



Manual Work and Mental Work

Humanist Knowledge for Professions
in the *Siglo de Oro*

Christoph Strosetzki

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Preface

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, numerous texts dealt with professions by presenting necessary skills, the required knowledge, individual fields of activity, purpose and origin, as well as prestige and dignity of the individual fields of activity. Since they generally refer back to ancient texts, the explanations are humanistic in character. Furthermore, the line of argumentation is humanistic, insofar as it mostly starts from the human being and first evaluates his profession morally and socially. The ancient idea of the priority of mental work over manual work, which is derived from the priority of the spiritual over the material, has a formative function here, but is also undermined by counter designs. Numerous ancient models are brought into line with Christianity in the Middle Ages, so that they also become significant in medieval form in the Spanish *Siglo de Oro*.

While in the Middle Ages it was only the prince's mirrors that dealt with the virtues, tasks, and activities of the ruler, in the early modern period, as a result of both an increasingly functionally differentiated modern society and as a result of the possibilities of printing, new tracts and dialogues appear that present further diverse professions. Along with the invention of printing, the early modern period also brought new interpretations of the Bible. Protestantism and Calvinism changed religious ideas in northern Europe. Spain, on the other hand, had remained Catholic and, after the Reconquista had won back the territories occupied by the Moors with the help of the Inquisition, had turned against Islam and Judaism as well as against heterodox dogmas, that is, those spread by Luther or Calvin. Catholic Spain of the *Siglo de Oro* appears therefore as a special case in Europe. However, non-traditionally orthodox elements can also be found here in the course of the Counter-Reformation. In addition, it should not be overlooked that the Spanish king was at the same time Charles V (1520–1556) Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and ruler of the colonies in America; so by the standards of the time, he ruled a global empire.

Charles Taylor, on the other hand, notes a paradigm shift caused by the Protestant Reformation that permeated the entire realm of earthly life and was also felt outside the borders of Protestant Europe, that is, in Catholic countries as well (Taylor 2018, 391). Since monasticism and the cult of the saints were rejected as mediating

instances by the Protestant side, and thus activities that had previously been considered “higher” were subjected to a disapproving critique; the fulfillment of human life was now seen in work and family, that is, in ordinary life. It is the latter and the common good that science was supposed to benefit, not theoretical speculation (377, 378, 384, 398).¹ Inventions deserve more praise than Aristotelian speculation, and trade became preferable to aristocratic quests for military glory and was viewed positively (424, 505). This is quite understandable, once we disregard the fact that the art of war, while belonging to the aristocratic sphere, was assigned to the *artes mechanicae*. The lowly craftsman and the skillful practitioner have, as it turns out, contributed more to the progress of science than the philosopher with all his leisure (378). It is necessary to pursue the affairs of the profession in a heavenly frame of mind, that is, participating in the world with detached affects (395). For Taylor, the paradigmatic representative of this direction is Francis Bacon as a Puritan, according to whom science should refrain from speculation and serve the benefit of mankind (407).

Taylor’s thesis of a paradigm shift in the evaluation of manual professions caused by Protestantism cannot be confirmed with the explanations of the present book, just as Foucault’s theory of discursive ruptures cannot. It is not true that manual occupations have enjoyed positive evaluation only since Puritanism, Calvinism, and Protestantism, whereas before they were little appreciated. For in antiquity, as in the Middle Ages and modern times, there have been positive as well as negative assessments of manual trades. Not uncommon are voices that highly value simple trades and “ordinary life” in antiquity and the Middle Ages. The change noted by Taylor outside the borders of Protestant Europe, that is, also in Catholic countries, cannot be detected, at least in Spain, where often the intellectual part was still the criterion for the evaluation of a profession.

The following text will therefore examine the extent to which Taylor’s model for the *Siglo de Oro* can be contrasted with the following categories: intellectual life, moral perfection, and social advancement through knowledge. The significance of these categories will be exemplified in the course of the following chapters, in order to be addressed once again in retrospect in the outlook at the end.

In Plato’s state, the peasants and workers constituted the lowest class, since they did not speculate about the true nature of a thing or the causes of a problem. According to Aristotle, politics requires virtue, which cannot be trained in craftsmanship. In ancient Greece, *mechanike techne*, as a kind of applied mathematics, was the discipline of using mechanical devices such as levers and screws to make machines that could accomplish what man could not with his own powers. At least, this is how Aristotle describes it in his work *Problemata mechanika*, which was available to the occidental Middle Ages only in fragments (Boehm 1993, 428). Even in Scholasticism, Thomas Aquinas’ concept of science, which is oriented towards reason, still sees the mechanical arts as *artes factivae, operativae, manuales*,

¹ In the case of repeated successive references to the same source, we limit ourselves to stating the page number.

serviles, inferiores, since they are bound to matter and utility and are not oriented towards knowledge. The hierarchy in theory does not necessarily correspond to the social situation; considering that the mechanical art of hunting belonged to the nobility, the architect was quite respected, and the manual physician could become rich (432).

Agricultural activity was positively valued in antiquity. Socrates considers agriculture as an activity worthy of a citizen (Xen. oik. 4–6). He is opposed to the idea that the superior man need not work (Xen. Mem. 2,7). Virgil praises agricultural activity in his *Georgica*. In Cicero, agriculture seems worthy of a free man (Cic. off. I, 42). However, the latifundia economy of slaves soon took the place of the free farmer of the plot economy.

In the Bible, work is directed towards the mastery of the forces of nature and the distribution of goods. Work is necessary to bring creation to its completion, when man is to subdue the Earth and rule over the animals (Gen 1:26–28), and at the same time atonement and purification, when he will eat his bread by the sweat of his brow (Gen 3:19). Thus work is seen once positively and once negatively: God requires the first man to work and tend his dwelling place in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). It goes on to say, “Despise not the tillage which God hath appointed” (Coh 7:16).

In contrast, if one looks at the attitude of German classicism, one is reminded of Aristotle. Goethe’s and Schiller’s ideal of a harmonious human being seems incompatible with a realistic portrayal of the world of work. While bourgeois businessmen pursue only their selfish interests in pedantic parochialism, for Schiller it is important to find a harmonious totality of the individual in purposeless play, in the absence of work. Only those who are active without working preserve the beautiful whole that is destroyed by work, by which he means select circles of the nobility and bourgeoisie. In Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the question of a bourgeois is not what he is, but only what insight, knowledge, ability, or fortune he has. “The nobleman is what he represents, the citizen what he produces” (Habermas 1968, 26–27). Wilhelm is fascinated by the unproductive aristocratic way of life, although he is later taught by Montan that it is not a matter of general education but rather of one being particularly good at something and achieving something that others cannot easily imitate (Berghahn 1979, 58, 71).

In the late Middle Ages, the *artes mechanicae* passed from a tradition of the oral transmission of a secret knowledge from generation to generation to writing, which then also had consequences for the tension between theory and practice or science and technology. However, this process was so slow that d’Alembert, in his *Discours préliminaire* to the eighteenth-century French encyclopedia, complains that there are hardly any written literary sources of support for the description of the mechanical arts, and that his authors therefore had to seek out workshops to interview the craftsmen (Boehm 1993, 421). The Abbé Pluche also presents the specifics of artisanal work in various industries in eight volumes of his *Spectacle de la nature* (Paris 1732). Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* negatively judges day laborers and handymen who carry heavy loads or perform other laborious tasks. And craftsmen, *artisans*, also practice mechanical arts that require little intelligence, according to Diderot, who wrote the article himself. In contrast, the outstanding works of the artists appear to

be characterized by intelligence. It was Karl Marx who later dreamed of a higher phase of society where the opposition between mental and physical labor had diminished (Marx 1973, 21). According to Marx, work is, after all, life generating action and free production, by which the worker creates objectivity for himself in his works. This is precisely the reason why alienation is so destructive for him.

When Bacon, for Taylor the paradigmatic representative of Puritanism, sees as his goal the expansion of man's power and praises inventions such as the book, gunpowder, and the compass, he is following in the tradition of the praise of inventions that began in antiquity. However, Bacon's goal of expanding power as well as Locke's purpose of self-preservation and improvement are elements of teleological thinking, which the physicist according to Bacon should actually be aware of.

As both positive and negative assessments of craft and ordinary life have occurred simultaneously since antiquity, the question arises as to how such a contradiction can be explained. Our hypothesis is that what the author chooses depends on his social position. Craftsmen will see crafts in a more favorable light than nobles or theologians. Heuristically, the thought model of ideology as defined by Karl Marx is helpful here: "The thoughts of the ruling class are the ruling thoughts in every epoch, i.e., the class which is the ruling material power of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual power" (Marx 1969, 46). This explains that the upper class emphasizes the priority of intellectual activity in order to legitimize its social supremacy. For the jurists who put themselves at the head of the state by ousting the nobles from their ancestral offices, the following Marx quote applies: "Every new class, namely, which puts itself in the place of one that ruled before it, is compelled, if only to carry out its purpose, to present its interest as the common interest of all the members of society" (Marx 1969, 47). Since Marx is referring to the nineteenth century, his theses have limited applicability to the early modern period. This is evident when he writes that it is unimportant whether this or that theorem is true, but important whether it is useful or harmful to capital, convenient or inconvenient, thus replacing unbiased scientific inquiry with mere apologetics.

When we ask in the following to what extent socially conditioned partisanship is responsible for the respective evaluation of manual and intellectual activity, the model of class struggle is subtracted from its historical context of the nineteenth century and generalized in the sense of the sociology of knowledge. In this way, class prejudices arising from the economic structure appear surmountable. Karl Mannheim's "total ideology" derives from the being-connectedness of knowledge, so that the "location-bound aspect structure of a thought" serves to conceal and stabilize social contexts (Mannheim 1929, 52). Stammer puts it even more generally, and in a way that serves our context, with the phrase "the ideological represents sociality in the spiritual" (Stammer 1950/1951, 282). It will thus depend on the social location from which the intellectual is praised and the manual rejected, or the manual is praised and the intellectual rejected.

This brings us close to Foucault, who also sees objective truth as relativized, but in doing so leaves out social subjects and classes. If what matters to him is that something is "in the true" rather than that it is true, then he assumes *a priori* epistemic discourses that guide cognition in certain epochs. "Mendel told the truth, but

he was not ‘in the true’ of the biological discourse of his epoch: biological objects and concepts were formed according to quite different rules” (Foucault 1991, 25). The rules that determine whether a result is valid or not establish power structures. Thus, he argues, the sixteenth century was characterized by resemblance, the period from the mid-seventeenth by *représentation* with taxonomic definitional *tableaux*, and the nineteenth century by historicity. According to Foucault, the shift from one paradigm designated as episteme to another takes place in ruptures. We will prove that the notion of rupture-like paradigm shifts is inadequate, since historical thinking, the constant search for inventors, and the historical course of a science are also pronounced in the sixteenth century. *Tableaux* of *représentation* are also found in the hierarchies of the sciences and their representatives from antiquity through the Middle Ages to the early modern period, and similarities have dominated the applications of mathematics and geometry in subjects such as music and astronomy since antiquity. Last but not least, both historicity and *représentation* are taught through the Aristotelian doctrine of four causes and the Aristotelian-Scholastic doctrine of definition with *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica* in the late sixteenth-century scholastic school of Salamanca. *Représentation* is evidenced by the doctrine of *arbor porphyriana*, introduced by the scholastic Petrus Hispanus in 1240 and popular in the sixteenth century, where not only are basic terms classified in tableau fashion but also a subordination of species and generic terms is practiced.

If, for example, after the invention of gunpowder, the tracts on the craft of warfare are devoted less to the use of the sword and the care of horses and instead focus on artillery, the professional image of the soldier shifts. Or if, after the discovery of the New World, herbal remedies from America are also taken into account, the source situation of pharmacy also changes. The professions of the lawyer are examples of how representatives of the bourgeoisie displace the nobles from key positions in the state. The progressive legitimization of the activity of the merchant is an example of the establishment of a professional group that had previously only been tolerated. Professionalization can be described as the process in which an activity or a profession is transformed and justifications are formulated that ideologically justify courses of action and serve to achieve goals. In the process, ideologically occupied and normative terms always emerge (Siegrist 1988, 14–15).

Following Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory (Luhmann 1992, 194, 199), we start from the notion of “guiding differences” to characterize the basic semantic structure of individual mental domains and spheres of action. As an illustrative example of leading difference, Luhmann cites the theory of Darwinism, which is organized by the opposition of variation and selection (Luhmann 1984, 19). Such binary structuring characterizes the early modern system of social intercourse, in which the distinctive features of aristocratic forms of life are defined by their opposition to the bourgeois or peasant. In modern functionally differentiated societies, too, points of social affiliation and demarcation are continuously communicated (Luhmann 1997, 606). It is characteristic of early modern society that it is in a transitional stage between stratificationally structured class society and functional differentiation.

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The cover image shows a detail from Botticelli's allegorical painting "Athena and the Centaur." Athena, as goddess of wisdom, is patroness of the sciences. The centaurs, on the other hand, who have the abdomen of a horse, are characterized by tremendous strength, with which they noisily and impetuously snorting like horses break off large rocks, break through walls without restraint, and hurl uprooted trees (Roscher 1894, 1063–1069). Thus, intellectual and physical strength are opposed to each other, in which one could see the contrast of head- and handwork depicted. That this is not so simple, however, becomes clear when one considers that Athena is also patron of craftsmen and goddess of war strategy. Thus, she has a protective and moderating effect on physical nature, which gives her a superiority in the Neoplatonic context of Medicean Florence and places her in a controlling role. As a tamer of centaurs, she takes the centaur by the scruff of the neck, because underneath, with reason, is the ruling part of the soul. With her gentleness and beauty as the personified virtue of *prudentia*, she is focused on the future and aims to "preserve acquired political power by correcting at an early stage developments that endanger it" (Leuker 2007, 258). The allegorical image thus does not only show intellect and physics as mere opposites but also points to the complex interferences of this relationship in different areas, which is also the task of this book.

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Contents

Part I	Introduction	1
1	Conceptions of Work	3
2	Alternatives to Work	9
Part II	Siglo de Oro	17
3	Collections	19
3.1	Encyclopaedia	19
3.2	Tomaso Garzoni and Suárez de Figueroa	24
3.3	Inventions	26
3.4	Personalities and Hierarchies	32
3.5	Satires	41
4	Mechanical Arts	45
4.1	Farmer	45
4.1.1	Antiquity and the Middle Ages	46
4.1.2	Early Modern Period	48
4.1.3	Spanish Domestic Literature	50
4.1.4	Country Life as a Golden Age	51
4.1.5	Rural Life and Primitive State	53
4.1.6	Country Life and Greed	55
4.1.7	The Idyll of the Garden	57
4.2	Soldier	58
4.2.1	Rejection and Legitimization of the War	59
4.2.2	Military Ranks	62
4.2.3	Recruitment	66
4.2.4	Responsibility, Motivation and Refusal to Obey Orders	68
4.2.5	Cunning and Treachery	70
4.2.6	Rebellion	72
4.2.7	Sword and Horse	73
4.2.8	Cannon and Rifles	75

4.3	Merchant	77
4.3.1	Negative Evaluation	78
4.3.2	Positive Evaluation	81
4.3.3	Virtues	83
4.3.4	Common Good and Self-Interest	84
4.3.5	Money Lending	86
4.3.6	Contracts	88
4.3.7	Respectability and Illegality	90
4.4	Between Mechanical Arts and <i>Artes Liberales</i>	93
4.4.1	Bricklayer and Tailor	93
4.4.2	Visual Arts and the Church	95
4.4.3	Experience and <i>Artes</i>	98
4.4.4	Fine Arts and Mathematics	99
4.4.5	Dignity of the Visual Arts	101
4.4.6	Fine Arts and <i>Artes Liberales</i>	102
4.4.7	Résumé	107
5	Artes Liberales	111
5.1	Trivium	111
5.1.1	Grammarians	111
5.1.2	Rhetoricians and Humanists	116
5.2	Quadrivium	131
5.2.1	Musicians	132
5.2.2	Mathematicians	136
5.2.3	Astronomers and Astrologers	141
5.2.4	Cosmographers and Navigators	150
6	Higher Faculties	155
6.1	Doctor	155
6.1.1	Body and Soul	157
6.1.2	Microcosm and Macrocosm	159
6.1.3	Teleology	160
6.1.4	Between Speculation and Empiricism	162
6.1.5	Mental Health	163
6.1.6	Dietetics	164
6.1.7	Remedies	167
6.1.8	Between University Teaching and Practice	170
6.1.9	Surgeon and Wound Healer	172
6.1.10	The Plague	177
6.1.11	Satire	180
6.1.12	Résumé	182
6.2	Theologian	183
6.2.1	Chaplain	184
6.2.2	Practical Helper	186
6.2.3	Missionary	187
6.2.4	Confessor	191

6.2.5	Asset Manager	195
6.2.6	Retreat and Monasticism	196
6.2.7	Jesuit	197
6.2.8	<i>memoria</i> and <i>Don Quixote</i>	201
6.2.9	Imitation in <i>Don Quixote</i>	204
6.2.10	<i>sola scriptura</i> and <i>Don Quixote</i> as Reader	206
6.2.11	Résumé.	208
6.3	Lawyer	209
6.3.1	Training	211
6.3.2	School of Salamanca	213
6.3.3	Chief Magistrate.	214
6.3.4	Jurisprudence: A Science?	216
6.3.5	Dignity of the Lawyer	219
6.3.6	Alderman	220
6.3.7	Lawyers in Fictional Literature	222
6.3.8	Lawyers as Advisers to Rulers.	225
6.3.9	Advocate	229
6.3.10	Satire	231
6.3.11	Satire in <i>Don Quixote</i>	232
6.3.12	Résumé.	238
Part III	Outlook	241
7	Craft and Hierarchy	243
	References.	251

Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

Conceptions of Work



Professions require skills and knowledge to practice them. Authors of the early modern period endeavored to compile the knowledge necessary for individual professions, repeatedly drawing on ancient texts in the humanist manner. A distinction must be made between professions in which practice predominates, such as that of the merchant, and those that are more theoretical, such as that of the astronomer. But even within individual professions, theoretical variants can be distinguished from practical ones, for example in a case of the physician, who speculates on ancient theories as a university doctor, and a wound healer, who treats injuries. While the former reflects on and discusses contradictions and explanations of traditional book knowledge, the latter draws on experience.

Again and again the contrasting pair of manual work and mental work is discussed, whereby mental work is generally valued higher in the hierarchy of professions, which is why the professions of manual work strive to rise. They point out that mental work also has a high proportion among them, in that they also demonstrate elements of the higher-ranking disciplines among themselves. The literature of antiquity, which provides sources for the knowledge of the present, is either unquestioningly taken over as valid as a matter of course or, as in the case of Galen's theory of the humours, relativised and overtaken by more recent approaches. In the presentation of the individual disciplines of knowledge, according to the Aristotelian doctrine of the four causes, invention is readily given as the causal cause and purpose as the final cause. It is to be asked to what extent, on the one hand, this increases their prestige through an early invention and the resulting long tradition, and to what extent, on the other hand, a normative component is introduced if the purposes and goals are oriented towards norms of the ethics of antiquity or Christianity.

The structure of the following remarks begins with a discussion of some central categories. Presented then are attempts in the early modern period of overall representations of knowledge, professions and outstanding professional representatives. Here, as in the following chapters, the hierarchization and its relativization through satire is of importance. The mechanical arts and the *artes liberales* are then

presented on the basis of individual professions selected as characteristic examples, each with its own specific knowledge. The higher faculties of medicine, theology and jurisprudence with their representatives form the conclusion.

The counterparts to professional activity and the knowledge to be acquired for it are leisure and idleness. While leisure has been praised since antiquity in the topoi of the *locus amoenus* and the *beatus ille* as a rural idyll free of professional activity, idleness, *otiositas*, is in Christian tradition the enemy of the soul, especially since it is close to *acedia*, the mortal sin of laziness. Therefore, when the beggar refuses to work, it is necessary to examine whether he is incapable or unwilling. The question also arises whether games are to be regarded as leisure or idleness. Are they recreation or a waste of time? Can greed make the game of chance a job-like activity? Do question games and chess games train intellectual and strategic skills, making them appear as propaedeutics of professional activity? Since games and leisure have a special relationship to professions, they are dealt with in the second part of this introduction, which deals with the evaluation of mental and manual labour, first in antiquity and the Middle Ages, then in the early modern period.

The fact that ancient mythology does not particularly value manual labor is evident from the fact that Hephaestus, the god of the blacksmith's art, forms a contrast to the beauty of the other gods. He is depicted as a cripple with a large neck and weakening legs (Hom. Il. 18). Ancient philosophy is no less hostile. In Plato's state, workers and peasants form the lowest class. Aristotle also held crafts in low esteem (Hist. 2, 167, Oik. 4, 203). In politics, for example, virtue is needed. But this, according to Aristotle, cannot be learned from craftsmanship (Pol. 4, 9). Political activity must remain closed to the craftsman, since he works unfree like a slave for others. Also, his work makes him narrow-minded and insensitive to great interests (Pol. 8, 2). In the case of indispensable activities, he who does them for a master is called a slave, and he who does them for the general public is called a workman (Pol. III). It is to be asked to what extent the turning away from the sensual and turning to the spiritual affects the valuation of physical labor. In the early modern period, did Luther's valorization of peasants and artisans in Protestantism have an impact on Catholic Spain? Did the teleological view or the empirical emergence of individual activities and fields of knowledge have an impact on their hierarchical position? If needs such as food, housing, or clothing lead to technical inventions, are these to be valued highly because they compensate for the deficiencies of the human being through rational thought, or lowly because they require little intellectual effort?

In the early modern treatises on *dignitas hominis*, it is thought that distinguishes man from the animal and thus constitutes his dignity. If he devotes himself to practical tasks, then he does nothing different from an animal. This hierarchization has a long history. Demeter is the corn mother and goddess of fertility. Her son is Plutos, the personification of wealth. The Eleusinian mysteries were held annually in her honor. According to Xenophon, the best crafts are those of agriculture and warcraft (Xen. oik. IV, 4, 15, 17, 24). The god of travelers and merchants, in Greek Hermes, in Latin Mercury, was also the god of thieves, and thus had something disreputable about him. There are examples of manual labor in Greek literature. Thus Homer's Odysseus made his own bed before the Trojan War (Hom. Od. 23, 181–201). In

Hesiod, work is the gods' punishment for Prometheus deceiving Zeus when he brought fire to man. Thus Zeus, in his anger, hid from men the means of subsistence (Hes. *erg.* 42–44). Hesiod, the author of *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*, made his living by an inherited farm, and writes to his brother, "Zeal promotes labor. One who is always pushing ahead is always struggling with harm." (Dummer 2001, 70). Nevertheless, he finds work tiring and sees himself in a brazen age preceded by better times. A distinction must be made, however, between the one who masters and exercises a technique and the one who merely labors, the *banausos* (the philistine) (Plat., *polit.* 495e). Work is contrasted with *scholē*, leisure, having time, which Aristotle values more highly, since happiness presupposes leisure and work is done in order to then have leisure. Similarly, war is waged in order to then have peace (Aristot. *NE* 1177b 4–6). He distinguishes the necessary and useful actions from the beautiful, whereby work happens for the sake of leisure and the necessary and useful for the sake of beauty (Aristot. *pol.*, 1333a). In this sense Horace praises the "beatus ille qui procul negotiis" (Hor. *Epod.* 2.1) is, though his *otium* may be filled with intensive agricultural labor. Since land ownership was the most important and stable form of property in antiquity, since peasant labor was considered non-specialized but diverse, and since peasants did not work for others but self-sufficiently for themselves, their activity corresponded to a Greek ideal (Meier 2003, 43).

According to Plutarch, Lykurg forbade the Spartans the practice of craftsmanship (Plut. *Lyk.* 24). Archimedes wished not to apply his intellectual reasoning to bodily things, considering mechanical works and everything that serves the necessary satisfaction of needs as ignoble and low (Plut. *Marc.* 14, 17). Even the beauty of the works of Phidias lend no esteem to the artist (Plut. *Per.* 2). Lucian of Samosata describes in a dream how two women court favour, the one as a science, the other as a sculpture (Lucian, *Somnium* 6–13).

In Plato's state, it seemed more attractive to speculate about the true nature of a thing or the reasons for a problem than to seek practical and technical applications. And in Xenophon's *Oikonomikos* it is said that practical work performed in a sitting position and in the house weakens the body and thus also slackens the mind (Engels 2006, 62). More generously perceived was the rural work of the shepherd or the peasant, for example in the Cynic Diogenes, who valorized simple work in the interest of self-sufficiency, or in the Stoic Zeno, who extolled the ideal of simple living according to nature. Among the Greeks, the aristocracy was concerned with politics and warfare or the theoretical activity of a philosopher. Slaves were available for manual labor (Rivero 2020, 20–25, 74–77). Thus, in antiquity, the *artes liberales* appropriate to a free man are contrasted with the *artes illiberales* or *sordidae* not appropriate to a free man. In Cicero, the activities that are meant only to satisfy pleasure, such as those of the fishmonger, butcher, or cook, are the least prestigious. While the Greco-Roman elite despised physical exertion and toil, the people developed a kind of skill-consciousness that ennobled work in the educational sense as *virtus*. In reality, the successful activity of even simple occupations, such as that of the woodcutter, the shoemaker, or the porter, led to modest prosperity and social advancement. This is confirmed by Democritus in the fifth century B.C. and the

sophist Protagoras, when they considered strenuous effort as conducive to the emergence of the *technai*, which advanced civilization.

The Roman Cicero, too, excluded from participation in politics all who practiced a paid profession, except farmers and wholesalers (Cicero, *de off.* I, 151). However, the Sophists, who charged money for their teaching, had already made intellectual work into gainful employment. Cicero, in his writing addressed to his son Marcus, makes a gradual assessment of crafts and types of gainful employment. He considers the collection of customs duties, the charging of interest, and the keeping of gambling houses to be particularly dirty, as well as mechanical and physical handicrafts, the luxury industry, and petty trade. Only agriculture is worthy of a free man (*De officiis*, I, 42).

Already the Bible had in the book of Jesus Sirach an ambivalent appreciation of the handicraft. He who holds the plow, who drives the cattle, directs himself completely to his activity. Likewise, he who works as a craftsman and builder, blacksmith and potter. "All these have trusted in their hands, and each proves wise in his doings. Without them no city is founded, they are not migrants and do not wander." (Sir 38:25–31). This is the positive part, which, however, has the consequence that in doing crafts there is no time for further gaining knowledge, which is then to the disadvantage of the craftsmen: "But for the counsel of the people they are not sought, and in the assembly they do not stand out; on a judge's seat they do not sit down, and about the decision of a judgment they do not think." (Sir 38:32–33).

Patristics adopts this ambivalent assessment. Augustine evaluates handicraft positively when he emphasizes that Jesus had a craftsman as foster-father, that Paul was a cell-cloth weaver who earned his living by working with his hands (Aug. c. acad. 18, 3; 20, 34; 1 Cor. 6, 12; 1 Tess. 2, 9; 2 Thess. 3, 8), and, moreover, the working man stands as a model for imitation (2 Thess. 3, 9, 10). When an attitude of rejection of manual labor took hold in the monasteries, he wrote his book "On the Manual Labor of the Monks", in which he presents the duty to feed oneself with manual labor as an apostolic commandment. For manual labor would find a great spiritual reward. Just as rowers motivate one another through song, this work also promotes prayer (Weinand 1911, 34–35). In agriculture Augustine sees an optimal union of physical and spiritual work, when the spirit of man speaks with nature (Weinand 1911, 55).

Influenced by Neoplatonism, which demands the renunciation of the sensual, of the outer worldly appearances, Augustine, on the other hand, strives for the concentration on the spiritual and the inner life. Since evil necessarily reigns in this world, but the soul wants to escape from evil, it must flee from this world. Therefore, the Neoplatonist wants to withdraw from worldly business, overcome his own body through asceticism, and devote himself to contemplation. In view of the approaching end of the world, the world and its creatures are only a ladder to God. Against this background, the task of the Church is not to make them free, but to make them good. Thus earthly things become steps on which one ascends to heavenly righteousness (Weinand 1911, 19). In this perspective, work and mechanical arts are also tools for reaching God. If worldly men work for earthly motives, one should not work for earthly love, but for the sake of the eternal rest that God promises.

Finally, according to Augustine, when man works, he imitates God, who in turn directs and sustains the universe (Aug. Conf. 1, 4; 13, 37). Here Plato's ideas of *parousia* and *metexis* take hold, reversing Plotinus' ancient emphasis on the idea or the divine and emphasizing the shining through of the idea in objects. According to Augustine, man possesses securely only what he has gained after laborious work. In his commentary on *Genesis* he lets the work begin right in Paradise. God had given Paradise to man to guard and cultivate it, so that what God had created would come to fruition through human activity. This work, however, was perceived as pleasure; it only became a burden through the Fall after the expulsion from Paradise. But even then physical work is to be spiritualized, in that through it the soul is directed toward God. The Jews misunderstood the Sabbath commandment when they abstained from physical labor. The commandment is to be understood allegorically, since it involves direction of the spirit to God rather than a commitment to physical idleness. (Weinand 1911, 22–25).

Such Augustinian approaches were taken up by Protestantism. Through Martin Luther, the everyday manual labor of peasants and craftsmen was valorized through the criticism of the clerical class and the abolition of monasticism. While the latter were accused of laziness, the peasant's manual labor appeared as the ideal way of life. The Peasants' War of 1525 was directed equally against the laziness of the clergy and the nobility (Wiedemann 1979, 83–87, 99, 307). A Catholic revaluation of practical work can be found in François de Sales 1609 in his *Guide to the Pious Life*. In Italian humanism, Pico della Mirandola had already declared man to be the designer of the world as the image of the Creator God in his treatise *On the Dignity of Man* in 1487 (Reinhard 2007, 21–22).

Even medieval monasticism held on to work, which was not its *raison d'être* but used as an ascetic exercise. Bernard of Clairvaux, who spread the Cistercian order in Europe, rebuked his nephew for defecting to the Clunyazens and betraying the Cistercian ideal, which consisted of fasting, vigilance, silence and the work of the hands. Of the hermit and monk-father Anthony the following anecdote was handed down in the eleventh century: When he was endeavoring to follow Christ ascetically in the Egyptian desert, he had a vision of a simple tanner in Alexandria who was even more devout than he was in his hermitage. When he went to see him, he found that the latter, with his humble devotion to work as a simple craftsman, was quietly attaining the kingdom of God (Seibt 1981, 166–167). Scotus Eriugena, around 859, in a commentary on Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis philologiae et Mercurii* (c. 400), had attested that the *artes liberales* were pursued for their own sake, while the *artes mechanicae* were based only on imitation and invention (Boehm 1993, 427–430). Hugh of St. Victor (1097–1141) had distinguished among the mechanical arts *lanificum*, *armatura*, *navigatio*, *agricultura*, *venatio*, *medicina et theatrica*, i.e. woolwork with clothing manufacture, military art, navigation, agriculture, hunting, medicine, and theater. Vincent of Beauvais sees that medicine has not only a manual but also a theoretical part and therefore replaces it with alchemy in his thirteenth century *Speculum doctrinale* when enumerating the mechanical arts (Lusignan 1982, 36). For Thomas Aquinas, the biblical parable of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, for which the Lord provides, does not speak against the general

provision for existence, but only against an excessive, immoderate striving for gain. Moderate work, on the other hand, protected against the dangers of an aimless life, demanded self-conquest, guaranteed subsistence, and made alms possible. And where Thomas in his *Summa contra gentiles* (1259–1267), especially in Ch. 77, ascribes to man a secondary creative efficacy, in that he himself, like the Creator, becomes the effective cause for other creatures, whereby God indirectly participates in every act of creation through secondary causes, the results of the mechanical arts are also meant. However, the universe and not the world of work is the focus of the argument (Seibt 1981, 170–171). Nevertheless, it can be stated that in antiquity and in the Middle Ages there were voices that positively appreciated manual labor.

Chapter 2

Alternatives to Work



Head work, like hand work, stands in contrast to the absence of work in leisure, idleness or play. Since these form a counterpart to the theme of work and its disciplines of knowledge, let us briefly introduce them with their implications and evaluations. In Luque Faxardo's *Fiel desengaño contra la ociosidad y los juegos* (1603), the world of the player is confronted with that of the sage in dialogue form. In the case of games, the commercial ones, in which skill is important, are to be distinguished from those in which the outcome depends on chance. Since the former, motivated by greed and the desire for gain, pursue the purpose of monetary gain at the expense of others, they are not only an expression of idleness, but are to be regarded as a disease and a sin. The loss of money is joined by that of friendship and respect. The author wants to allow the Olympic Games, in which young people can strengthen their forces, and the chess game, in which war tactics are practiced (Luque Faxardo 1955, 746). On the other hand, he finds it particularly inappropriate for women to play cards (Albert 2009, 142).

In his *Tratado contra los juegos públicos* (1609), Juan de Mariana puts the different kinds of entertainment and pastimes on the same level, so that bullfighting, theatrical games and prostitution are seen as damage to the country and religion, as “oficina de deshonestidad” (Mariana 1950, 413), and counterpart to praiseworthy work. It is also work that is seen as part of human dignity in Francisco Cervantes de Salazar. He had edited Pérez de Oliva's *Diálogo de la dignidad del hombre* (1546) and supplemented it with a text of his own. Here the figure of Labricio, whose ancestor was Hercules, represents work and Ocía with her retinue Fraude and Hipocresía idleness. The plot ends with a banquet at which Mercury urges all the guests to work honorably and advises against idleness and its harmful concomitants (Cervantes de Salazar 1772; Briesemeister 2009, 254–257).

Juan de Pineda, in his *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana* (1589), tightens the argument by considering idleness not as something neutral, but as something bad (Juan de Pineda 1963, 239–241). Thus, he argues, it is wrong to think that the idler who does nothing does neither good nor bad. He does bad and

can expect no reward. Gutierrez de los Ríos, in the last chapter of his *Noticia general para la estimación de las artes y la manera en que se conocen los liberales de las que son mecánicas y serviles* (1600), also praises work, attributing on the one hand the deplorable situation of the Spain of his time to widespread idleness, and on the other hand calling for the overcoming of this state by a return to the values of work. This present state of affairs was caused by the glamour and fame of the idlers and the poverty and misery of the honest workers, which made the life of idleness worthy of imitation. Nobles, foreigners and other idlers were “ladrones legítimos y legales” (Gutierrez de los Ríos 1600, 227) and seized the ecclesiastical and state pension income and thus the labor earnings of each individual in the state. The idleness of the nobility was opposed by Hernando de Talavera in his *De cómo se ha de ordenar el tiempo para que sea bien expendido* (c. 1500), in which he stressed the importance of time. Whoever used it properly could achieve prosperity and property. Citing Seneca, he states that there is no greater and worse loss than that of time (Hernando de Talavera 1911, 95). After all, he argues, the stars were arranged by the Creator in such a way that we can read from them the passage of time. Such benefits of the stars, however, are held in low esteem by those nobles who turn day into night and night into day, partying at night, getting on their nerves, and sleeping late during the day. Wealthy nobles will not immediately become poor because of their disorderly lifestyle. But those who are already poor will have to put up with the reproach of having become poor through idleness. Already in the Bible we find the following parable: “Go to the ant, you lazy one, consider her behavior, and become wise! It has no leader, no overseer, no ruler, and yet it provides food in the summer, gathers provisions at harvest time. How long, thou lazy one, wilt thou lie there, when wilt thou rise from thy sleep? Still a little sleep, still a little slumber, still a little fold your arms to rest. Then poverty comes upon thee quickly like a rascal, trouble like an armed man.” (Prov 6:6-11; Bibel 2017:723).

In the preface to his *Discursos del amparo de los legítimos pobres y reduccion de los fingidos: y de la fundacion y principio de los albergues destos Reynos y amparo de la milicia dellos* (1598), Perez de Herrera emphasizes that the support of the truly poor should be accompanied by a reduction in the number of malingerers. Under the latter category fall, “los fingidos, falsos, engañosos, y vagabundos” (Perez de Herrera 1598, al lector), who seize the alms of others and violate all the good customs and laws of the state. The poor spread contagious diseases and behave as thieves of charity. Vagabonds, pretending to be poor, enter houses to ask for alms, spying where it is worth while to break in at night. Thus they are very inventive in settling down to their poor life of idleness and gluttony (5r), and living without religious support. Poor as they pretend to be, they are avaricious. Spending nothing, they accumulate money. Although they could work, they inflict wounds on themselves or eat harmful things in order to look as pale as possible and arouse pity. They pretend to be dumb and blind without being so. They twist the feet and hands of their children who have just been born, or they forcibly cause them to lose their sight, only that they may help them to accumulate money. As they always wear the same filthy clothes in cold and heat, eat rotten meat or other things that have been thrown away, drink undrinkable water and bad wine in great quantity, especially in

summer, when it is hot and humid, as in Seville, they emit a mouldy smell, spoil the air, and bring typhus and plague.

Addiction to gambling can be a cause of poverty. According to Adrian de Castro, it is closer to idleness than to leisure. As usual in other fields, his *Libro de los daños que resultan del juego* first gives its origin and inventor. They are greed, idolatry, and the god of merchants and thieves: “La madre deste vicio es la Avaricia, su ama de leche la Idolatria, su ayo y maestro el Dios Mercurio, qual la madre tal el hijo.” (de Castro 1599, 6v). With Aristotle, greed is explained as an infinite and boundless desire to have, making it the root of all evils, of treachery, perjury, and violence. The fact that Anselm of Canterbury is also cited, according to whom money and riches are the god of the covetous, suggests that it is primarily a matter of gambling for money. The gambler is compared to Tantalus, who stood atoning for his misdeeds in the underworld up to his chin in water, but could not drink from it as it kept receding, nor could he grasp the fruit above him as the wind blew it away at every attempt. Tantalus torments also the gamblers have when they thirst for money. That Mercury is named as the educator is not surprising. He is, after all, the greatest cheat and most treacherous gypsy among the gods. Ancient references often dominate, although the end and climax of the argument against gambling is the raffle of the clothes of the crucified Jesus.

While doctors cure minor illnesses with mild medicines, according to de Castro, greed is a difficult disease to cure, which idolizes money and gold. Examples include Caesar, who wanted to immortalize himself by having his image engraved on coins, and the Golden Calf, which the Israelites created and worshipped as a new god when they grew tired of waiting for Moses. If one compares possessions with freedom, peace of mind, or good reputation, they seem of lesser value anyway. But possessions also have something of a chameleon quality that adapts to its surroundings. If they are with a good person, they appear good and can lead to charity, while with a bad one this leads to lechery and gluttony. An example of this is the gambler, for whom it is sacrilege to withdraw his money from the game in order to give it to the poor.

If you look at the player at play, you notice his oaths, his blasphemies, his hatred, his envy, his defiance, his lies and false flattery. In any case, he says, it is better to possess little securely than to leave much to a doubtful fate. Of course, according to de Castro, it is appealing to make great gains with small stakes. But one should avoid the behavior of the dog in Aesop’s fable, who, with a piece of meat between his teeth, stoops over a river in whose waters he sees the meat magnified. Hence he snaps at the reflection in the water and loses the meat from his muzzle. Here the proverb fits, “Mas vale pajaro en mano, que buitre volando.” (34r) (Better a sparrow in the hand than a dove on the roof.). And in Seneca it is stated that an adverse fate is more likely than a favorable one. Through gambling, more rich have become poor than poor have become rich. Those who have lost their own possessions also lose their dignity when they have to ask others for money and credit. Such distresses are then responsible for usurious interest and for flattery. Since flattery, cunning, and deception rule the world of gamblers, Aesop’s fable in which a hungry vixen saw a jackdaw with a piece of bread in its beak illustrates the point. The vixen praises the

jackdaw's beauty, speed, and lightness and asks her if she can sing as beautifully. The jackdaw is flattered and when she begins to sing, the bread falls out of her beak, which the vixen immediately steals from her.

According to de Castro, emergencies are often exploited for usury. If the merchant knows that the borrower is in distress, he allows the price to rise to unimaginable heights. "No pide lo que ella vale, sino lo que el quiere." (60v). Thus, there are people just waiting to lend to hard-pressed players. Thus, the game creates disorder and lost is the great good of peace, which is the condition for prosperity, tranquility and permanence. Without peace, cities are unprotected and revenues are uncertain. It is like the strings of a musical instrument. If one is out of tune, the proper tuning of the others is useless (64v). The author contrasts covetousness, which is responsible for trying to gain possessions and win lands through wars, with meekness, whose kinship with peace is emphasized in the Psalms of the Bible. Indeed, he argues, play is nothing other than a living image of war and discord (82v). Seneca is credited with the assertion that the root of wars is that some claim for themselves what belongs to all or to another. And the game is nothing but a war in which one wins and the other loses, and whoever wins today will be defeated tomorrow.

Another great good is lost through the game: time. Here de Castro quotes Aristotle, who characterizes it as the beginning of the future and the end of the past. According to Augustine, time is something intangible, since the past is no more, the future not yet happened, and the present an indivisible and unknowable moment. For Thales, time is the wisest of all things, since it finds, confesses and discovers everything. And according to Seneca, all things are foreign to man, only time is proper to him. Therefore Theophilus advises us to use this good wisely. Since man, unlike animals, has a mind, let him devote his time to contemplation and the sciences (123v–124v) or to the salvation of his soul. But he who plays has time for nothing else. Thus the merchant, when he plays, lacks time for his shop, the scribe for his office, the scholar for study, the physician for visiting the sick, and the cleric for prayer. Those who do not play, on the other hand, have time in abundance to think, to do good deeds, or to meet with friends. Maintaining friendships stabilizes society and supports the individual. There is also time for the practice of music, which Aristotle said transforms negative feelings into positive ones.

Can you also learn through play? Does a quiz only require presence of mind or is it also suitable for imparting knowledge? It is not possible to reconstruct exactly how question and answer games were designed in detail in the *Siglo de Oro*. In any case, instructions for questions and answers are available in book form. In the dedicatory letter of his *Sylva de varias questiones naturales y morales con sus respuestas y soluciones, facadas de muchos autores griegos y latinos* (1575), Hieronymo Campos begins by blaming idleness for numerous evils and misdeeds, which is why it is important to fill one's time with sensible activities. The Roman state, which had long flourished and dominated the world, is cited as an example of this, until sweet idleness spread there and it finally succumbed to the attacks of the barbarians. The author Campos himself intends to use his time, freed after participation in warlike enterprises, to gather his materials, collected from ancient Greek and Roman authors, in the form of questions and answers in a "silva," so that those unpracticed

in the sciences may find answers and remove doubts, “con que pueda Vuestra Excelencia algunos ratos (desocupado de los negocios publicos) recrear el alma.” (Campos 1575, dedication).

The questions and answers are arranged in groups of 100 and concern first physical objects and then human concerns. The fourth question, “what is the human body made of?” is answered by referring to the four elements: “El cuerpo del hombre, de que esta hecho y compuesto? *Solucion.* De quatro elementos: Tierra, Agua, Aire, y Fuego.”(1v). Why the blood is red is answered by referring to its place of origin, the liver. An opaque object and light are given as the cause of the shadow. Why is the wind from the Mediterranean countries to the east so pleasant? – Because it is temperate and neither hot nor cold. Why are some right-handed and others left-handed? – The reason is the heat emanating from the heart, which radiates more strongly to the right or left and thus makes one or the other hand more active, which can also be a hereditary predisposition. How is it that after a clear and cheerful day it soon becomes cloudy with the onset of night? – This is due to the inconstancy of the moon, which commands the night.

A few more examples from the realm of human morality follow: Why is the loss of one’s property preferable to unjust gain? – Because this loss depresses only for a short time, and not for so many years as the remorse of wrong done. By what MEANS does a king perpetuate himself throughout his life and after his death? – By liking his subjects and committing no injustice. When do cities and states perish? – When the rulers no longer know how to distinguish between good and bad. The question of what benefit music brings to those who actively pursue it is answered with reference to its positive psychological and physical effects: – “Levanta el entendimiento y el alma, a contemplar cosas grandes, y despierta el cuerpo, para que pueda dezir lo que quiere, con mucha gravedad y eloquentia, assi en verso como en prosa.” (132v). Why does Homer call salt a divine thing? – Because it gives flavour to all food and has a preservative effect.

The approach of Alonso López de Corela in his *Trezientas preguntas de cosas naturales* (1546) appears more academic. The author, who calls himself a physician in the title page, sends his 300 questions ahead, then lets a preface follow, and in the main part repeats the questions with solutions in the right column of each page, while in the left column he gives and discusses the respective sources. In the preface he addresses all those who know nothing of philosophy and other sciences. He wants to give them the opportunity to keep difficult and important things in mind, since it is as difficult to ask questions as it is to give answers. In doing so, he uses a simple and low style, because “el bien tanto es mayor quanto a mas se comunica” (Al prudente lector), making it possible to benefit a large number of readers. In answer to the first question, why man is of great and upright stature, the purpose given is that it enables him to see the sky better. The reason further given is that he has more heat than other living creatures.

The answers are discussed in the left column, citing passages in Aristotle, Galen and Boethius. Thus, as a counter-argument, it is stated that there are animals that do not walk straight but can still see the sky, such as the cock. Why is it praiseworthy to kindle great fires in times of pestilence? – Fire carries away the poisonous

pestilential air, as evidenced by Pliny in the left column. Why is man stricken with sadness when he is alone at home? – Because he becomes pensive and melancholy, sadness assails him, as is confirmed *ex contrario* with Avicenna, who points out that it is a pleasure to have social interaction with others. Why is man born without teeth? – Because, unlike some animals, he does not need them at first, bones can form beforehand. Why does reading in the evening keep some awake while others fall asleep while doing it? – It is because the moist cold juice of the body immobilizes the phlegmatic and warms the brain in the choleric, Aristotle being quoted here in the left column. These examples from the questions in the book without page references may give an impression. Despite the seemingly greater scientificity, originality also seems to be more important here than scientifically validated knowledge, which raises the question of whether knowledge ought really to be conveyed primarily in an entertaining way, or whether the entertaining aspect should not dominate over the instructive one. Perhaps the texts were taken to help in games in society, in which the aim was to shine through brilliant answers, as is assumed in seventeenth century France with La Rochefoucauld (Sorel 1977; Strosetzki 1990).

If the game of questions can instruct entertainingly, then this applies even more to the game of chess. For Ruylopez de Sigura it is in any case not a game but a science. In his *Libro de la invencion liberal y arte de juego del Axedrez* (1561), he explains why it requires mastery of the liberal arts of geometry and arithmetic. It is, in fact, square and has eight boxes on each side, which in total stand side by side like 64 houses. It is a mathematical science because it does not deal with chance but with proofs. Moreover, as in other sciences, one needs here “ingenio, memoria, fuerza de imaginacion, exercicio, y afficion.” (Ruylopez de Sigura 1561, 1v). What the imagination conceives is to be preserved by the memory and brought to mind by the spirit of invention on occasion. Practice is as important in the art of chess as the mastery of knowledge.

Not to be underestimated is the importance of inclination and enthusiasm, which increase diligence and ease difficulties. Since all this is also true of other sciences, it is proved that chess is a science. It is not merely a laudable pastime, but something necessary for the maintenance of man, who, like all beings who have a body, cannot work uninterruptedly, but needs rests. The mind, too, needs breaks in order not to become ill and dull. Recovered, it is better, stronger and more perceptive. Chess is especially appropriate in this context, “por ser juego de sciencia, y parecer que con el se huye el ocio inhonesto.” (4v). Finally, scholars and great philosophers, such as Seneca, are attested to have played chess. Also, one should not be confused by the term “game,” since other arts of the *artes liberales* were also so called, such as *ludus litterarum* the study of literature or *ludus grammaticus* the study of grammar.

When asked who invented chess, Ruylopez de Sigura gives different answers. For some it is the Moors, for others the Greeks. On the one hand, Xerxes from Babylon comes into question. Then the game is a reflection of the city with the king, his nobles and the edges as city walls. On the other, the prudent army commander Palamedes is said to have invented, among many other things in the Trojan War, the board game as a useful occupation between warlike actions for his soldiers, on which chess could be played, because it involved them “en las cosas de la milicia: y traxessen los ingenios vivos, y exercitados en las subtilezas de poder vencer sus enemigos.”