. X, lectio IX, p. 538. Henceforth I will cite page numbers of these editions.

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pertain to properly human felicity since they appeal only to the animal part of the soul (Litzinger, II: 903–4; Spiazzi, pp. 539–40). This view of *ludus* as a source of bodily pleasure is consistent with the medical approach toward theatrics of other medieval thinkers. The particular kind of *gaudium* that comes *in ludo* seems implicitly to be the cheerfulness of disposition which conserves health. Here, as in other discussions of recreation, the physiological understanding of delight tends to be assumed rather than argued. The recreational approach usually presupposes the medical rationale discussed in Chapter 2 and spends its time more on psychological and moral considerations.

These considerations occur in most detail in *Ethics* IV, 8. Although both author and commentator are careful to distinguish pleasure in entertainment from true felicity, they do accord the former a legitimate place in human activity, as Aquinas spells out most fully:

But amusement does have an aspect of good inasmuch as it is useful for human living. As man sometimes needs to give his body rest from labors, so also he sometimes needs to rest his soul from mental strain that ensues from his application to serious affairs. This is done by amusement. For this reason Aristotle says that, since there should be some relaxation for man from the anxieties and cares of human living and social intercourse by means of amusement—thus amusement has an aspect of useful good—it follows that in amusement there can be a certain agreeable association of men with one another, so they may say and hear such things as are proper and in the proper way. [Litzinger, I: 368]

Psychological needs prompt ethical concerns, the question of propriety in entertainment. Aquinas follows Aristotle in distinguishing a mean, a proper degree of interest in amusement, from two extremes: the excessive desire to create laughter (buffoonery), and the excessive harshness in those "who are not mellowed by amusing recreation" (boorishness). The mean is the virtue of *eutrapelia*, wittiness. This moral virtue, one of those concerned with words and actions in social relationships (outlined in *Ethics* II, 7), reveals itself not only in the moderate frequency with which one takes amusement but also in the nature of one's subjects and language: "It is proper to men of

this sort to narrate and listen to such amusing incidents (talia ludicra) as become a decent and liberal man who possesses a soul free from slavish passions" (Litzinger, I: 368–70; Spiazzi, pp. 236–37). Throughout this discussion the context is one of polite social conversation; Aquinas seems to be thinking in terms of informal jests and jokes. But we may remember from Chapter 1 that *ludicra* is also Gundissalinus's term for the works of poets that please rather than profit and that manuals of health group a variety of forms of discourse within concepts of *conversatio* and *confabulatio*. It is certainly possible that Aquinas's discussion of the virtue of *eutrapelia* implicitly includes storytelling; its principal relevance, though, is its delineation of a virtue connected with entertainment.

Aguinas pursues this matter more extensively in the Summa theologica, II-II, as part of a discussion of temperance and the moderation of bodily desires. Question 168 deals with modesty in bodily actions and is devoted principally to actions and speech made in play. Article 2 asserts that there can be a moral virtue in ludis, arguing that the soul, like the body, tires when strained excessively, in great part because intellectual effort requires the use of powers that operate through the body. Contemplation is most tiring of all, since it demands that a person rise beyond the "sensibilia" he is naturally attracted to, thereby inducing greater fatigue. Just as physical rest repairs bodily exhaustion, "so psychological tiredness is eased by resting the soul.... pleasure is rest for the soul (quies autem animae est delectatio)." Pleasure is to the mind what sleep is to the body.9 Here Aquinas retells Cassian's story of the bent bow, but his own sense of ludus includes verbal as well as physical play: "Those words and deeds in which nothing is sought beyond the soul's pleasure are called playful or humorous (ludicra vel jocosa), and it is necessary to make use of them at times for solace of soul (ad quamdam animae quietem)."

This is the essence of the recreational argument. Play offers

⁹This analogy is pursued at greater length in a commentary on the Ethics by John Buridan, Questiones Joannis Buridani super decem libros ethicorum aristotelis ad nicomachum (Paris, 1513; rpt. Frankfurt: Minerva G.M.B.H., 1968), L. IV, q. 19; Utrum eutrapelia sit virtus moralis, ff. 88–89. Aquinas's discussion in q. 168 appears also in the Summa theologica of Antoninus of Florence, Pars IV, tit. IV, c. X, §3, cols. 165–66.

delight; delight is rest; and rest is necessary. Hence, to the objection that play cannot be virtuous since it is directed to no end but itself, whereas virtuous action involves choice directed to something else, Aquinas responds: "The activity of playing looked at specifically in itself is not ordained to a further end, yet the pleasure we take therein serves as recreation and rest for the soul (ad aliquam animae recreationem et quietem), and accordingly when this be well-tempered, application to play is lawful." Play is justified because of its value as recreation. Jocosa verba may have no intention beyond amusement, but the very amusement they provide has psychological usefulness, and such activity comes within the province of ethics insofar as it needs proper rational control. As Aquinas puts it in the responsio of the third article, "playful and jesting words and actions lie within the field of reason."

Article 3 concerns the sinfulness of excessive play. One of the reasons advanced why superfluitas ludi ought not be considered sinful is that actors, histriones, spend all their time playing but are not therefore in a state of sin. To this Aguinas replies that as long as they play moderately, without scurrilous words or behavior and at the proper times, their art is indeed lawful. For although they do not have another profession, they do engage in "other serious and virtuous activities" in the eyes of God, such as praying and being charitable. Aguinas accepts the principle that "the acting profession, the purpose of which is to put on shows for our enjoyment (ad solatium hominibus exhibendum), is not unlawful in itself." This "solatium" is that which Bonaventure and others impute to theatrics and which physicians explain as contributing to the desirable psychological state of temperate cheerfulness. By discussing the function of performance in the context of the morality of play, Aquinas extends the conception of legitimate recreation to kinds of discourse more elaborate than spontaneous jokes and witticisms.

In question 168 Aquinas sets the limits of legitimate play. He cites Cicero and Ambrose to point out that the "delectatio" offered by amusement must not be indecent, must not dissipate all "gravitas animae," and must be ordered according to the proper circumstances—time, place, person (a. 2, resp.). In his discussion of whether insufficient playing is sinful, he follows Aristotle in arguing that "too little playing is less wrong than

too much" and suggesting that only a little recreation "suffices to give flavour to living, just as a little salt suffices for food" (a. 4, resp.). The dietary analogy is revealing and reminds us that behind the ethical concerns about proper play lies the physical reality of a body and soul needing recuperation. The entire question in fact is part of a discussion of the need to control bodily desires. The moral problem is to give play its due without turning it into an end in itself; the idea of recreation, predicated on an Aristotelian ethics, accomplishes just that: it legitimizes entertainment on psychological grounds, gives it a human value that is far from negligible, but at the same time puts it into a hierarchy of values that transcend it. For work is more important than play, and the felicity of contemplation a greater pleasure than recreational enjoyment.

It would be possible, but certainly not refreshing, to explore the idea of recreation further in Aquinas and in later discussions of the *Ethics* such as John Buridan's *Questiones* and Nicole Oresme's translation and commentary. Nor is it necessary, since the basic arguments do not change. But one other philosophic defense of recreation is worth some attention, since it incorporates so many central ideas and commonplaces. In the section on moral philosophy of the *Opus majus*, Roger Bacon explains at some length why people must take recreation:

Since according to Scripture the body which is corrupted burdens the soul, and our earthly habitation is depressing to the sense that is cognizant of many things, for peace of mind, therefore, human frailty must necessarily relax the mind at times through the comforts and recreations necessary for the body (solacia et recreaciones corpori necessarias). For otherwise the spirit becomes anxious, dull, fitful, and gloomier than it should be, languid with the tedium of goodness, complaining, and prone to frequent fits of impatience and anger.

Here, as elsewhere, the need for refreshment is tied to man's frailty; it is a concession to corruption. But it is a worthwhile, indeed a necessary, one, and Bacon goes on to note that even the holiest men took time out from their ascetic routine, citing Cassian on John the Evangelist and putting the story of the bent bow into the mouth of St. Benedict. Bacon then turns to

an important classical source for the idea of recreation, Seneca's De tranquillitate animi, citing in passing the first line of Cato's famous distich. He quotes Seneca at length, who includes in his list of "solacia" such activities as giving the mind over "ad iocos," drinking wine, and dancing. Such "animis remissio" results in a more acute mind later, whereas uninterrupted strain leads to "languor," just as a field will lose its fertility if it is constantly forced to be productive. Seneca notes that people are naturally attracted to "lusus" and "iocus" but warns against the dangers of overindulgence. Bacon repeats his examples of properly ordered recreations—the establishment of certain holidays each month, the refusal to conduct business after a certain hour each day. He discusses wine, its relaxing effects and its association with poetic madness. Even though Bacon is working primarily from Seneca rather than from Aristotle, which produces a somewhat greater emphasis on private indulgence than on public moderation, his view of recreation is essentially similar to what we have seen in Aquinas: it is an activity dangerous if pursued extensively but necessary at times and useful when taken with restraint.10

At this point some distinctions may be in order. The idea of recreation is in one sense an attempt to fit play into an ethical framework. It invites consideration of the idea of play itself, which has been the topic of some well-known theoretical treatments, particularly Johan Huizinga's *Homo ludens*, and has fostered a number of literary studies which rely in one way or another on theories of play and game, one of the most notable being Kolve's interpretation of the cycle drama (pp. 8–32). In some respects medieval views of play are reasonably close to modern ones, but in general they tend to treat the subject from an ethical perspective rather than from a psychological, sociological, or anthropological one. I prefer to stay with medieval theorizing here, especially since its point of view, as we will see, is more directly related to medieval literary claims and criticism than are modern play and game theories.

¹⁰Trans. Robert Belle Burke, *The* Opus majus of Roger Bacon, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928), II: 783–86. Text in *Moralis philosophia*, ed. F. Delorme and E. Massa (Turin: Thesaurus Mundi, 1953), pp. 181–84.

We have already seen how broad a range of activities the term "ludus" encompasses, as does the modern word "play" depending on the context, it may refer to sports, theatrical performances, games, entertainment in general, or any words or actions that can be distinguished from normal "serious" behavior ("I said it in play"). Medieval theorizing recognizes different types of play, principally on the basis of motives or ends. Aquinas argues a threefold distinctio, which Robert Holcot echoes in his popular commentary on the Book of Wisdom: a "base and improper play" that is sinful, a "play of devotion and spiritual joy," and a "play of human consolation, the mean of which is called eutrapelia." The Summa theologica attributed to Alexander of Hales offers a fourfold classification of dance and play: one sinful, one spiritual, one taken for the recreation of human nature ("ad naturae recreationem"), one taken for physical exercise.11 Aside from this separate category for exercise, the distinctions are parallel, recognizing a vicious play that proceeds from base motives, a virtuous kind that proceeds from spiritual joyfulness (here the example is always David's dancing in front of the ark), and a kind of play intended for people's recreatio or consolatio. Holcot's reference to the virtue of eutrapelia in connection with this type makes it obvious that he is thinking of the kind of entertainment discussed in the Ethics and that the morality of this sort of play depends on the degree to which one adheres to the mean in its use.

We may use the distinction between recreative and spiritual play to contrast briefly the idea of recreation and the idea of leisure. Superficially they are closely related in that both refer to a state of nonwork. But recreation, as we have seen, is always discussed as the necessary rest to enable man to return to work;

¹¹For Holcot and the source in Aquinas see Siegfried Wenzel, "An Early Reference to a Corpus Christi Play," Modern Philology, 74 (1977), 390-91. The fifteenth-century Summa angelica, s.v. ludus, echoes this distinction, defining play as either "spiritualis," "humanus," or "diabolicus." Human play is not sinful when done in the proper circumstances and when intended for honest recreation or the exercise of body or mind. (Lyons, 1519), ff. 289v-9ov. For Alexander of Hales, I cite the Quaracchi edition (4 vols., 1924-48), II, Pars II, ing. III, tract. III, sect. III, q. 1., c. 1, solutio, p. 471. Such distinctions are useful, incidentally, in understanding the examples of and attitudes toward play in the Lollard Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge, which George R. Coffman found so confusing; see Kolve, pp. 18-19.

play, seen in this context, is a lesser good that must be valued below the serious efforts it restores one for. Recreatio is etymologically a re-creation, a re-constituting of one's normal physical and mental health which has flagged because of work and natural human frailty. This is a valuable service, but obviously subordinate to the ongoing business of one's life. Leisure, on the other hand, is historically superior to man's work. It is the goal of personal or civic activity, a state of fulfillment. Michael O'Loughlin has discussed the classical manifestations of the idea, perhaps best known through Horace, and has argued that the Christian monastic ideal is a transformation of the classical notion of civic leisure. With its attendant activity of contemplation, leisure is a mode of existence allowing for the fullest realization of the potential of the human soul. 13

True, contemplation and recreation share similarities. Aquinas says that contemplation can be compared to play for two reasons: each gives delight, each is taken up for its own sake.¹⁴ These similarities allow Huizinga to claim as play everything from games to religious ceremony. Though valid for its own purposes, his approach ignores a crucial medieval distinction: the end, the final cause of the activity. The finis of recreative play, as we have seen, is improved ability to work, regardless of the fact that one might not be thinking of that end when one plays. The finis of Christian contemplation is joy in God, the only truly sufficient quies for the unquiet heart. The Middle Ages did not confuse the two activities, and it is significant that for the best modern statement of the distinction one must go not to theorists of play but to the Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper, who, although he does not treat the idea of recreation per se, distinguishes leisure and festive time from those pauses in routine which serve merely to prepare one for further

¹²Thus John Buridan, f. 88v: "Just as waking is superior to sleep and is its end, so serious work and steady application are superior to mental divagation and sportive activity (ludicris operationibus) and are their ends."

¹³The Garlands of Repose: The Literary Celebration of Civic and Retired Leisure (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), esp. pp. 166–88. For discussion of the reemergence of the classical idea of leisure in the Renaissance, contrasting medieval and humanist views of contemplation, see Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, pp. 243–45.

¹⁴Quoted and discussed by de Bruyne, III: 295.

work.¹⁵ In this he is following the logic of *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 6, and its medieval Christian commentaries.

One commentary on that chapter will aid us in a further distinction. When Nicole Oresme translated the Ethics in 1370 and completed the passage arguing that felicity does not consist in play but that the "repos" of play is for the purpose of activity, he added an explanation in his annotations to make clear that the "repos" Aristotle is talking about is not the same thing as the heavenly rest promised in the Bible. "Aristotle means that [recreational] rest is for the sake of work in this life in which idleness is wicked." However, "in eternal glory there is not a rest which is the cessation of all activity," for there is constant "operacion" among the blessed in their experience of God. The "repos" of heaven only abolishes that kind of activity which is "cheerless, enervating, and arduous."16 Oresme's distinction here between kinds of "repos" introduces the idea of idleness. In the work of the active life idleness is a sin; how can one discriminate between valid recreational "repos" and mere slothfulness? Recreation involves some kind of activity, some form of *ludus* which creates physical refreshment or mental quies through delectatio, thereby reinvigorating the psyche. It is thus possible for recreational activities to be seen as remedies against idleness. The Castle of Perseverance articulates the morality of play not in terms of Aristotelian ethics but in terms of the Christian categories of the deadly sins and their opposing virtues. Besynesse urges Mankind to avoid Slawthe with good works and adds that he should always be occupied with something:

15Leisure the Basis of Culture, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: New American

Library, 1963), esp. pp. 38-45.

¹⁶Le livre de Ethiques d'Aristote, ed. A. D. Menut (New York: Stechert, 1940), p. 517. Cf. Oresme's related distinction between play and contemplation in his translation of and commentary on Aristotle's Politics, 1337b-1338a, ed. A. D. Menut, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 60, part 6 (1970), 341-42; since the work of the active life enervates the spirits and the inner and outer senses, causing sadness, the "delectation" afforded by games and music is an appropriate remedy, "just as laxatives offer a remedy against repletion of humors," for it renders the body's spirits refreshed and strengthened. But contemplation does not need "such exterior delights" because of its own "delectations tres merveilleuses." The medical analogy testifies further to the physiological view of entertainment discussed in Chap. 2.

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Do sumwhat alwey for loue of me, Pou bou schuldyst but thwyte a stycke. Wyth bedys sumtyme be blys. Sumtyme rede and sumtyme wryte And sumtyme pleye at bi delyte. Pe Deuyl be waytyth wyth dyspyte Whanne bou art in idylnesse.¹⁷

Reading, writing, whittling, praying, playing—a wide range of human endeavor, all of it seen here as part of *solicitudo* in the fight against idleness.

But activity by itself cannot always be sufficient to make the distinction. The monastic tradition stresses work as the remedy for sloth, acedia. 18 What some might call recreative play others might see as inanity, the furthering of idleness. There are questions of intent as well, as implied in Guillaume de Deguileville's Pèlerinage de la vie humaine, in an episode that has interesting literary implications. In this allegory, the pilgrim at one point meets Youth, a damsel covered with feathers, symbolizing Youth's flightiness. She likes only to "go sportë me" and to live "In merthe only, & in solace," and she lists her favorite entertainments: various kinds of games, hunting, listening to "song & menstralcye," and reading "no storyes but on ffablys, / On thyng that ys nat worth a lek"—no sober histories, just trivial fictions. 19 Youth leads the narrator to a fork in the road, with a woman "off lytel bysynesse" on the left and a "besy" man on the right (11254-67). The old man harrangues against idleness. The lady explains that lovers come her way, echoing the opening of the Roman de la rose in which the porter of the garden of Deduit is Idleness. She says that she teaches the lovers to dance, to make "Balladys, Roundelays, vyrelayes," to play music, "To spendë al the day in ffablys," to play games— "And to al swych maner play, / Thys the verray ryhtë way" (11603-26).

¹⁷Lines 1647–53, ed. Mark Eccles, *The Macro Plays*, EETS o.s. 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 51.

¹⁸See Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 21–22; also pp. 59–60 for later acknowledgment of the value of variety and relaxation. ¹⁹Trans. John Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. F. J. Furnivall,

EETS e.s. 77, 83, 92 (1889, 1901, 1904; rpt. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint,

1973), lines 11178-212. I will cite line numbers hereafter.

Youth's proclivities are the domain of Idleness, as the almost exactly parallel catalogues suggest. Deguileville allows no conception of recreation to intrude here, not because the activities named might not be legitimate entertainment (later in this chapter we will see hunting explained on recreational grounds, and in the next some late medieval lyrics on the same principle) but because in the context of youthful aimlessness they have become an end rather than a means. Youth wants a life of "merthe" and "solace" only. Presumably the grieving knight in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess, though he too was young and in love, had somewhat more moral awareness. For although he fell in love at a time when "Yowthe, my maistresse, / Governed me in ydelnesse" (797-98), his love for good fair White prompted him to do his "besynesse / To make songes" in order to "kepe me fro ydelnesse" (1155-57). His thinking here perhaps parallels that of the musical theorist Johannes de Grocheo, who, enumerating types of songs popular around the turn of the fourteenth century, says of the stantipes that it "causes the souls of young men and girls to concentrate because of its difficulty and turns them from improper thinking."20 The formal intricacy of a ballade or rondel would serve equally well to channel the young knight's energies along artistic lines. In any case, the different perspectives on lyric composition in Deguileville and in Chaucer are a succinct reminder of the dangers of postulating a unitary late medieval attitude toward certain forms of secular activity. From the perspective of man's pilgrimage through life, youthful love lyrics are idle trifles; from the perspective of a young man in love with a noble and ennobling lady, self-expression through poems is a valid activity that combats idleness and its attendant brooding and improper thinking. Later in this chapter we will see Gaston Phoebus make much of the dangerous thoughts that arise in idleness, for which his remedy is another recreation, hunting; and in Chapter 6 we will see the same idea play a major role in Boccaccio's explanation of the value of his Decameron distractions.

The conflicting attitudes of Deguileville and the grieving knight point to perhaps the most difficult problem in dealing

²⁰Concerning Music (De Musica), trans. Albert Seay, 2d ed. (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1974), p. 17; repeated in regard to the purely instrumental stantipes on p. 20.

with the morality of recreation, the question of intent, one raised as well in the distinctiones' separation of evil from recreational play. On the one hand, play, as Aristotle and Aquinas say, has no other end but itself; on this level one's intent in playing is to enjoy it, to gain the *delectatio* offered by the satisfying completion of a chess game, a hunt, or a well-told tale. But as a part of one's moral life play can only be justified to the extent that it promotes one's capacities for serious endeavor: work, study, contemplation. It is on this level that the ethical judgment of play usually takes place. One's intent within the play is delight; one's intent concerning the play should be recreative but may be libertine. Distinguishing this kind of intent is not always easy. Doubtless many people in the Middle Ages felt that the recreational argument tended to be a smokescreen for self-indulgence, and hence we get passages like Deguileville's which do not even allow it to be considered. But his voice is by no means the only "official" one.

Related to the problem of intent and the validity of recreation is the question of proper play. The tradition of the Ethics and its commentaries gives substantial attention to the need for decency in play if it is to be acceptable entertainment. Jokes, for example, should not be vulgar or cruel, though Aquinas makes the interesting point that in regard to social amusement, "talking and listening are very different, for a man properly listens to things he could not properly say" (Litzinger, I: 368), an ethical attitude that seems consistent with what we know about the enjoyment of some rather coarse fabliaux and novelle among people of more than minimal refinement. The recreational argument thus loses force when applied to pastimes that are patently immoral. Dice playing in particular comes in for severe attack. "Recreacion may not excusen pleying at be dice," says a Lollard tract on the topic.21 When Chaucer's Pardoner harrangues against the tavern sins, he notes apropos of "hasardrye" that "Lordes may fynden oother maner pley / Honest ynough to dryve the day awey" (CT C 627-28). The wicked game stands condemned, not all forms of recreation.22

²¹British Library MS Add. 24202, f. 22.

²²Robert A. Pratt has shown that much of the Pardoner's homiletics is based on John of Wales's *Communiloquium*, and he notes John's "somewhat parallel" line to 627–28: "There is play that is socially proper, intended for recreation

The Pardoner's reference to "Lordes" is doubtless prompted by his examples of dicing among kings and nobility, and it serves to remind us of one of the major sources in the later Middle Ages for the distinction between honest and dishonest play, manuals for princes. The long version of the Secretum secretorum includes a chapter on the "disports" of rulers, justifying them on primarily physiological grounds but warning against overindulgence.²³ Much more detailed is the advice of Philippe de Mézières to Charles VI, in the third part of his long allegory Le songe du Vieil Pelerin (The Dream of the Old Pilgrim). Queen Verite discusses the topic of "esbatemens," entertainment, acknowledging that after the arduous tasks of royal government one needs some "honneste recreacion." She mentions as proper entertainments ("esbatemens raisonnables") some physical pastimes like archery and dancing, though the latter requires strict moderation. She instructs her charge to avoid dishonest games prohibited by the Church, such as dicing and all games based on the desire to win money. She is careful to stress that "all your entertainments must be regulated according to time and place," the kind of concern with appropriate circumstances which we have seen in Aristotle and Aquinas. Her advice to hold to the mean ("tenir le moyen") in all recreations evokes a whole Aristotelian morality. Her concern for limiting indulgence in entertainment prompts a concluding story about the nephew of St. Cyril, who died at eighteen, appeared to his uncle in a vision, and explained that he was condemned to hell for delighting too much in entertainment and for not making confession before he died "concerning my games and my excessive entertainments."24

and relief from fatigue (Item est ludus socialis honestatis, scilicet ad recreationem et relavamen laboris)." "Chaucer and the Hand That Fed Him," *Speculum*, 41 (1966), 632.

²³See Manzalaoui, pp. 318–19; Steele, pp. 15, 58, 140–41.

²⁴Ed. G. W. Coopland, ² vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), II: 212–16. What might the nephew's confession have sounded like had he remembered to make one? In *The Sin of Sloth*, pp. 198–99, Wenzel prints a formula for confessing sloth that concludes with a view of overindulgence in entertainment as a part of that sin. The penitent is to say: "I have often allowed myself frivolous and worthless thoughts and have let my mind wander amidst them. I have become accustomed to speaking idle and scurrilous or foul words. I have been too interested in mimes and shows or in hunting. I have habitually

The Songe dates from 1389. Less than twenty years later another Frenchman, the Augustinian Jacques Legrand, wrote an encyclopedia, the Sophilogium, which includes a chapter "De ludis principum."25 He too follows the standard line: there is nothing blameworthy if one "refreshes his spirit in proper recreation (in honesto solatio spiritum suum recreet)," but princes are wrong to spend all their time on games or to devote themselves to wicked ones. He cites a variety of authorities on the dangers of dicing and paints a vivid picture of how such dissipation affects one's rule—the sort of material Shakespeare's Henry IV would have used to lecture Prince Hal. When he turns to "ludi honesti" he cites, as Bacon did, Seneca's De tranquillitate animi, and retells Cassian's story of John and the partridge. Legrand subsequently translated the Sophilogium into two French works, and this chapter became part of the Livre des bonnes meurs, a treatise on moral behavior that was very popular during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was translated into English by William Caxton as the Book of Good Manners.

As we have seen, although the idea of recreation is itself relatively simple, the ethical questions it engenders are not. There is perhaps no better summary of the medieval notion of recreation and the moral concerns it prompts than that in a Renaissance play, John Redford's *Wit and Science*, which turns many of the principles and problems discussed above into personification allegory. Wit seeks to marry Science, the daughter of Reason and Experience. At the beginning of the play Reason recognizes that Wit cannot "hold owte" on his journey to this marriage, that is, to the attainment of learning and knowledge, without some "solas" to "refresh" him (29–33). The main obstacle to Wit's achieving his goal is Tediousnes, and when Wit arrogantly thinks he can beat back Tediousnes by

played dice, chess, and similar games and taken too much delight in them. (Cogitaciones frivolas et inanes sepe admisi et permisi animum in talibus vagari. Verbis vanis et scurrilibus vel turpibus assuetus fui. De ludis mimicis et theatralibus aut venacionibus me nimis intromisi. Ad aleas et scaccos ut huiusmodi ludere consuevi et in hijs nimis delectatus sum.)" Note that even in the confessional context the focus is not on the entertainments themselves but on how often or how excessively the penitent has pursued them, thus implying a legitimate level of delight in recreations.

²⁵Sophilogium, IX, c. 8 (Lyons, 1495), ff. 134-134v.

²⁶I cite line numbers from the text in David Bevington's *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), pp. 1030-61.

himself, he is felled. But Honest Recreacion, the "best physicke" in order to attain "consolacion" (228–30), revives him, having been sent to Wit by Reason. Reason now recommends that Wit send Recreacion and her companions (Cumfort, Quicknes, and Strength—both physical and psychological restoration) home, since they have done their job; but in an amusing exchange, the previously earnest Wit now turns casual, telling Reason not to be too "hastye" and assuring him that he will get to his daughter "all at leiser" (275-77). Seeing that Wit does not want to leave Honest Recreacion, Reason departs. Wit decides that he would rather marry his new companion than Lady Science, and to prove himself worthy of her begins to dance, at the end of which he falls into the lap of Idlenes. Honest Recreacion is appalled, but Wit is interested only in his "ese" at this point (342), and Idlenes helps to blind him to the difference between them by accusing Honest Recreacion of promoting all sorts of entertainments, evil as well as decent (371-85). Wit falls asleep and is unable to hear Honest Recreacion's protestations that Idlenes has blurred a crucial distinction. As a result of his slide from recreation into idleness. Wit takes on the appearance of Ignorance, is rejected by Science, and ultimately has to win her again by fighting Tediousnes, this time with the aid of Diligence and Instruccion, as he should have previously.

It is all there: the values of recreation, its pleasures, and its dangers. Although the educational concerns of the play are notably Renaissance, *Wit and Science* gives dramatic shape to a view of the role of *ludus* in life that obtained in earlier centuries as well as its own. More than the statements of principle by moral philosophers, it treats sympathetically both the need and the difficulty of knowing when vacation turns into truancy.

Monastic Recreatio

Thus far we have been considering the idea of recreation principally in a secular context, using material from the realm of moral philosophy, ethics. The medieval attitude toward entertainment that emerges seems, though guarded, certainly more tolerant than is often thought. Although G. G. Coulton and others have documented substantial clerical hostil-

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ity toward entertainment, I have tried to show that for the later Middle Ages as a whole the dominant attitude is shaped by an essentially ethical tradition out of Aristotle. Still, there is some testimony from monastic life that is relevant as well.

The Rule of St. Benedict, recognizing that idleness is an enemy of the soul (chap. 48), prescribes manual labor and religious reading as countermeasures. It does not formulate an idea of recreation and throughout rejects anything suggestive of casual entertainment: "But as for buffoonery or idle words, such as move to laughter (scurrilitates vero vel verba otiosa et risum moventia), we utterly condemn them in every place, nor do we allow the disciple to open his mouth in such discourse."27 But by the later Middle Ages, some members of religious orders-and not only sensualists like Chaucer's Monk-must have seen that rule as old and overly strict. The concept of recreation, which we have found to be present even in the desert fathers, affects interpretations of proper behavior in the cloistered life. The ordinances in 1300 for the Benedictine priory of Ely allow, upon permission, walks outside the cloister for recreation ("causa recreacionis") though not for wanton trifling ("causa lasciulendi"). In the fourteenth century, the prior of the monastery at Durham had a country house to which monks would come on occasion "for recreation or ludi." In the fifteenth, the nuns at St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, were instructed "that all daunsyng and reuelyng be utterly forborne among yow, except Christmasse and other honest tymys of recreacyone among yowre self."28 Although John of Whethamstede, abbot of St. Albans, chided a brother for wanting to leave the abbey for Christ Church, Canterbury, where among other seductions there was, "in regard to recreation," too much conversation, he nevertheless maintained a cell at Redburn where the brothers went to spend some time "in solatiis." In 1423 he had to warn them that such privileged time was not appropriate to

²⁷The Rule of St. Benedict, ed. and trans. D. O. H. Blair, 5th ed. (Fort Augustus, Scotland: Abbey Press, 1948), c. 6, pp. 38–39. This attitude appears elsewhere in the Rule.

^{**}For Ely, see Evans, pp. 12–13. For Durham, see Dom David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948–59), II: 246, 324–25, and Chambers, II: 240–44. For St. Helen's, Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries* (rpt. New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1964), p. 309; see also p. 384 and n. 1.

those "who do not know how to place proper limits on their pleasures," and he explicitly forbade excessive "vigilias," which led to neglect of religious duties.²⁹

This evidence reveals a view of recreation which acknowledges a legitimate need for loosening the strain of monastic discipline. In fact, the term "recreatio" in the context of the cloister means "a temporary but intentional relaxation of the normal monastic regime of silence, prayer, work and seclusion."30 Thus at Durham, special occasions on which the monks could eat meat were known as "recreationes"; the custom of periodic bloodletting came to involve a kind of recreational time during which certain freedoms from normal regulations were permitted; holidays at certain manors and hunting extended the principle to activity outside the monastery.³¹ Recreation in this sense involves the idea of refreshment in its widest possible application: any alteration of behavior that will reinvigorate, whether it involve diet, medicine, psychology, or exercise. That range of meaning is evident also in the English noun "recreation," which in the Oxford English Dictionary has senses that run from "refreshment through partaking of food" (Gower often uses it in this way) to refreshment through amusement to refreshment through spiritual consolation. Such semantic range is further testimony to the link between hygiene and entertainment previously explored. It is epitomized in the title of a late medieval work, the Summa recreatorum, whose five parts consist of a variety of "refreshers" ranging from information on foods and diet to discussion of worthwhile laws to "delightful stories and songs." The inclusion of scientific, moral, and entertaining material as part of banquet behavior is in-

²⁹Annales Monasterii S. Albani a Johanne Amundesham... conscripti, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols., Rolls Series 28, pt. 5 (London, 1870–71), I: 89, 113. See II: xx-xxiv for discussion and partial translation, and for some minor corrections, E. F. Jacob, "'Florida Verborum Venustas': Some Early Examples of Euphuism in England," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 17 (1933), 272.

³⁰Knowles, II: 245.

³¹See ibid., I: 283–85, II: 245–47; Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 455–56, 461–62; Huling E. Ussery, "The Status of Chaucer's Monk: Clerical, Official, Social, and Moral," *Tulane Studies in English*, 17 (1969), 10. Regulations for chantry priests reveal a similar range of allowable *recreationes*; see K. L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 256–60.

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debted to Macrobius's *Saturnalia*, as the *Summa*'s prologue acknowledges, but it is perhaps a more distinctly late medieval view of *recreatio* that accounts for the work's title and its inclusion in a manuscript containing other scientific and medical texts.³²

Even the Benedictine Rule's firm stand against frivolous talk that induces laughter could be tempered. The fifteenth-century confessional manual of Antoninus of Florence poses the following question to be asked about the behavior of religious:

Has the person been too frivolous in conversation or prompted others to levity or to laughter with words or actions or entertainments? Sometimes these things can be done without sinning for the purposes of recreation or of relieving oneself or others from slothfulness. Rarely, however, is this sort of thing proper for religious.³³

The legitimate uses of levity are very carefully circumscribed here, but that comes as no surprise considering that Antoninus is concerned with people in religious orders. What is revealing is that even in such circumstances there is allowance for amusement provided that it serves recreative purposes or that it aids in alleviating *acedia*. This latter function reminds us of the harsher realities of religious discipline; spiritual sloth, in a variety of manifestations, was a genuine problem, and insofar as occasional levity might help one cope with it, *solatii* could be justified even within the walls of the cloister. Thomas Walsing-

³²For a summary of the work, which can be dated before 1412, and its relation to the later and better-known Mensa philosophica, see Brian Lawn, The Salernitan Questions: An Introduction to the History of Medieval and Renaissance Problem Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 107–11. For information on the Vienna manuscript and on the contents of the section of stories and songs, which range from religious and moral pieces to lighter verse, see Alfons Hilka, "Zur Summa recreatorum. Liste der poetischen Stücke und Abdruck von vier Marienliedern," in Studien zur lateinischen Dichtung des Mittelalters. Ehrengabe für Karl Strecker, ed. W. Stach and H. Walther (Dresden: Wilhelm und Bertha v. Baensch, 1931), pp. 97–116. I owe this reference to George Rigg.

³³Summula confessionis, Interrogatorio, Pars III, c. 13 (Venice, 1473), f. 77v: "Si conuersando fuit nimis leuis uel alios inducens ad leuitatem uel risum uerbis gestibus uel solatiis; que aliquando sine peccato fieri possunt ad recreationem uel subleuandum se uel alios ab accidia, raro tamen decet huiusmodi religiosos."

ham, monk and chronicler, has this psychological concern in mind when he distinguishes the kinds of usefulness his *Historia Alexandri* provides. Readers in general will learn of actions and values worthy of glory. For people in the cloister the narrative is "utilis" because of the *delectatio* it generates; such pleasure may dispel *acedia* and alleviate tediousness, thereby forestalling unprofitable restlessness.³⁴

Though not widely different from secular ideas, monastic views of recreation tend to perceive it more as a relationship than as a set of specific amusements. Recreation is the relaxation of a rule, the unbending of the bow, and recreational activity thus defines itself as whatever a temporary dispensation allows one to do that normal routine does not. Eating meat may be recreative from this point of view, even though it would not appear in a conventional list of ludi. Such an approach, which points up a feature only implicit in the secular material we have considered, is important because it helps us avoid the oversimple equation of recreation with triviality. To perceive a work of literature as recreative is not necessarily to judge it as inconsequential but rather to consider it as standing in a certain relationship to other kinds of endeavor.³⁵ Take the case of a request for a book made by the abbot of St. Augustine's Abbey. His letter asks a friend to lend him a story of Godfrey de Bouillon's conquest of the Holy Land, noting that it is one of those works "you have been accustomed to read in order to mix entertainment with your duties (ex quorum lectura interponi solent solacia curis vestris)" and that he too will receive pleasure and consolation

³⁴Quoted in *Thomae Walsingham de archana deorum*, ed. Robert A. van Kluyve (Durham: Duke University Press, 1968), pp. xi-xii: "Religiosis insuper et in claustris residentibus non erit hec compilatio minus utilis, quia ex processu delectationem non modicam generabit et fortassis talium personarum tollet accidiam et tedium relevabit. Et cum sit generativa letitie lectio huius hystoria, occasiones vagandi inutiliter aufert et efficaciter primiet et extinguet." On the dangers of *acedia* see Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, passim, and the article by P. Alphandéry he cites on p. 205, n. 5; Power, pp. 293–

97.

35I have adopted this idea from H. Wagenvoort, "Ludus Poeticus," in his Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion (Leyden: Brill, 1956), pp. 30–42. He argues that the classical, especially Horatian, use of "ludus" to describe poetic composition does not mean that poetry was viewed "as a mere game" but that the term is "a relative notion" comparing lesser to greater seriousness and/or achievement.

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from it.³⁶ The sentence explicitly echoes Disticha Catonis III, 6: "Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis." It treats the reading of a chanson de geste as the sort of pleasure which a person needs to intermingle with his more serious work. But surely the story of one of the nine worthies is not simply escapist adventure, not without some moral value; in medieval theorizing such histories are said to offer examples of noble deeds and qualities to be imitated, and doubtless this one of fighting for the faith contributes to Christian purposefulness. Why then does the letter define such reading in recreational rather than didactic terms? Because relative to the abbot's (and presumably his friend's) ongoing concerns, the responsibilities of a life devoted to the service of God, such activity is more immediately pleasurable, a respite from workaday strain. John Mason thinks of Cato's distich, probably, not because he believes the narrative of Godfrev's adventures to be merely a trivial pastime but because he perceives, properly enough, that the activity of reading it is relaxation from official duties. To at least some extent, recreation is always a relative term, saying less about the inherent quality of whatever it is that brings delectatio than about its standing vis-à-vis other concerns.

Walter Map's *De nugis curialium*, written nearly two centuries earlier than John Mason's letter, defines itself in a similar way, in this case in a secular context. At the beginning of his miscellany of stories, anecdotes, observations, and satire, Map says that he will treat his material "so that the reading may please and the edification contribute to morality." Here is the familiar division of literary response into pleasure gained from narrative or stylistic features and profit derived from an intellectual core. The book thus advertises itself as a complete literary enterprise, combining the two values, and in a later passage suggests that even though a story may appear "friuola" one can profit from it. Yet the collection as a whole is given purely recreational status, as Map makes clear in his prologue to Part III, addressing a patron:

³⁶Text and discussion in W. A. Pantin, "The Letters of John Mason: A Fourteenth-Century Formulary from St. Augustine's, Canterbury," in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, ed. T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 216–17.

When our counsellors leave the business of counselling, wearied by the greatness of a king's tasks, they take pleasure in unbending to join converse with the lowly, and in lightening with jests the weight of serious affairs. In this way it may please thee, after thou hast rested from the counsel of a book of philosophy, or, it may be, of the divine book, to hear or read for the sake of pastime or pleasure (recreacionis et ludi gracia) the savourless and sapless trifles of this book. For it is not of the contests of the courts or of the magnitude of a philosopher's maxims that I am going to treat.³⁷

The modesty of this claim is not inconsistent with Map's Horatian goals. His collection offers instruction ad mores, yet relative to philosophy and theology its material consists only of trifles, nugae; it is worthwhile, yet royal business is more important (or at least more importunate). What cannot be disputed is the need for relaxation and the pleasure people take in entertaining stories. The concept of recreation enables Map and others to locate with some honesty the role of literary entertainment in medieval life.³⁸ It is also, of course, a role literature has played in other eras; the idea of recreation defines rather well the complex status of a form of discourse that is relevant to the ongoing concerns of life yet valued and enjoyed in great part as a withdrawal from them.

Recreation in Medieval Life: Two Examples

The evidence assembled above, ranging from learned commentary on Aristotle to popular tags and anecdotes, not only explains the idea of recreation but also gives some indication of its pervasiveness throughout the later Middle Ages. Yet since the context has thus far been principally theoretical, it will

³⁷De nugis curialium, ed. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), pp. 18, 122, 104. Trans. Frederick Tupper and M. B. Ogle, *De nugis curialium (Courtiers' Trifles)* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924), p. 130. See also James Hinton, "Walter Map's *De nugis curialium*: Its Plan and Composition," *PMLA*, 32 (1917), 81–132.

³⁸Cf. the later example of Christine de Pisan, who sends to Guillaume de Tignonville, provost of Paris, texts of the well-known *debat* on the *Roman de la rose*, noting that, amidst his laborious efforts on important affairs, he might take pleasure, "soulas," in the exchange. Ed. C. F. Ward, *The Epistles on the Romance of the Rose and Other Documents in the Debate* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1911), p. 36.

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be useful to see the idea in application, to see how people used it to understand or justify certain kinds of behavior. Although one could document the appearance of the recreational argument in medieval discussions of almost any pastime—dancing, for example³⁹—the remainder of this chapter will survey only two places that often feature its use: observations on student life and treatises on hunting.

It is natural to expect that concerns about student behavior would prompt some reflection on the relationship between study and play. Failure to recognize the limits of a student's, particularly a young student's, powers of concentration could be harmful. Writing early in the twelfth century, Guibert of Nogent criticizes the teacher he had as a boy for working him without restraint, because unrelenting mental stress dulls "the natural powers of grown men, as well as of boys" and turns "energy" into "apathy." Guibert then offers a better pedagogical technique: "when the mind has been fixed exclusively on one subject, we ought to give it relaxation from its intensity, so that after dealing in turn with different subjects we may with renewed energy, as after a holiday, fasten upon that one with which our minds are most engaged."40 He speaks in terms of "variety" and "change" in one's endeavors rather than play, but the principle of necessary respite from strain, mental vacation, governs the reasoning. Not surprisingly, we find that manuals for young students permit play. One, a fifteenth-century set of typical student dialogues, envisages an after-school scene of game playing in the churchyard in which children's minds are refreshed ("recreatur puerorum animus"). Another from later in the century permits play for recreation ("causa recreandi"), though it restricts time, place, and type of game, and insists to boot that the students always speak Latin.⁴¹ A

³⁹For some medieval commentary on dancing, see Coulton, *Five Centuries*, I: 531–38. He tends to ignore secular testimony that is less censorious, and the paragraph on Antoninus of Florence, p. 533, distorts his position, which does admit cases where dancing is not sinful; see *Summa theologica*, II, tit. VI, c. 6 (Verona, 1740), cols. 785–87.

⁴⁰Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent, trans. C. C. Swinton Bland, rev. and ed. John F. Benton (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 46–48.

⁴¹Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in Mediaeval Culture* (1929; rpt. New York: Ungar, 1965), pp. 80–81, 90–91.

fourteenth-century treatise spells out the medical and psychological rationale for recreation, affirming a causal relationship between physical invigoration and mental acuity:

Nor should the scholars be always kept intent upon their books and writing tablets, but they should be given an occasional recess and set at suitable games, so that their spirits may be raised and their blood stirred by the pleasure of play (ut spiritus exaltentur et sanguis sublimetur ludi delectatione). For thus the boys' minds which before were fatigued by the tedium of classes are refined and refreshed (ingenia subtiliantur et recreantur).⁴²

The passage represents a practical application of medical principles discussed in Chapter 2—the delight produced by play promotes the improved operation of blood and *spiritus* in the body, which in turn promotes improved mental activity.

Older students need holidays too. A fifteenth-century collection of letters includes one in which a son requests his father to have a horse sent so that he can return home for the Feast of Corpus Christi. He justifies the vacation at length using the familiar recreational argument, complete with allusions to the Cato distich and the image of the bent bow.⁴³ A good deal more subtle is the sixth chapter of the Manuale scholarium, a 1481 treatise in dialogue form designed to acquaint students with life at Heidelberg. It involves two students talking about a break in studies. Camillus asks Bartoldus if he would like to take a walk, but Bartoldus thinks he should keep studying. Camillus argues that too much work makes the mind collapse, and Bartoldus agrees that some relaxation is proper. They head out to the fields and spend time discussing the scenery. In a meadow Bartoldus admits that they have found as pleasant a place as paradise: "The flowing of the brook greatly refreshes (recreat) me, and it delights the eye to see the fish darting hither and yon." With good Petrarchan earnestness he decides to bring his books out to the meadow, "for the mind ought to

⁴²Ed. and trans. Lynn Thorndike, *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (1944; rpt. New York: Norton, 1975), pp. 225, 426.

⁴³W. A. Pantin, "A Medieval Treatise on Letter-Writing, with Examples, from the Rylands Latin MS. 394," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 13 (1929), 379–80.

be greatly improved here." Camillus agrees that it is a good place for study; he has taken such delight in it that Bartoldus has to remind him that it is time to return to town.44 Like Wit and Science, this chapter gives dramatic life to intellectual concerns about the proper use of one's time. Its viewpoint seems to be somewhat more humanistic, more evocative of classical and Renaissance notions of leisure and contemplation, than most medieval testimony. Like Petrarch's attitudes, which we will examine in Chapter 6, its interest in having the students use the meadow for intellectual reflection tends to blur the separation of recreation and study announced at the beginning of the episode. Delectatio and recreatio are attained not through games but through observation of natural beauty and harmony; as in Guibert of Nogent (and in Bruno of Cologne, cited above, n. 4), the focus is more on varying one's attention than on defending amusement.

If there is a kind of academic pastoral ideal at work in this scene, it is one that seldom appears in medieval discussions of student conduct. Generally they acknowledge the need for recreation but immediately narrow the ways in which students should take it. There is no inconsistency between such acceptance and all the medieval censuring of disreputable student behavior, especially the preference for tavern over classroom. Abusing the principle of recreation does not invalidate it. When a father writes to his son, "I have recently discovered that you live dissolutely and slothfully, preferring license to restraint and play to work (ludicra seriis anteponas),"45 his distress stems from the belief not that all ludicra must be rejected but that his son has been excessive in their use—antiponere rather than Cato's interponere. For all the adverse opinion voiced in the Middle Ages about student revelry, the authorities do not deny that some disport is permissible and desirable. And for the students' point of view we have only to read "Omittamus studia" from the Carmina Burana or the similarly

⁴⁴Trans. Robert Francis Seybolt, *The Manuale Scholarium* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1921), pp. 50–53. Text in Friedrich Zarncke, ed., *Die Deutschen Universitäten im Mittelalter* (Leipzig: T. O. Weigel, 1857), 17–19.

⁴⁵Haskins, pp. 15–16. As Haskins and Pantin both point out, medieval letters reflect medieval attitudes whether written as personal communications or as models of style.

exultant lyric on the end of term edited by Peter Dronke, both of which detail the afflictions to mind and body caused by prolonged study.⁴⁶

The idea of recreation reaches its acme in the late medieval hunting manuals, some of which are so intent on turning game into earnest that the recreational argument becomes but a small part of their elaborate self-justification. Viewed from one perspective, they appear as a most un-Aristotelian extreme in the medieval interest in entertainment, part of that exaggerated, ritualized self-indulgence of an aristocracy whose values were becoming increasingly irrelevant amidst social and technological change. Viewed from another, less common, perspective, they are fascinating testimony to one way in which secular values could be articulated and maintained in the court culture of the later Middle Ages.

Basically, the Middle Ages thought of hunting as a sport and hence as a kind of play, though, as Hugh of St. Victor's list of mechanical arts makes clear, it could also be seen as a necessary occupation in the production of food. Hunting and hawking appear in William Fitzstephen's description of the many types of *ludi* of twelfth-century Londoners, and some two hundred years later the *Ménagier de Paris* includes a treatise on hawking as part of a category of "games and entertainments pleasing in part for the sake of learning how to speak to and associate with people."⁴⁷ Here the pleasures of the sport seem subordinate to the pleasures of being in the right "compaignie" (one thinks of the elegant hawking party in the illumination for August in the *Très riches heures*), but the fundamental point remains: hawking is a game, an entertainment.

Hunting was so popular in the later Middle Ages that it engendered a number of treatises and a set of rationales that went far beyond whatever simple recreational claims one might

⁴⁶Text and trans. of the former in Helen Waddell, *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* (1929; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin, 1968), pp. 214–17. Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love-Lyric*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), II: 400–2.

⁴⁷Robertson, p. 12. Le Ménagier de Paris, ed. Jérôme Pichon, 2 vols. (Paris, 1846), I: 7. The treatise itself is in II: 279–326. Chapters on the other "jeux et esbatemens" announced in the author's introduction, which he identifies as various kinds of "demandes," have not survived.

make on behalf of a pastime.⁴⁸ Some thirteenth-century works focus on hunting or hawking as an ars, a discipline that requires knowledge and practice. This perspective is evident in Frederick II's treatise on falconry and in the earliest vernacular hunting manuals. Still, these treatises are aware that people pursue the art for the pleasure it brings. Frederick distinguishes varying motives for falconry, ranging from baser instincts like gluttony and avarice and "the joy of the eye (causa delectamenti visus sui)" to the nobler purpose of "having the best birds of prey," from which come both "surpassing fame and honor" and the great delight ("magnum delectamentum") of having excellent birds. (Frederick's disapproval of the joy of the eve as a motive makes an interesting contrast to the great hunting treatises a century later, which, in debates on the relative merits of hunting and hawking, include appeals to the senses as a positive value.) The earliest French vernacular treatise on hunting, La chace dou cerf, though almost entirely concerned with such technical matters as tracking and brittening the deer, begins with a list of other secular activities: some people like to compose verses ("rimer"), either for honor or money; others take interest in love or in tournaments. An honest spirit takes pleasure in many things ("En plusors choses se deduit / Loious cuers"), and one such "deduit," of course, is hunting.⁴⁹ "Deduit" has a wide variety of meanings in French: pleasure, often sexual pleasure; amusement; sport; and sometimes, as we will see, it is used as a synonym for hunting. Though not etymologically related, it seems to have much the same semantic range as delectatio, and I think we are justified in

⁴⁸The best short treatment of the sport and its manuals is Marcelle Thiébaux, "The Mediaeval Chase," *Speculum*, 42 (1967), 260–74; see also her *Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), which is principally about literary uses of the hunt. Two early works have valuable bibliographic material on medieval and Renaissance hunting treatises: Edward, Second Duke of York, *The Master of Game*, ed. William A. and F. Baillie-Grohman (London: Ballantyne, Hanson, 1904), pp. 213–72; and *The Art of Hunting or, Three Hunting MSS*, ed. Alice Dryden (Northampton: William Mark, 1908), pp. 141–57. The 1904 edition of the *Master of Game* was limited to 600 copies, and its extensive supplementary material was omitted in the more easily available 1909 edition that I cite later.

⁴⁹Text and translation of Frederick II in Haskins, p. 113. *La chace dou cerf*, ed. Gunnar Tilander, Cynegetica 7 (Stockholm, 1960), p. 16. For other "purely instructive" manuals see Thiébaux, *Stag of Love*, p. 26.

imputing to defenses of hunting on grounds of "delectamentum" or "deduit" some kind of understanding of the recreational rationale that justifies the temporary attainment of *quies* through delight.

When we move to the middle of the fourteenth century, hunting manuals claim to offer not only technical but moral instruction. They come equipped with a host of narrative and allegorical trappings. Leading the way is Les livres du roy Modus et de la royne Ratio, by Henri de Ferrières. I will discuss this intriguing text in more detail in Chapter 5, for it is most fully related to my concerns there. Here we can at least note that the first part of Modus et Ratio is a treatise on hunting, that King Modus is in charge of giving the rules for hunting as he is of all other "gieux" and "esbatemens," that he promulgates his Livre des deduis ("deduis" here means hunting) in order that people not be idle, and that his very proper sport is distinguished from vicious ones, such as dice playing. In short, we have in narrative form a panoply of recreational ideas to justify hunting: the need for properly controlled play, the distinction between good and bad entertainment, the justification of recreational activity as combating idleness. In addition, Queen Ratio's moralizations of the animals of the hunt introduce a good deal of religious and ethical instruction.50

The combination of secular pleasure and moral earnestness in *Modus et Ratio* sets the pattern for two other important treatises. Gace de la Buigne began his *Roman des deduis* in 1359 while in captivity in England with the King of France, Jean le Bon, whom he served as chaplain. He addressed it to the King's fourth son, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, who had also been captured at the Battle of Poitiers, so that he "might learn of these delights [of hunting] in order to avoid the sin of idleness and to be better instructed in manners and in virtues." Certainly anyone who makes his way through all of Gace's twelve thousand lines of verse could not be accused of

⁵⁰For the text, see below, Chap. 5, n. 29. Though his work is based on outdated scholarship, there is a sympathetic summary of the contents of the first part of *Modus et Ratio* in D. H. Madden, *A Chapter of Mediaeval History: The Fathers of the Literature of Field Sport and Horses* (1924; rpt. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1969), pp. 49–81.

⁵¹Le roman des deduis, ed Ake Blomqvist, Studia Romanica Holmiensia 3 (Karlshamn, 1951), p. 93. Hereafter I will cite page numbers of this edition.

idleness, and the poem's mixture of hunting advice and ethical instruction justifies the double claim that Philip will learn both the art itself and the principles of good behavior. To accomplish this dual purpose, Gace uses the seven deadly sins as a framework, showing how a good sportsman must avoid them. For example, a "debauched glutton" could not be a good falconer because he might hurt the bird while carousing (p. 152). Gace provides a battle of vices and virtues, and with the victory of the latter comes an after-dinner debate (inspired by the shorter debate in *Modus et Ratio*) between Deduit de Chiens and Deduit de Oyseaulx, whose supporters argue at great length the relative merits of hunting and hawking. Both sides want the title of "Deduit" alone, which would prove superiority, but the King who judges the debate decrees that each must keep his surname.

It is not a great work of literature, but it has some felicities. In spite of the heavy moralizing, there is a vein of humor throughout, especially in the debate, which pokes a certain amount of fun at the spokesmen, Amour de Chiens and Amour de Oyseaulx, for their longwindedness and overenthusiasm. At the end both Raison and Verité note the dangers of excessive fondness for such deduis. Gace seems to be both serious about the moral dimensions of his favorite sport and aware of the fact that it is, after all, just a recreation. At one point he alludes to Cato's distich (p. 116), and at another, in a charming passage spoken by Amour de Oyseaulx, he defends his own proclivities for falconry, arguing that he is inclined that way by nature and citing Aristotle in regard to the influence of lineage on one's personality (p. 288). Gace gives us further autobiography. He had a falcon as a child. Later, after becoming a priest, he would go out hawking once or twice a week with an expert falconer, but, he hastens to add, only after mass was said and his religious duties fulfilled (p. 289). Even as chaplain to three French kings he continued to enjoy hawking:

> ... for he went, if you would know the truth, in order to take recreation, which is permitted to a priest, for neither in canon law nor in the Bible can one find a prohibition against having recreation, nor does canon law consider it foolish

when there is a need for it. However, if he did it too often, then the law would bring him down.⁵²

The self-consciousness points to an awareness of criticism, or potential criticism, though the appeal to recreation is surely not entirely defensive. Like his contemporary Guillaume de Machaut, one of whose works we will consider in Chapter-5, Gace de la Buigne is a man of religious vocation who is at home with secular culture and values. Yet perhaps not completely at home. The very need to graft moral instruction onto a hunting treatise, the retreat, when pressed, to a stock defense of hunting as permissible recreation, certainly distinguish Gace's brand of secularism from later, more thoroughly naturalistic, ones. The recreational argument seems to be almost a kind of refuge, a convenient solution to his own somewhat ambivalent feelings about his passion for hawking.

We have already seen theoretical and literary understanding that the recreational argument is not absolute, that its appropriateness depends on motives and circumstances. The issue of clergy and hunting in the fourteenth century, which the *Roman des deduis* raises, supplies a historical example of the moral questions surrounding one type of recreation as practiced by one particular group. Father Beichner, in an article that takes a more charitable view of Chaucer's Monk, who "lovede venerye," than most critics do, has supplied evidence of various contemporary clerical hunters.⁵³ The attitude toward them, or theirs toward the hunt, seems to be at best ambiguous. John

52"Car il aloit, sachiés de voir, / Pour recreacion avoir, / Laquel chose a prestre est lisible, / Car n'est trouvé n'en droit n'en Bible / Qu'il y ait prohibicion / Pour avoir recreacion, / Ne que droit tiengne a niceté / Quant il en est necessité, / Maiz, se trop souvent y aloit, / Adonques droit le reprendroit." Pp. 289–90. Gace puns on reprendre, which has both a general meaning (to seize, reprove, censure) and a technical one in hawking (to make one's birds return; see p. 630). He goes on to mention the relevant text in canon law, of which Blomqvist prints excerpts in his notes. For further texts and background on the Church's attitude toward clerics hunting, see Rudolph Willard, "Chaucer's text that seith that hunters ben nat holy men," Texas University Studies in English, 26 (1947), 209–51. H. Gourdon de Genouillac, L'église et la chasse (Paris, 1886), has some interesting information on the Middle Ages but unfortunately very little documentation. See also G. G. Coulton, Medieval Village, Manor, and Monastery (1925; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 508–12.

⁵³Paul E. Beichner, C.S.C., "Daun Piers, Monk and Business Administrator,"

Speculum, 34 (1959), 611-19. The texts I cite are on 617-18.

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Peckham says that the canons of St. Augustine's at Coxford should have liberty to hunt, but not on foot and only when the prior is "indulging in such at the time." Why did he choose "indulgere" rather than "ludere" or "recreare"? The famous hunting abbot William de Cloune, according to the chronicler Henry Knighton, said privately that he did not delight in the "frivolous hunting" he participated in with the nobility for the sake of their favor. The abbot of St. Albans, says another chronicle, maintained hunters and hawkers for the enjoyment of his friends but personally execrated all forms of play. Hunting may have recreational justification, and yet these respected prelates, unlike Gace, do not advance it. In the case of Chaucer's Monk, to move from history to satire, the lines clearly rule out a defense on the basis of permissible play: "Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare / Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare" (CT A 191-92, my italics). Recreation has become an end rather than a means, the temporary delectatio of hunting (here charged with sexual innuendo as well) a substitute for the permanent quies to be found elsewhere.54

But outside the ecclesiastical context the attitude toward the chase was not so ambiguous, though there was some criticism, and the celebration of hunting reached a kind of apotheosis in 1378 when Gaston Phoebus, Count of Foix, began his *Livre de chasse*. Though it draws heavily on *Modus et Ratio* and slightly on the *Roman des deduis*, according to Thiébaux, the book is in one sense a return to the more technical treatises, for it abandons narrative allegory in favor of direct instruction in the art of hunting, aided by some marvellous illuminations. But Gaston's preface makes as much of hunting in a few pages as Henri de Ferrières or Gace de la Buigne did in hundreds. He argues the value of hunting on the following grounds:

... hunting causeth a man to eschew the seven deadly sins. Secondly men are better when riding, more just and more understanding, and more alert and more at ease and more

⁵⁴Cf. the related argument of David E. Berndt, "Monastic Acedia and Chaucer's Characterization of Daun Piers," SP, 68 (1971), 435–50. See also the case described in a letter by Peter of Blois, trans. Willard, 247–49, where, in spite of the general harrangue against hunting, the addressee's sin is not that he hunts but that he hunts excessively, especially considering his advanced age.

undertaking, and better knowing of all countries and all passages; in short and long all good customs and manners cometh thereof and the health of man and of his soul. For he that fleeth the seven deadly sins as we believe, he shall be saved, therefore a good hunter shall be saved, and in this world have joy enough and of gladness and of solace, so that he keep himself from two things. One is that he leave not the knowledge nor the service of God, from whom all good cometh, for his hunting. The second is that he lose not the service of his master for his hunting, nor his own duties which might profit him most.⁵⁵

Both sacred and secular systems are invoked here to establish the moral worth of hunting. Though Gaston does not use the term "recreation," it is clear that he is thinking within the context of a properly ordered hierarchy of activities when he subordinates the sport to proper obedience to earthly and heavenly lords and to one's serious occupations.

The rest of the preface justifies Gaston's initial assertions. A hunter flees the seven deadly sins by not being idle and thereby avoiding the "evil imaginations" that come with inactivity and prompt the other sins (p. 5). Gaston depicts the daily routine of the hunter, rising early, staying busy, going to sleep promptly because of his weariness. "Wherefore I say that such an hunter is not idle, he can have no evil thoughts, nor can he do evil works, wherefore he must go into paradise" (p. 8). The chain of thought is more explicit in the French, and the conclusion more striking: "Since a hunter is not idle he cannot have evil imaginings, and if he does not have evil imaginings, he cannot do evil things, for imagination comes first. And if he does not do evil things, he must go straightaway to heaven (puisque veneur n'est ocieux il ne puelt avoir males ymaginacions et s'il n'a males ymaginacions, il ne puelt fere males euvres; quar l'ymaginacion va devant; et s'il ne fet males euvres, il fault qu'il s'en aille tout droit en paradis)" (p. 5).

⁵⁵Quoted from the translation by Edward, Second Duke of York, *The Master of Game*, ed. William A. and F. Baillie-Grohman (London: Chatto & Windus, 1909), pp. 4–5. Edward's translation dates from 1406–13. It is modernized in this edition; the Middle English is available in the 1904 text (see n. 48). For the original I have used *La chasse de Gaston Phoebus Comte de Foix*, ed. Joseph Lavallée (Paris, 1854). Subsequent citations will be from these editions.

Apparently Edward, for all his love of the sport, when he came to Gaston's "tout droit," could not quite accept the proposition that a good hunter would never even have to put in any purgatorial time.

Next Gaston turns to the assertion that hunters live "more joyfully" in this world than do other people. He paints a deservedly famous picture of the natural pleasures of a beautiful morning and the delights of the hunt, repeating several times that these things bring "great joy" and "great pleasure" to the hunter (pp. 8-11). Finally, he argues out his assertion of hunters' good health, noting that they eat less and get more exercise than others, thereby living longer. The fusion of secular and sacred values emerges once again: "men desire in this world to live long and in health and in joy, and after death in the health of the soul. And hunters have all these things" (p. 12). It is no incongruity that in Bibliothèque Nationale MS f. fr. 616, the Livre de chasse is followed by Gaston's prayers in Latin and French. For he seems to have believed that it is possible to have the best of both worlds; and the best of this one is a recreation elevated into a way of life.

Huizinga has argued that the coexistence of worldiness and devoutness in Gaston and in other late medieval French aristocrats depends on "the absolute dualism of the two conceptions. "56 Gaston's own logic seems to be more gradualistic than dualistic. The secular delights of hunting are, at least in theory, subordinate to more serious matters, as recreational morality would dictate. Yet one senses, in Gaston and in the other fourteenth-century treatises, that the idea of legitimate recreation is being asked to encompass more than Aristotle or Aguinas ever meant it to. Their efforts to explain that hunting is not just a pastime but a valuable pursuit in itself have something of the earnestness and defensiveness of the pronouncements of college football coaches on how their sport makes athletes into good citizens. There is a point at which an activity ostensibly recreational becomes so significant culturally, emerges as an embodiment of so many social preoccupations, that simply to call it "play" no longer suffices. In the fourteenth

⁵⁶The Waning of the Middle Ages, trans. F. Hopman (1924; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), p. 181.

century, in certain circles, that seems to have happened to hunting. It becomes a locus of important secular values and as such transcends its status as a mere pastime. In Chapter 5 we will see some of those values discussed and affirmed in works that use orderly recreation as an image of social stability in the face of plague. Here we may briefly note another, the emphasis on hunting as opposed to idleness (and thus to lecherous and other wicked thoughts), a dominant theme in the treatises and one that, as Thiébaux has pointed out, is evoked with such urbanity in the third part of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. 57 It is one thing to argue, as the Castle of Perseverance does, that play has a part in solicitudo; it is quite another to intimate that a sporting activity by itself constitutes all the daily busy-ness man needs to save his soul. It is not hard to see how a leisured class might well develop such an argument as a justification for its favorite sport.

Yet the principle of recreation still remains, in King Modus's rulership over games and entertainment and in Gace's defense of his hawking. It offers a means of handling the secular assertiveness implicit in the treatises by conceptualizing it in a way that traditional, especially ecclesiastical, thinking can accept. In later centuries the delights of sport, and the delights of literature, will be talked about as pleasures valid in and of themselves; in the hunting manuals of Henri de Ferrières, Gace de la Buigne, and Gaston Phoebus, we sense a bourgeoning secularity that approaches such a point of view but never lets go of the theory that contains earthly delight within the limits of allotted recreation. This is a phenomenon that has its most obvious literary parallel in the *Decameron*, a work that seems to offer a naturalistic ethic in some of its tales and in Boccaccio's fourth day defense but which encases the tales in a framework based on traditional recreational and therapeutic ideas. We will consider the Decameron at some length later. It is time now, having examined the idea of recreation in the later Middle Ages as it derives from Aristotelian ethics, to look at some less complicated evidence of its use in literary thought.

⁵⁷Thiébaux, Stag of Love, pp. 76-81.