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Publisher: Routledge

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## Leisure/Loisir

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rloi20>

## Leisure (4th ed.), by John R. (Jack) Kelly

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Published online: 06 Jun 2013.

To cite this article: Gervais Deschênes Ph.D. (2013): Leisure (4th ed.), by John R. (Jack) Kelly, Leisure/Loisir, DOI:10.1080/14927713.2013.801153

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14927713.2013.801153>

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Leisure** (4th ed.), by John R. (Jack) Kelly, Urbana, IL, Sagamore, 2012, 523 pp., CAN\$65.00/£42.00, ISBN 978-1-57167-640-5

What do people find in their leisure? Self-expression, companionship, integration of mind and body or wholeness, physical health, a needed contrast or rhythm in the work-constrained schedule, rest and relaxation, a chance to try something new and to meet new people, to build relationships, to consolidate the family, to get in touch with nature, to test oneself in risk or competition, to meet the expectations of people who are important to them and to just feel good without analysing why. All these are among the benefits people find in their leisure. (Kelly, 2012, p. 13)

The fourth edition of this well-known text, with revised chapters, is a powerful masterpiece of academic writing. Kelly, an emeritus professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the USA, with the same reputation as famous leisure specialists such as Veblen, Pieper, deGrazia, Kaplan, Dumazedier, Parker, Robert, Kraus, Stebbins, Pronovost, Godbey and so forth, creates a solid theoretical framework for leisure studies. This famous author has written 11 books, 50 chapters, 8 encyclopedia articles, 11 technical reports for federal agencies and corporations and over 60 research articles. He has an interesting formative university background of three Master's degrees (Yale University in theology, 1954; South Carolina University in ethical theology, 1965 and Oregon University in sociology, 1971) and finally a doctoral degree (Oregon in sociology, 1972). The intent of his recent book is to:

raise important issues rather than to close them. Science, after all, is a process of learning and communication, not a book of facts. In the end, this book is an invitation to join in that process of learning as well as to engage in the full potential of leisure and of life. (p. v)

A little further, the author reveals that “[t]he primary aim of this book is to bring the reader into an engagement with both the known and the unknown about the human phenomenon we call leisure” (Kelly, 2012, p. vii). The new features of this edition revolve around the main themes: discussion topics within the text rather than at the end of each chapter; gender throughout the corpus of text; leisure diversity in an inclusive multicultural society; leisure as political and conflicted space; leisure in the marketplace and globalization; history and contemporary issues in current leisure practices; sexuality in society; aging and the life course; multiple media and popular culture; and the nature of leisure.

The content of this work is divided into four sections: Section I – Contemporary Leisure: People and Resources (Chapter 1: The World of Leisure, Chapter 2: Leisure, Recreation, and Play, Chapter 3: Sources of Leisure Styles, Chapter 4: Leisure and the Life Course, Chapter 5: Leisure in a Diverse Society, Chapter 6: Politics and Policy, Chapter 7: Work, Leisure, and Time); Section II – Leisure: Past and Future (Chapter 8: The Ancient Heritage, Chapter 9: Leisure Ideals and Work Ethics, Chapter 10: Industrial America and the City, Chapter 11: From Community to Consumption, Chapter 12: Leisure and the Future); Section III – Forms of Leisure and Recreation (Chapter 13: Sport and

Exercise, Chapter 14: Outdoor Recreation, Chapter 15: Leisure and the Arts, Chapter 16: Popular Culture and Mass Media, Chapter 17: Travel and Tourism); and Section IV – Leisure Contexts and Resources (Chapter 18: Public Recreation: An Introduction, Chapter 19: Leisure and Education, Chapter 20: Recreation Business: The Market Sector, Chapter 21: Leisure Specialization and Subcultures, Chapter 22: Gender, Sexuality, and Leisure, Chapter 23: Leisure for Everyone, Chapter 24: Theories of Leisure: Contexts and Creation). Each chapter includes issues and discussion questions, highlights and a bibliography at the end. The text is highlighted by key points that aid synthesis, exposition of ideas and learning and teaching.

It is difficult in a short book review to touch on all the subjects explored by Kelly's thoughts and the human legacy given to all of the people who have had the opportunity to meet and be taught by him. Kelly is quite aware of the many facets of the discipline of leisure. In fact, this crucial book offers a full spectrum of this human practice in presenting all sorts of knowledge from general perspectives and principles to specific details. For instance, Kelly handles finely historiography and the relationship with leisure by elucidating the beating heart of North America during the periods of Puritanism, the Old West age, the "Gold Rush", the Civil War, the Great Depression and the World Wars of the last century. The leisure–wildlife relationship of the countryside of the United States is very well explored and introduced to the readership. Kelly explains beautifully as well the formation and importance of the Recreation and Youth movement (e.g. the Boy and Girl Scouts, the YMCA and YWCA, 4-H). He covers adequately the twentieth century with the impact of transforming technologies and their avatars on leisure (e.g. car expansion, electricity, television, telephones and computers).

The main strength of this book is the chapter "Leisure and the Future", where he starts from a pessimistic viewpoint and afterwards sketches out a more optimistic view of a world of leisure in the near future, in spite of the economic difficulties of many countries. As Kelly mentions, it seems that counterculture/subculture movements have become marginal in both influence and numbers even if we notice from time to time some resurgence of protestation against the economic establishment which refuses firmly to understand their claims for a better world. Kelly states that:

[. . .] the hints are of a gradual shift in conventional values toward a greater commitment to leisure. Leisure in the sense of autotelic or self-justifying experience may take a larger and more central place in the values and commitments of post-industrial Americans and West Europeans. If this is true, then leisure may be one factor causing social change rather simply being shaped by other factors. (p. 242)

Currently, the demand is there in front of us and requires among citizens a proper dialogue for a better distribution of wealth throughout generations here and now.

The style of this book is freely written, using the latest trends and statistical data, and this information is often overemployed. As a consequence, it is sometime difficult to find the main argument in a chapter. Throughout each chapter, the writing is sometimes unequal and sometimes repetitive. For instance, the expression, "on the other hand," is over exploited and leaves the reader uncertain. Another irritant, and not the least, is the reference throughout this work about the connection between *leisure* and *sexuality*. In some ways, Kelly proceeds in an obsessive and stereotypical manner in linking together these two contested concepts. As he points out:

Sexual identity is more than just glandular urges toward activity and explicitly sexual activity such as intercourse, masturbation, and other kinds of physical stimulation [. . .] Then there are all the questions about what kind of man or woman? How do we define ourselves and carry

out gender identities in different social contexts? Identification as straight, lesbian, bisexual, or gay is only the beginning in our lifelong development and expression of our sexuality. (p. 457)

While it might be truthful and well-received at this present time to be open-minded about making links between leisure and sexuality, unfortunately, it is a sensitive representation of thinking in front of an afflicted reality which produces an over-amplification of sexual identities. Increasing patterns of fetishism destroy the self-identification of humanity and depersonalize, therefore, the real oneness of individuals. Without being sanctimonious, leisure contexts are far away from fetishism sexual practises, and rather, are questing to be more or less sexual in monogamous behaviour patterns. So, to find the profound meaning of leisure, the Re-creation model is somehow recommended here for the benefit of humanity which affirms heterosexuality.

There are some profound changes that Kelly makes in the chapter “Theories of Leisure: Contexts and Creation” in relation to his earlier work *Freedom to Be: A New Sociology of Leisure* (1987). Kelly interchanges some parameters of his dialectical model such as “false consciousness”, which should be installed in the *Humanist Theory* instead of the *Political Theory* with its new title that Kelly uses: *Conflict Theory*. Consistent with the earlier book (Kelly, 1987), the sacred dimension is obviously limited in this present work as many sociologists, philosophers and theologians such as Hegel, Nietzsche, Durkheim, Weil, Bonhoeffer, Heidegger, Camus, Rahner and Habermas, to name a few, are forgotten in the bibliography of this work. Indeed, these authors were equally included from Kelly’s phenomenal framework in 1987 and were in some way the cornerstone of his theoretical discussion and vision of life. It is really sad that Kelly has not introduced a chapter about the diverse “religious” and “spiritual” patterns of leisure. Actually, there are many folks who are presently writing about this theme (e.g., Heintzmann, Van Andel, & Visker, 1994/2006) and need the acknowledgment of other specialists from time to time. As a matter of fact, a special edition on spirituality was published in this journal in 2009. Further, as far as it goes, two other theoretical metaphors have been created from Kelly’s model (Deschênes, 2002).

Nevertheless, the present *Humanist Theory* created by Kelly’s thoughts addresses constantly the question of leisure: *How do we become genuinely human in a crisis world?* In that sense, leisure is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon with a specific definition of leisure “as activity chosen in relative freedom for its qualities of satisfaction” (Kelly, 2012, p. 3). In the same vein, Kelly made an attempt to define the concept of recreation and play in relation to leisure as time, activity, experience, action, existential and meaning. At first, “recreation is defined as voluntary non-work activity that is organized for the attainment of personal and social benefits including restoration and social cohesion” (Kelly, 2012, p. 29) whereas “[l]ike leisure, play may be seen as the quality of action. Action is play when it is open, when the action creates its own world” (Kelly, 2012, p. 32). The common denominator of these three concepts should be considered as a modality of existence through actions and meanings from the imaginary world into the real world. To some extent, leisure “is a mental and spiritual attitude [ . . . ] it is, in the first place, an attitude of mind, a condition of the soul. . .” (Pieper, 1952/1963, p. 40). This modality of existence should be viewed as coming and going between the contexts of non-activity of inward calm and action. It is a way of being authentic and human in a world searching for true meanings and directions.

This book is definitely a tremendous work about the reality of the experience of leisure. Kelly is at his best and retransmits for generations his foresightedness about this field of practice. His faithful method is relevant for those at being in leisure and becoming day by day more human. Professionals and academics of leisure shall find suitable and broad

inquiries to improve their social services and the management of leisure for people in the community. Needless to say, it is hoped that Kelly comes back with another book/chapter regarding the connection between leisure and spirituality.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Karl Spracklen for providing editorial support for this book review.

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© 2013, Gervais Deschênes  
DOI: 10.1080/14927713.2013.801153*