Chasing the Grail: Kids in a Culture of Electronic Leisure*

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On the one hand, parents often complain that teenagers have never had it so good. In parents' eyes, the world of middle-class kids looks a lot like an old-fashioned carnival or amusement park, an endless midway of "fun," full of games, goodies, rides, and sideshows. Or, better yet, for kids today life is more like a circus with twenty-four wild and shiny rings. Obviously, amusements and attractions have not only multiplied but individually are flashier than ever. What strikes most everyone about the youth culture, beyond sheer quantity and variety, is its texture of glitter, high excitement, and perpetual diversion. Occasionally school and work intrude but not for long or very seriously. As usual, kids "hang out" a lot. That is something they have always done and always will. Now, however, they seem to devote more of that "hang-out" time to entertainment, especially electronic, regardless of form or setting. Indeed, some critics argue that the hallmark of teen culture, no matter what brand or style of it, is an addictive devotion to electronic media. Teens swim in a sea, mesmerized by the ever-changing spectacle of strange and colorful shapes and sounds. Enrapt, they readily forget about the dangers of drowning. Their delight might prove their destruction.

It is an easy case to make. Statistics on media use, viewing and listening, indicate its pervasive allure. While kids watch less network television when they become teens, much of that viewing is replaced by cable programming, especially MTV and movie channels. Tens of millions of teens watch MTV for over an hour every day. The average teen watches about two movies a week, and those usually at home via cable or rental cassettes. In effect, anyone's rec room can become, at the flick of a thumb, a diverse and often extreme dramatic world full of heroes and hookers, singers and monsters. At home and away, car radios and portable boom boxes and cassette and compact disk players make rock and roll a constant, ubiquitous anthem to every facet of ordinary life -- an emotional backdrop for the slow unwieldy process of growing up. In addition to listening to the radio, they purchase over hundreds of millions of dollars of recorded music every year. In cities small and large, the largest communal gatherings are expensive hi-tech rock concerts that mimic the gods' own thunder and lightning. If anything, there seems to be a surfeit of amusement, more than anyone can take in -- circus overload, we might call it -- and it never

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ends (unlike those annual itinerant carnivals or seasonal parks that move on or close down). Images, and sounds, all telling some sort of story, are constant and everywhere. All oriented primarily toward kids, rock radio and tours, dance clubs, MTV, cable movies, and movie emporiums (housing as many as twenty theaters) now form the flashy hurdy-gurdy bedrock of the cultural landscape for youth. With all of this, they should be happy and pleased as punch. Kids never had so much so good.

Other statistics, the hourly data of America's social wreckage, tell quite a different story. For all their leisure, and unprecedented kinds and amounts of amusement, our youth suffer a host of plagues: boredom, fatigue, addiction, ennui, narcissism, anomie, abuse, and suicide. What to older people looks like heaven feels, for them, more like hell. For large numbers of youth, and adults as well -- including not only the poor and disenfranchised but the well-to-do and powerful -- the utopian life has turned dystopian. Both reactionaries and revolutionaries have pointed out that the more time, wealth, and amusement teens have, the worse off they seem to get: alcohol, drugs, violence, gangs, divorce, greed, ostentation, pornography, disease, teen suicide, and classism. The hard truth of this sorrowful predicament, contradictory and puzzling as it is, slowly seeps into public awareness. Stranger yet, in today's media-dependent world, public knowledge of these sad tidings comes mostly by the very means that abetted their rise. TV and film often revamp old maladies and social problems by means of glamor and sensation. For some, culprit TV eagerly, even proudly brings news of the mischief and tragedy to which it has significantly contributed. Even with the best of intentions, TV news often goes beyond reportage to pander personal and social destruction.

The media may indeed bear some responsibility for fostering assorted social calamities -- be it abortion, abuse, or teen suicide -- but many would argue that a more fundamental cultural ailment underlies North American teen dis-ease, and that is a surfeit of leisure. More and more teenagers seem to have more and more time for leisure and enjoyment. As never before, and scarcely even imaginable in the past, kids today not only have more leisure but have it in abundance. If they chose to work, it is usually only to procure the economic means to enhance free time -- cars, clothes, stereos, food -- all to make the good times even better. Even impoverished youth frequently acquire all the accoutrements of media culture, sometimes before meeting their basic physical needs. Such a predicament foments the perennial worries of old fogies who fear that, as the old adage puts it, "idle hands are the devil's playground." "Spare time" and boredom breed trouble, or so the media tell us, in what has become a major myth about youth. From West Side Story to Grease, from The Wild One to Animal House and Risky Business, whether in the ghetto or suburbs, bored teens invariably create havoc. Hormones and "spare" time do not mix, except for the profit of the entertainment industry.

While that view has great appeal and some historical cogency, it greatly
simplifies a condition that afflicts not just youth but the whole of American culture. The challenge of leisure, so much for so many, is comparatively new and looms very large. Hardly anyone who reflects on it can miss its significance. What plagues kids also hounds adults, and it is part and parcel of a broad and complex cultural upheaval, whose outcome we still await. The lifestyle of kids is in fact only the most conspicuous outcropping of a deep trans-generational confusion about the uses and purposes of time, whether in work or play. After all, the current circumstance has no precedent: never have so many partook of so much, either temporally or materially. What to do with this new "extra," this new cultural bounty, confounds most everyone; social data of abuse and excess suggest one index to a broad cultural perplexity. The problem of leisure forms a major element of modern cultural confusion: what to do with ourselves when we have the time. And consigned as youth are to a special protracted limbo between infancy and maturity, they in particular seem to suffer the general adult quests for identity, intimacy, and meaning.

Western culture as a whole has not fared well amid this new historical dispensation. Rather than broad social contentment -- a fair of delight and mutuality, to recall the opening metaphor -- difficult cultural paradoxes haunt virtually every social group and institution. Present patterns of leisure suggest that while expectation, variety, and pleasure abound, satisfaction lags far behind. The great leisure circus, appetizing and abundant, promises more and greater pleasure but seemingly delivers less and less delight and contentment to its dazed clientele. Greater quantity and hype promise more, deliver less, and in the wake of disappointment, fuel still more desperate searches. Wordsworth's charge that industrial affluence bred lives of "quiet desperation," a charge made two centuries ago, seems painfully apt.

This essay will first explore the background of modern leisure and how its pursuit and promises, amid disorienting cultural flux, have become salvific for legions of devotees. The public en masse, and especially its children, now turn to electronic entertainment, the chief promulgator of the "good life," for more and more purposes and satisfactions, many of which were once served by other myths, customs, and institutions of Western culture. This recourse appeals especially to youth because they acutely feel the lack of a cohesive tradition in a mobile and pluralistic world. To be sure, humankind has always sought leisure, enjoyment, and entertainment, but numerous circumstances of the modern world, as always a mix of socio-economic and cultural, have considerably whetted the appetite for the compelling and, ultimately, chimerical ideal of intense sensate life that is shaped, promoted, and mined by the entertainment industry. That industry, especially in the case of MTV and the movies, now flaunts an extraordinary hold upon the expectations and imagination of both popular and elite audiences. Finally, the essay will survey the bewildering landscape of roles, both traditional and innovative, of popular art and, in conclusion, suggest a benchmark for the task of evaluating popular art's
capacity for cultural nurture.

The Newness of Leisure

What moderns mean by leisure is, as the term modern connotes, something new. Its most distinctive mark is simply the amount of "free time" enjoyed by so many for so long. There is, however, more to leisure than the length of the work day or week or the amount of "self time." Of equal importance is the certainty, regularity, and security of our leisure. Most employed Americans can confidently plan and anticipate the use of non-work time and expect to enjoy it for years of comfort and health in a long life. All and all, this expectation in itself constitutes a major historical change. For everyone from teenie-boppers to "golden oldies," expectations about what life is and might yield have dramatically shifted. That is seen well enough in the variety, elaborateness, and expense of the leisure revolution -- entertainment, travel, collecting, fitness, fashion, ad infinitum. Their habits and mindset diverge starkly from history's norm, of which they know little.

A notable consequence of pervasive leisure is that most moderns, teens especially, consider it normative and ordinary, an everyday commonplace -- a "right," in fact -- and cannot imagine an era when the conditions of daily life were even slightly worse. For the commoners of history, whose lives have received little historical attention, the scale of modern leisure surpasses their wildest fantasy. Needless to say, the desire and struggle for ease and freedom -- the dream of leisure -- has always been a central cultural preoccupation. Even the beginnings of Western culture, as seen in Greek drama and biblical narratives, attest to a perennial struggle between enjoyment, toil, suffering, and rest. On such crucial matters have rested for countless epochs the central contours of daily life. In seventeenth-century England, for example, the role, content, and control of leisure activity provoked deep political, religious, and social turmoil. Traditional societies enjoyed leisure, to be sure, in seasonal and religious festivals, but these interludes were intermittent and short-lived. With few exceptions, history's countless, faceless generations have lived lives that have fit the Hobbesian description of "nasty, brutish, and short."

It is difficult to overstate this point, for its neglect in contemporary culture aggravates its own confusions about leisure. Modernity's historical amnesia largely overlooks even the most elementary facts of history--that, for example, the forty hour workweek and sanitary sewers are but a few decades old. The progress toward leisure is new and, comparatively speaking, very dramatic. In the United States only a hundred years ago the conditions of work and living and early death were, by today's standards, horrendous: long hours, grinding labor, overcrowding, stench, filth, malnutrition, disease, poverty, and caprice. In 1793, a yellow fever epidemic killed ten per cent of the population of Philadelphia, and small pox and other contagions regularly ravaged American
So constant were hardship and disease that in the American Civil War twice as many soldiers died from disease and starvation as from battlefield injury.²

The demands of ordinary life and making one's way were hardly less severe. In seventeenth-century America, most unprivileged adolescents were either apprenticed or indentured to other families. At the height of the American industrial revolution in the late nineteenth century, and early in the century in England, the average workweek for working-class urban children, often beginning at age nine or ten, was well over sixty hours. Working conditions were both unhealthy and dangerous. Life on the farms proved little better, with intense seasonal labor and year-round morning and night chores. Child labor laws gradually eased the labor burden for urban youth, as later unionization and improved technology did for adults. Before the industrial revolution provided more leisure, it first extracted vast quantities of time and health from its working-class operatives. Only as recently as 1930 did the workweek finally shrink to the current forty hours. By and large, the conditions of survival were far more arduous and capricious, and life spans were far shorter, averaging only 47 years as late as 1900.

The dramatic change in conditions of work and leisure can be put in still another meaningful way, one that emphasizes the historical oddity of modern life. On many fronts, modern science, technology, and industry have quite literally reversed the effects of the biblical Fall: hardscrabble toil for food, pain in childbirth, and the sway of early death. If these burdens -- curse is not too strong a word -- have historically described the general tragic harshness and brevity of life, then indeed the fortunate West has managed to surpass some of the limit and mortality that has bound civilization from its beginnings. Longevity, ease, anesthesia, health, and abundance have replaced short, bleak lives of drudgery, pain, and poverty.

Indeed, the lifestyle of the average Westerner exceeds the luxury of bygone economic elites who largely escaped the hard daily struggle for survival -- the aristocracies of Jerusalem, Athens, Paris, Boston, and the like to whom historians have given most of their attention. In hindsight, it looks as if those small privileged groups suffered some of the same puzzling, cultural maladies we now face. Modern culture, too, is rife with historical peculiarities, both opportunities and calamities, that only increase in number and strangeness, for never in history have so many for so long enjoyed such steady, abundant leisure. It is clear that contemporary youth have more leisure, and the affluence to enjoy it, than people only a hundred years ago ever dreamed possible, at least in this life.

The Paradox of Leisure; or The Hard Work of Finding Fun

Summarized in this fashion, the development of Western culture sounds
benign, if not idyllic. Still, another set of facts and figures, another angle of vision, make this achievement of well-being seem a decidedly mixed blessing. Technologically-based leisure has exacted its price; it has bestowed but a patina of freedom and that at a high cost. What is true for adults applies still more to kids, the inadvertent bystanders of our historical predicament. As inmates of adolescence, they are confined to a realm of leisure, pleasure, dream, and peers.

In the four decades since the end of World War II, North America's corporate-industrial economy has flourished. At the same time, however, numerous popular books and films have persistently pointed to the costly psychic and ethical toll of pursuing the grail of leisure. From Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955), a best-selling novel about success in corporate America, to the prolonged current of dissent in such films as *The Graduate* (1968), *Network* (1976), *Broadcast News* (1988), and *Wall Street* (1988), one pop art piece after another has posed fundamental questions about the personal cost in obtaining leisure and material reward. Scads of best-selling self-help books have told, on the one hand, how to climb the success ladder, such as Robert Ringer's *Looking Out for Number One* and *Winning Through Intimidation* or Norman Vincent Peale's countless positive-thinking inspirational. On the opposite side, innumerable self-help bestsellers -- ranging from sex manuals to psychologist Leo Buscaglia's guides to feeling and loving -- suggest how to repair the infinite variety of frozen and blighted selves of countless adults and children. Child psychologist David Elkind's best-selling *The Hurried Child* indicted the common middle-class practice of imposing adult standards of competition and performance on young children, who then grow up to be fretful adults. Elkind's impressionistic hunches of the 1970s have now received ample empirical confirmation from social research. While most Westerners enthusiastically endorse capitalism's remarkable benefits, a strong subcurrent wonders about the worth and old-style moral correctness of an economic struggle whose reward is contemporary leisure.

In spite of the lasting suspicion about the goods they've bought, time and possessions, a significant cultural shift does not seem to be in the offing. Unparalleled leisure and affluence seem only to fire the appetite for more. The 1980s seemed the era of greed and "me," the time of the yuppie, enormous stock scandals, and widespread governmental deceit and corruption. Even the bohemian counter-culture heroes of the youth revolution of the 1970s, The Rolling Stones, fully "capitalized" their 1989 North American tour with the generous sponsorship of a brewery. Recent statistics further corroborate the mood of the last decade. Americans seem willing to sacrifice more and more for "goods" and leisure, even time itself. In the fifteen years between 1973 and 1988, the average workweek has expanded from forty-one hours to forty-seven, with many professions, like law and medicine, demanding an eighty hour week. The optimistic forecasts of the 1960s that in twenty years the workweek would
dwindle to be twenty-two hours, or the workyear to twenty-seven weeks, now seem fantastic. With increased work commitments, the average American's leisure time has shrunk by 37 percent. In over half of American marriages, both spouses work, and that burden of family care doubles for the sizeable number of single parents.\textsuperscript{3} With such labors, who has time for play?

These figures in part clarify a central irony of our time: more and greater technology does not notably increase free time. Quite to the contrary, numerous studies have shown that the more technologized a culture becomes the less leisure for its workers.\textsuperscript{4} Both the acquisition and maintenance of the costly exotic gadgets and symbols -- electronics, vehicles, and vacations -- demand ever greater amounts of time and resources, just those commodities that we wish to expand and enhance. As one observer has succinctly put it, "The time commitment our consumption requires snatches away the very leisure we thought we were gaining."\textsuperscript{5} The constancy and rigor of our pursuit threaten to overwhelm the seekers, and on this front kids have learned well from the models of their parents. It is a dubious legacy at best. Relegated to a world of leisure and affluence, the fun-palace of adolescence -- what Fitzgerald calls "purposeless splendor" -- kids consume and float.

To be sure, our techno-industrial economy serves its workers, but on the other hand, those same workers increasingly serve the incessant demands of the planned obsolescence of up-scale consumerism. The labor force works ever harder and longer to obtain those items that will save time, give leisure, and help all enjoy everything more efficiently and intensely -- that is, when time allows. The predicament, then, seems to be this: longer and harder work for the well-off life of ease and idleness, which only recedes as we chase it. The circularity of the predicament recalls F. Scott Fitzgerald's sad benediction in the final sentences of \textit{The Great Gatsby} (1925): "Gatsby believed in...the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but...tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther....So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." If we could but step out of the whirlwind of pursuit, we might find the time to breathe and enjoy it all. With the techno-economic means of the contemporary Eden, a whole culture lives in reciprocal submission.

It is safe to say, then, as numerous social critics have argued, that leisure, and invariably affluent leisure, has become a commercial and popular icon by which modern Western culture now steers its way. The appetite for leisure often embraces irrationality as hordes chase the newest leisure fad -- whether it be tanning parlors, winter trips, snowmobiles, or CD players -- all to enhance and intensify the experience of leisure. Kids do the same in their headlong rush to buy the latest album, see the hot movie, don the trendiest styles, or sample the sweetest beer. Western culture has indeed received a marvel-filled gift, alluring, invigorating, and new in the long history of the race. Oddly, as social data well indicate, youth have inherited and imbibed a mindset and its habits
that offer, at best, mixed satisfactions. Still, for youth as for adults, the shiny commercial promise of new and greater delight continues, and the search finds ever-new impetus.

The Exaltation of Modern Leisure.

The peculiar paradox of modern leisure -- at once greater labor, pursuit, and dissatisfaction, a condition particularly evident among youth -- results in part from the unthinking ahistoricism of contemporary culture: the failure to recognize the benign uniqueness of the modern moment. The habitual parental song of "you never had it so good" or "when I was a kid in the fifties," while perhaps true, does not go far in raising anyone's historical awareness. This mood, in any case, partakes of strong anti-modern, intellectual currents, liberal and conservative alike, that have often romanticized the past for the purpose of demystifying mass culture and modern techno-industrial accomplishment. As one historian of leisure has commented, work has always been work, and people have always perceived it as such; there never was some bygone ideal era when work was so infused with meaning and joy that work was not work. Always there has been a dividing line, save perhaps in animistic societies. That does not mean, however, that the conditions of labor in relation to leisure, community, and self have always been the same. Rather, it is important to see any given setting of work and leisure within a spectrum or continuum of mixtures of content and discontent.

In our own time, the bifurcation between work and leisure has further dichotomized. From early industrialism in the eighteenth century to the present, the demands of "work time" or "punching the clock" have increased work regularity. The relative discretionary freedom of the pre-industrial worker to work or play on a given day no longer remains, save at considerable economic sacrifice and risk. Obligation and routine, the much lamented workplace "rut," dominate. The standardization of work tasks, specialized and repetitive, whether in law firms or assembly lines, has made work less meaningful, with high numbers of American workers feeling unchallenged and unrewarded. The social atmosphere of the work place, driven by profit and flavored with quotas and competition, make many contemporary work settings drab, impersonal, and forbidding. Finally, for most of modern culture, going to work entails greater travel time, distances, cost, and, very often, stress, thus removing work even farther, geographically and psychically, from the remainder of one's non-work world. The combination of these factors -- regularity, standardization, impersonality, competition, and transport -- have demeaned and ever further separated work from locality, community, freedom, and self-worth.

Moreover, standards of affluence -- sanitation, clothing, food, housing, transportation, and entertainment -- have become so high that their subscribers, the ordinary person and consumer, must undertake a high degree of
exacting labor. By and large, given the structure of modern corporate work, employees simply cannot for a time phase out or go on an extended holiday. If they do so, they lose the job and the house, the cars, and the kids’ educations. Those brief annual respites, vacations, have become frenetic, requiring great energy and money for exotic retreats, recreational "get away" vehicles, or intense experiences. Opting out of the economic climb, either by choice or social origin, insures a life within the social welfare "safety net" of poverty, crime, and boredom. Whatever the choice, the alternatives are not inviting, and the circumstance remains much the same.

The effect of this regimented, corporate-industrial "workstyle" has been to increase, if not exalt the value and significance of leisure. Leisure activity, whether watching TV, dining, fishing, or going to art galleries, has more and more had to supply compensations for the deficiencies of work. If work has become constrictive and regimented, less a domain of choice, pleasure, and significance, the result has been for the many, adults and kids alike, to search the harder for the "good times," as a recent beer commercial put it, facets of life that promise clear and "packed" enjoyment and significance, whether physical, social, or aesthetic. It is this appetite and search that the commercial entertainment media, especially advertising, continually fuel and exploit.

The conditions of modern labor, then, have notably increased the economic cost of leisure and exalted its significance as leisure is made to compensate for deficiencies of work. A century and a half of industrial advancement has allowed for more leisure but has not necessarily increased the level of human contentment or ease. Contrary to long-standing expectations, leisure time has apparently become less relaxed and restorative as the demands and labor of the work world have made its expansion and use more necessary and more desperate. We have much pleasure but little satisfaction or contentment. The commercial media, including entertainment, have prospered by marketing to this dis-ease, accentuating its reality, and promising multiple consumer solutions. And of course, beset with natural developmental problems of identity and intimacy, and ample quantities of money, youth have proven to be an especially fertile market for entrepreneurs of discontent.

These tenuous relationships between work, leisure, entertainment, and consumption take place within a larger century-old cultural disorientation (some would say crisis), and that is, the loss of a cogent and cohesive cultural vision, both intellectually and symbolically. In the place of the univocal cultural force of the Judeo-Christian tradition, whatever its deficits and lapses, has emerged a smorgasboard, a broad pluralism of competitive salvific "isms": scientism, secularism, hedonism, consumerism, Jungianism, New Ageism, aestheticism, capitalism, Marxism, ad infinitum, an "ism" for every taste, class, age, and educational background. Amid this philosophical supermarket, much of it brandished by the media, people generally look for a path by which to understand and steer their lives, although this is only rarely undertaken as a
programmatic philosophical venture. Aptly catching this cultural fix was Victorian poet Matthew Arnold's well-known self-description as "wandering between two worlds, one dead and the other powerless to be born." Arnold mourned the loss of a Christian vision of the world, one he could no longer accept, but he sensed the profound and lasting cultural confusion that would follow in its demise. With the old Christian world gone, rendered no longer credible by Darwin, Western culture possessed nothing of commensurate intellectual or imaginative stature or "force," to use Henry Adams' term, to take its place. For better or worse, the lasting cultural glue of the West had lost its hold, throwing its members into disarray and confusion.

Many cultural critics suggest that Arnold's depiction describes a lasting condition of confusion and aimlessness. That legacy afflicts youth in particular, suspended as they are between a lost cultural coherence and today's bewildering multi-headed pluralism. Arnold's hope for a new compelling vision that would yield a new coherence has not been realized, nor does there seem to be much prospect for such. Instead, in America in particular, adults and youth seemingly cast about as in the multi-ringed circus with which we began this chapter -- amused, diverted, and entertained but not satisfied, still looking. Novelist-philosopher Walker Percy has explained that modern consuming self in the darkest of terms as a creature without center or aim. Because of the loss of a transcendent focus and meaningful cultural cohesion, the everyday "self sees its only recourse as an endless round of work, diversion, and consumption of goods and services." The only common ground seems to be a vision of the "good life," a consumerist, sensate ideal allowed by our leisure and affluence and fostered by Madison Avenue, a myth into which children are thoroughly conditioned by endless commercials. Percy believes that we live at a stage of civilization where the self is wholly defined by the empirical realities of the objects, experiences, and entertainments it acquires. To be sure, at least part of what has filled the vacuum of meaning, bondedness, and delight has been electronic entertainment.

What to Do with Leisure; or,
Six Uses of Entertainment, Historic and Contemporary

For contemporary young people, much of what has filled the increase of "time" and affluence has been entertainment, whether TV, music, movies, or, more recently, interactive video games. Academic researchers, journalists of TV and print, and anxious parents have roundly and endlessly argued whether these fillers of time be friend or foe. The points of contention cover everything from the nature of the medium and the morality of program content to appropriate amounts of use. The more theoretical debates about the significance, content, nature, and influence of popular entertainment, especially that designed for teens, does not seem likely to abate any time soon. On a practical
level of what is good and bad in rock music, TV, or the movies, most people agree that all contain too much violence and sex, but there is virtually no agreement on who should say what is too much or how to go about combating the bad. The question of what should supplant these staples never gets asked. In spite of ample concern and volumes of words, there is little clear understanding, let alone consensus on what exactly entertainment is or what it should accomplish. Consequently, it is perhaps useful to review both historic and current understandings of the uses of entertainment.

As much as we investigate or imagine the distant human past, it seems safe to conclude that with the emergence of stable society came entertainment. In other words, entertainment has always been there -- by itself and interwoven with other activities. The history of human cultures suggests that the desire to be entertained constitutes a basic appetite and activity, as central and vital as the need for sleep and food. It is so much a human constant or given that it evades ready definition and hardly bears thinking about. As soon as humans had some leisure or free time, they no doubt tried to amuse or enjoy themselves, and that was entertainment. And amid their work of survival and child-rearing, they no doubt found portions thereof that were enjoyable, and that was entertainment, or at least partly so. So also, in their labor and worship, on feast days and in devotional art, they found enjoyment, pleasure, and satisfaction, and that was entertainment. In legends and sagas, sacred and otherwise, told, sung, and drawn, ancient peoples learned their own histories that depicted their place in the world, but not without enjoying the tale's substance or the skill or artfulness of the narrator. In laying out fields or adorning pots or tents or bags, early humanity found pleasure and satisfaction in design, representation, and color, and that was entertainment. Anthropology and ethnography abound with accounts of the multi-purposes and almost infinite variety of entertainment, from cock-fights to opera-going, in both ancient and modern cultures. Given the current conditions of Western culture, at once regimented and pluralistic, and the natural adolescent desire to enjoy and understand the self and the world, teens seem to be particularly hungry and indiscriminate in their use of great varieties of entertainment.

In some ways, clearly, the world and humanity, teen-agers included, have not changed much. The means and materials of production, delivery, and reception of entertainment have changed radically, but the basic human thirst for meaningful and enjoyable physical and psychological settings, two profoundly intertwined demands, has not diminished or altered. It is more than likely that the convergence of contemporary leisure and the chaos of meaning has only aggravated the human hunger for amusement and meaning. A chief feature of the biblical Eden, the central myth of Western culture, one that forecasts a central historical preoccupation, was the great supply of sensuous plenty and delight: trees were good to look at, their fruit good to eat, and the sun and moon took their galactic places in order to mark festivals in which the
great gift of the created world, life itself and its immense fecundity, might be regularly celebrated. The biblical account's mythic calling to know and delight in the earth and all its creatures betokens and summarizes, then, a realm of meaning and experience after which humankind has ever since been striving. In the delight of sense and mutuality lies meaning, and in the meaning lie mutuality and delight.

The tragic aeons after the Fall have only aggravated the human quest for meaning and delight. And in our current cultural fix, the varied conditions of the modern world -- philosophic, social, economic, and technological -- have very likely, at least for many adolescents, only worsened the ageless, restless quest for understanding, identity, intimacy, and delight. We have the resources for leisure and amazement but lack still personal or collective vision. As Western culture has become more technologically advanced, socially fragmented, and ideologically disoriented, the quest for what entertainment has historically provided -- maps of meaning, delight, and diversion -- has only intensified. Correspondingly, entertainment makers have been more than eager to meet the demand with whatever will sell, however tawdry. In this we find a symbiotic interdependence between audience and industry.

Entertainment, then, flourishes, and it performs still its old functions. Our modern cultural plight has, however, asked the realm of art to assume new authoritative functions, functions that were previously filled by religion or kinship. Some of the new major forms of entertainment, such as violent pornography, suggest a grave imaginative distortion, if not reversal of a biblical paradigm of delight and intimacy. It is useful to reflect on the different functions of art and entertainment.

1. Mythic. One understanding of art looks at popular entertainment as supplying for consumers an imaginative realm or refraction of life that contains clues, hints, signs, and routes for interpreting the tangled welter of experience that life presents. Mythic narratives, whether they be of Odysseus, Abraham Lincoln, or Rambo, tell us much of what the world might be like and how one should behave within it, and the quest for this vital information about life is one in which adolescents are very much engaged. Analysts of culture repeatedly point to these mythic constructions, for they potentially chart the way for an assortment of human pursuits. Full of terrors and ecstacies, guile and innocence, horror and beauty, iniquity and virtue, life itself challenges one and all to survive and prosper. We are, after all, as novelist Thornton Wilder has suggested, "thrown into existence, like dice from a box," and we spend much of our time thereafter trying to understand its obstacles and resolve its riddles. Much of art, then, works to describe the nature of the world and one's place within it, and from these dramatic depictions, in story and image, we learn.

This function of popular art is now heightened insofar as Westerners by and large live without traditional religious certainties and communities, and in such a setting most people confront questions, usually starting in adolescence.
to which there are now a plethora of answers. Our culture now churns forth a multiplicity of attractive solutions and claims, ranging from Christian fundamentalism to New Ageism to rank hedonism. Young people may not quite start from scratch, but the inquiry assumes a lot more urgency and confusion when we live in a philosophical supermarket where appeal depends on packaging and much shelf space is devoted to snack food.

A single binding myth no longer shapes and beckons particular societies or people. The instinctive human appetite to imbibe images and stories that impart some measure of clarity, delight, and hope has, amid our sea of uncertainty, turned voracious, scrambling and hunting ever harder for shards of light and hope. For many people, especially within the leisure and affluence that allows for search, our popular entertainments have become, though unconsciously exalted they may be, forceful practical laboratories for cataloguing and testing life's options.

2. Aesthetic. The question of what in a popular entertainment brings enjoyment to an audience is a harder one to answer. Surely, however, if any one fact can be concluded about popular entertainment, it is that it is enjoyed, especially by teenagers, for better or worse. That sort of assertion carries little weight in highbrow bastions of educational or moral privilege. A partial rejoinder suggests that at least part of the appeal of popular art lies in its constant replay of mythic elements, in however simple or melodramatic terms, and that repetition accounts for some audience satisfaction. Television, pop music, or movies will very likely never be as cerebral and serious -- whatever that means -- or "complex," intricate, and nuanced as high art but that recognition says very little about either the success, worth, or influence of an imaginative venture. The canons of criticism have, in effect, dictated that the only significant or true art -- whether musical, visual, or dramatic -- is that which is susceptible to extensive and complex verbal analysis of form and content, a set of criteria that invests professional specialists with exalted knowledge and authority and, in the case of education, tenure.

Such a bias toward distillable meaning (or in the case of modernism, anti-meaning) or verbal amplitude -- what some would call logocentric interpretation and evaluation -- has prompted great masses of people to regard their taste, intelligence, leisure, and even mores as necessarily inferior simply because they have missed approval by a long-entrenched, self-inflating, and self-protective critical establishment. Furthermore, the high critical stance has virtually forgotten that a prime intention or effect of all art, at least that which is good enough to be called entertainment, is pleasure or enjoyment. The cultural plebians should be reminded that it is quite appropriate to like the simple and unsophisticated -- that which comes in the form of simple tales, legends, myths, parables, melodramas, and fantasies. Moreover, both elite critics and popular audiences should recall that some of the works that now make up the classical galaxy were either once very popular or borrowed
some of their most renowned material from popular forms. In music this applies to Bach, Beethoven, and Copland; in literature, Franklin, Melville, Dickens, and Fitzgerald; in film, Griffith, Eisenstein, and Hitchcock.

With this in mind, then, it is perhaps safe to venture that a chief function of art, by clarifying and intensifying the perception of the "stuff" of life, is simply to heighten one's sense and pleasure of being alive, and that can transpire equally well in simple and complex forms, as well as in tragedy or comedy and realism and fantasy. On the one hand, at perhaps its most minimal level, in the vitality and virtuosity of performance, popular entertainment spurs a sheer relish of the sensuous goodness of life, of the marvellous timber of voice and expression, of the close mimicry of life in acting, and the facsimile and surprise of visual composition. The gift of feeling good about being alive is no small presentation or acceptance.

Now lost notions of the Christian tradition illustrate the gist of this line of thought. Calvinism and some sacramentalist strains of Roman Catholicism have always emphasized the notion of general or common grace, a texture of love and beauty infused into the very fabric of creation and the patterns and rhythms of ordinary daily life. To a great extent, traditional philosophical humanism has simply secularized this age-old Christian strain. In any of these perspectives, given to humanity specifically is the capacity to enjoy and revel in the ordinary beauty and glory of life and nature. The glory persists, and even amid tawdry distortions of primal beauty, vestiges of splendor remain. The modern experience of alienation and horror have rightly sobered our sense of being alive, but the numerous terrors of our century remain horrific violations exactly because they do so diminish how fine life can be. In an early novel by John Updike, the protagonist's minister-father comments upon drunken laughter coming from a bar that "All joy belongs to the Lord."

There is, after all, though the pessimism of modernism would deny it, at least in print, the plain fun of making and viewing the revel of being alive. There can be, in our most unthinking enjoyment, a kind of aesthetic enraptment, the relish of a rock beat, a dance move, camera sweep, or inane joke. There is the plain unwitting delight, too, in seeing life rendered fully, freshly, vigorously, humorously, or triumphantly, even if that is only in a rerun or the retelling of old stories in fresh ways. In unfathomable and untraceable ways, ways that are largely unchartable routes and destinations in the human psyche, seeing and hearing intensify awareness, wonder, and relish, or, when appropriate horror. Life becomes more dear.

3. Excursionary. Insofar as art enraptis its audience in aesthetic enjoyment and participation, it bestows two additional, very important and probably necessary helps to the human circumstance. First, there is the very real necessity to get away, to leave one's immediate concerns, obligations, and worries in order to enter, at least for a short while, another mode of reflection and experience from the one demanded by the ordinary practical necessities of
daily survival. The human psychological mechanism must simply "shut down" at times, do something else, to allow time and rest to think and heal itself. The simple act of being away, of attending to another sort of expression, allows the spirit to recoup and renew for the practical toils of everyday life. That benefit very likely transpires regardless of artistic medium, although its performance has to be of sufficient quality to fetch and sustain attention. These aesthetic short vacations of getting away, of time out, allow for refreshment, enliven the spirit, and can nurture resiliency and creativity for the ordinary tasks of life. Modern poet T. S. Eliot suggested that humankind can only "bear so much reality." Using Eliot as a starting point, this view of popular entertainment would contend that the human spirit seeks simple escape and renewal elsewhere. To some extent, the harried nature of modern life creates a thorough-going stress that makes the psyche demand evenings as a "couch potato." Moreover, historian of science Thomas Kuhn has chronicled how logic alone has proved insufficient in effecting major scientific revolutions. Rather, seminal insights have most often taken place away from the laboratory or blackboard when, in short, doing other things.

A more subtle explanation of the crucial cognitive necessity of "getting away" through popular entertainment comes from anthropologist Clifford Geertz. In a famous essay on the Balinese cockfight, Geertz argues that seemingly incidental entertainments are in fact -- through images, stories, and songs -- metaphorical distillations or condensations, packed tight, relevant but not frighteningly rendered, of the very stuff of life. These inviting metaphors catch up important themes of "death, masculinity, rage, pride, loss, beneficence, chance." Regardless of medium, says Geertz, its purpose is simply to "display," not to dilute or agitate, an emotionally charged portion of experience. They enter another world, an imaginative and fictive one, in order to understand this one. In getting away, then, audiences see and feel played out before them the essential dramas and questions of life, and such "display" clarifies and provides emotional resonance with the world in which audiences find themselves. That is another kind of excursion art provides.

Finally, as an elaboration on what Geertz suggests, and an echo too of the mythic function discussed above, it is worth looking at what many popular entertainments provide. In the simpler forms of narrative -- usually termed fable, romance, or melodrama -- good seemingly always triumphs. With hopeful climaxes, the tales suggest that all things will end well. This optimistic cast in popular art has endured relentless criticism by the elite critics because it is naive, fanciful, and stultifying. For others, of a political bent, not only is it insufficiently realistic by virtue of its happy endings, but the facile hopefulness of good-always-winning-out-in-the-end dulls, diverts, or saps audience reaction to evil. Such art, it is argued, is delusory and propagandistic, serving as the pie-in-the-sky opiate that religion once did before it died away.
On the other hand, these excursions into hope and triumph might ultimately have quite the opposite effect — one of renewing resolution and prompting action. Not all incentives toward good come from desperation; much is fueled by the hope that good and kindness might in the end win out, if only steeled by idealism and determination, which is the usual content of popular dramas in movies and TV. Lastly, such criticism perhaps says much about high culture's naiveté in estimating the naiveté and intelligence of those who imbibe and are heartened by such tales. Tired and harrassed, yes, but most people are not simpletons, fools, or knaves. Most audiences, adult and teen, can readily enough tell the difference between what-is and what-we-wish. We know well that happy-endings are not all that frequent, but still we watch, knowing full well the tragedy of life in general, because melodrama and happy endings give hope that maybe things will, in the end, somehow, turn out alright. Popular entertainment may amount to escape, but in all these forms it is escape with a purpose, either refreshment, perspective, or hope.

4. Cohesion. While the old Christian glue has loosened in Western culture, popular art does still provide various, shared, by virtue of their popularity, images and tales that allow for social connectedness and larger cultural cohesion. Perhaps the most widely shared religious experience in recent decades came in the immense popularity, first, of the continuing Star Wars saga and then, in 1982, the story of E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial. Seemingly everyone understood something about spiritual appeal in the notion of the "force" or something about lostness in ET's plaintive appeal to "phone home." These are perhaps fragmentary and transient linkages, but they do supply referents, much like sports, politics, or soap operas, that together constitute a core or pool of common experience whose meanings are clear, articulable, and forceful.

This dimension of popular art particularly appeals to teens who are, comparatively speaking, new to the world and eagerly, sometimes desperately trying to figure out the riddles of identity and intimacy. They garner images, lyrics, beats, jokes, and stories like sponges and then weave those data into the fabric of their own dreams and relationships. In the barest sense, tastes in music can form the grounds for "something to talk about" or orientations or criteria for social grouping. The stuff of popular culture has become more and more important as most every cultural setting has become ethnically and religiously diverse. The average American family moves every four years, making geographical, social, or cultural ties hard to establish and sustain. Tradition of any sort, what remains of any, exerts relatively little hold on youth. It is little wonder, then, that a national electronic culture has increasingly displaced older means of cultural transmission and allegiance. The fact remains, however, that entertainment now supplies, for better or worse, much of the historical continuity and socio-cultural glue necessary to perpetuate a society. Popular entertainment does provide linkages by which connections can occur.
5. Distraction. We live in an unusual culture, one that simultaneously generates enormous quantities of stress and boredom. The demands and excesses of a highly technological consumerist culture, as described earlier, exact their hard toll on its workers. Assembly-line work full of repetition, monotony, and blandness weary and deflate the spirit. Huge numbers of underpaid, unemployed, and untrained people, usually young, lifelong members in the new underclass, live desperate, futureless lives, overrun by boredom, crime, and drugs. While in a vastly different economic caste, the middle-management and executive people, likely candidates for the leisure class, flag and falter, expending enormous time and energy in the success and status races. And so it goes, on and on. The cultural direction of America, as of many of her economic allies, both Western and Eastern, seems now to have a sort of relentless and irreversible momentum. Leisure, wealth, and the abandon of youth—what looks like the permanent exaltation of the yuppie—summarize more and more American cultural aspirations.

This grim cultural forecast features the odd, seemingly paradoxical blending of both fatigue and satedness. On the one hand, the world of work exhausts, both physically or psychically, whether it be manual, skilled, or managerial labor. On the other hand, the prizes in the great consumeristic free-for-all, on which we increasingly gorge, offer but momentary satisfaction, and at a very dear cost. The effort of acquiring the ever-mounting glut of material blandishments profoundly disorients and confuses the central and deeper psychological and spiritual needs of the self, needs for relatedness, calm, reflection, and meaning. In this context, popular entertainments work very often, and increasingly, to fill the void, dull the ache, or mask the confusion, however one wishes to phrase the malady. Popular forms now function less for diversion and more for mindless distraction, another addictive route that detours the self from contemplating its own confusion and emptiness. The arts become, finally, soporific, a perpetual whirl and chant to induce a trance that serves simply to take the mind off of things, everything.

6. Compaction. Nonetheless, so enamored are we of the consumerist ideal of an abundant Eden, we consciously set forth to glut ourselves on the enticing promised pleasures of goods and entertainment. The lives of work and economic success loom large, breeding a sort of frenzy, and to justify such, there seems to be a corresponding effort to absorb as much entertainment as possible, as much of the good life generally, so as to confirm the essential rightness of the consumerist ethos. In still another way, probably more heartfelt, the enjoyment mania offers compensation for the drudgery or stress of the work that gives the affluence that allows the compensation. Ironically, in either case, the frenzy of the economic scramble spills over to dominate leisure. Consequently, hordes of people in all social classes try to compact more and splashier leisure and objects into shrinking quantities of free time and resources: big-screen high-definition TVs; surround sound quadraphonic
digital Dolbyized high-definition interactive multi-screened vcrs; laser digital audio and video players; wall-sized sound machines (called speakers) and entertainment centers; automobiles with more speaker power than horsepower; and finally, cordless, go-anywhere speakers, headphoned radio-cassette players, compact audio players, and wrist-watch TVs. In the worst extremes, what is heard or seen becomes irrelevant. Style and effect count for more than the content or form, whether in country and western or, for that matter (and far more likely), in opera. For larger and larger audiences, it is the fullness of the reproductive capacity, the force of the illusion, that dominate. The techno-personal quest for the chimera of multiple perfect sounds and perfect pictures for simultaneous perfect moments seduces, drives, and becomes an end in itself.

In such a culture, satedness becomes a logical impossibility. If audiences can only take more in, in the end satisfaction will finally come. The premises of a consumer culture—based on obsolescence, fashion, and status—undercut the very prospect of completion. The latest, hottest fads seem to combine two or more entertainments or distractions at once, especially as time, affluence, and gadgetry allow, to stave off boredom, futility, and fear. We do not now simply waterski or fly, we hang glide. We do not merely fish, wily and patient; we plumb the deeps with sonar to find the prey. Stadiums carry domes, air-conditioning, and big-screen instant replay. Movie complexes carry twenty screens, thousands of seats, and monster sound systems, such as the George Lucas designed and licensed THX system.

Cultural Criticism, Popular Entertainment, and the Quest for Leisure

Anthropology and sociology have done much to delineate the multiple cultural roles of art. It is now, as shown above, relatively easy to delineate with some precision the different functions of art and entertainment in different cultures. Questions of value—the relative health or rightness of those cultures, or of the arts that inform, shape, reflect, and sustain them—generally do not concern the social scientific inquiry. By and large, the social sciences restrict their analysis to questions of function and of how a culture works. Whether in the visual arts, literature, or film, aesthetic or art criticism has become rarefied in preoccupations with theory and has long since relegated questions of value to psychology and politics. In any case, traditional art criticism does not prove helpful in the assessment of popular art, whether aesthetic or moral. Most often the academic critical elites have focused their attention on an established canon of masterpieces, be they Shakespeare or Picasso. Calls for the examination of popular art usually elicit references to its general unworthiness, pointing specifically to a lack of seriousness, depth, complexity, or innovation. Critics with marked ideological perspectives, whether conservative, Marxist, or
feminist, often see popular art as the new electronic opiate that binds the masses to dullness and passivity.

So deeply entrenched is a high culture or elitist bias that the understanding and evaluation of popular art is not likely to muster much attention for some time to come. The reasons for this are complex, and space does not allow for attention to them. The larger challenge is to formulate some sensible criteria for the aesthetic, intellectual, and moral evaluation of popular art. Any such critical filters must sensibly take into account the richness and fullness in the portraiture of human culture—especially appetites for myth, art, and play—provided by contemporary anthropologists of the stature of Clifford Geertz and Robert Darnton. To do otherwise is to ignore in behalf of ideology what modernity itself has taught. Not only must an informed view take into account the functional multiplicity of popular art as depicted by the likes of Geertz and Darnton, but it must appreciate the significance of aesthetic simplicity, the depth of metaphor, the resonance of allusion, and iconic intensity. Most of all, amid the nightmarish political and psychic landscape of the twentieth century, any view must assert an inclusive prescriptive norm that promises to distinguish cultural health from decay. By some means or another, Western culture must begin to ponder the significance and impact of the kinds of stories we tell ourselves. All should be careful here to avoid the narrow moral and political guidelines that give rise to a new constrictive legalism.

Numerous traditions can be mined for fresh perspective for this task. One of the most lively and available in the West is that contained in the Jewish-Christian notion of creation. With it, we have a brief and simple retrospective ideal that successfully encompasses and resolves a variety of questions about the shape, texture, and purposes of human culture—what the world at its best might and should be.

The Genesis accounts of creation clarify divine intentions for human life—specifically, to put it in other words, what God wanted, not from but for humanity. Hardly any other piece of Western story-telling, religious or secular, has been so rife with misinterpretation and misemphasis. Popular lore and religious nurture seldom venture beyond prattle about birds, fishes, and fig leaves. Usually the world is deemed "good," as God declares it, only because God has said so, and that pretty much settles the matter. Readers most often cannot answer why it is good for humankind, let alone why it is, for God, good—why God bothers and likes what God does. Within the Christian tradition, there has been much theo-biblical talk of order, hierarchy, dominion, and sometimes harmony, but not of what Great Love intended for human life.

Close attention to the creation account allows for a clear fix on divine intentions for life in Eden. And what we find there says more about God than humanity per se. The Holy One fends off void and chaos to establish and consecrate for humanity history and a fecund, teeming place in which to live it. The divine intention for humankind is already seen about half way to actually
creating a human. God lets his ultimate desire be known by placing lights in the sky to mark seasons and festivals, the latter being a grateful revel in which only people partake (1:14). Amid the world’s shaping God knows whence it is all headed, pointed. Already, so early in the account, God has in mind the good pleasure of humanity for which all that whole plenteous world comes to be. Food drops from trees, and flesh does not devour flesh. And there is too the demand that all creatures procreate and thrive.

The second chapter of Genesis fleshes out this scheme still farther. There we find, for sure, the heralded details of God forming man from the dust of the earth. More importantly, numerous details reveal the stress God places on a fitting habitation for humankind. This is ground for meeting and delight, a place that Creator and creatures might together enjoy and relish, full of fruitful and attractive trees, a place to walk in the cool of the evening breeze (2:8). Adam and Eve, helpmates together, care for the garden, cultivate it, sustain and further its fruitfulness and glory, and in mutual return, the garden provides physical nurture and sensuous delight, at least for the eye and palate. As the human beings live in harmony with animal and plant life, so also they abide in ease, a quiet intimacy of trust and gratitude, with the Creator, who walks the garden in the cool of the evening. Seen so Eden becomes a habitation of delight, harmony, and mutuality, the hallmarks of creation. Its unique stature is resoundingly emphasized by the stark contrast with what soon follows: the pointless jealous slaying of Cain and the predatory violence that occasions the Flood, acts that God plainly abominates. In Eden there is no violence, strife, dispute, or contention. Rather there is only festival and delight in the glory, mutuality, and harmony of a world that moves in glad, gracious concert with plant, animal, human, and divine.

The point here is that a primary intention of the creation was to provide an arena of unceasing delight, a very good show indeed, at once aesthetic, moral, psychological, social, and political. It is important to note that one Old Testament scholar has suggested that the repeated "good" of the first chapter connotes aesthetic more than moral judgment, although one suspects the two meanings are here conflated and indivisible. In any case, what God likes and provides for humankind says much about God and about the intended texture of human life, whose daily stuff should occasion constant relish, gladness, and gratitude. This sensibility that provides the backdrop for the Psalms and prophets who compare God's greater glory to the self-evident splendor and majesty of the natural world. The glory and beauty continuously invoked assumes that, first, the world is resplendent with the creative fire and fineness of Love and that, because of this, beauty and aesthetic delight do and should inform the daily ordinary sense of what surrounds and animates life, namely God, or at least that it is the hand of God that shapes the beauty that exalts all things, including people.

The delight is clearly aesthetic, a psychological response to color, form,
texture, and rhythm. It is not only that, however. Far more is involved and informs that delight. Such aesthetic pleasure is not "pure" and does not transpire apart from a "packed" human setting, a circumstance interwoven and freighted with social, intellectual, and moral pressure, as the imminent Fall amply demonstrates. Rather, delight takes place within and partakes of, even depends upon conditions of harmony and intimacy, which are social and relational categories, each informing the other. Aesthetic pleasure, then, flows from and hinges upon, is interdependent and co-extensive with moral and relational qualities. Biblical scholar Walter Bruggemann labels this a "theology of blessing" wherein the whole creation manifests the "friendly disposition" of God.11 Reciprocal, interactive, interwoven, co-extensive--beauty has within, at its inmost core, a texture of welcome and assent, of intimacy and trust.

This perspective not only sheds light on the complex interplay of elements that make successful art but it restores to art and aesthetics a central role for moral reflection and affirmation. Questions of formal value cannot be separated from questions of moral and social value. The Genesis creation account provides, then, a practical benchmark for approaching and reflecting on the nature, enjoyment, and purposes of art. There is no delight without intimacy and trust, and no trust without intimacy and delight, and no intimacy without delight and trust. A full art cares desperately for these interwoven categories, and if effective, illumines and shores up awe, delight, welcome, and assent. This scheme can be but suggestive here. Nonetheless, it posits a full domain for art that draws critical attention away from the prevailing silliness of elite and popular antagonisms, which is a first step in opening long closed windows of perception in the understanding and criticism of art.

We will not do away with art, whether consumer-driven Hollywood, bedtime stories, or Puccini. Kids in particular, unhampered and leisurely, imbibe it like air. Their predicament is not unlike their parents but more acute, given their inexperience, immaturity, leisure, and relative isolation from the adult culture. Hauling their own longings for intimacy and delight, cast into that circus of enjoyment, artistic and otherwise, beset by a voracious and wily entertainment industry, and lost in a welter of competing ideologies, kids flounder, and it is no wonder. Their human callings to delight, intimacy, and love at once beckon and baffle. They wonder and they wander, latching on to the nearest icon or soporific that promises some surcease, no matter how brief, from confusion, boredom, and pain. And so they quest on and on for a magic grail in the kingdom of Gaud.

ENDNOTES


5 Ibid., 51.


8 Ibid., 444.

9 Ibid., 448.
