BOOK REVIEW

NOT WORK ALONE: A CROSS-CULTURAL VIEW OF ACTIVITIES SUPERFLUOUS TO SURVIVAL edited by Jeremy Cherfas and Roger Lewin. Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications, 1980. $20.00.

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Not Work Alone is a collection of fourteen essays on what are, presumably, as the subtitle of the book implies, "activities superfluous to survival." The editors, Jeremy Cherfas and Roger Lewin, each of whom also contributes an essay to the collection, divide their book into three main categories: Young Play, Adult Play, and Word Play. The essays are so diverse, in both content and style, that one may suppose that the editors must have met almost insurmountable difficulties in deciding how to classify them. Apparently, they decided to classify some of the essays according to the age of the participants in play, hence the categories Young Play and Adult Play, and the rest according to content, in this case, play with words or Word Play.

The cultures covered by the essays are numerous, industrial (mainly the United States) and preindustrial. Some of the preindustrial cultures studied include the Eskimo, Afghan Turkestan, Amazonian Kayapo tribesmen, Turkic groups in central Asia, Fiji Indians, Javanese culture in Indonesia, Hasidic Jewry, Zuni Indians in the United States, Hindu Kush in Afghanistan, and the Massim of the D'Entrecasteaux Islands.

Each essay describes a different activity. Activities included in the essays classified as Young Play are infant and child play and games, such as representational play and pretend games, and several playground games (Cock Robin, Hi Jimmy Knacker, Mother May I, Hide and Seek, Cowboys and Indians, Blind Man's Buff, Tug o'War, and others). The activities described in the essays under Adult Play include the more familiar games of gambling and professional football, and the not-so-familiar *abutu* (food rivalry), *buzkashi* (horseback competition), ritual warfare, factional politics, and body adornment. In the third category of articles, Word Play, all of the activities described are, as the title implies, centered on words: storytelling, laughter and humor, verbal dueling, drama, and profanity.

What is not very clear is why any of these activities are "superfluous to survival," or, as the categories into which they are divided imply, why they are "play." As is stated in one of the essays, "Infant Games and the Creation of Culture," the activity analyzed, play,

> is not vital for the biological survival of the body as are eating and sleeping, but it is vital for psychological survival in society [p. 36].

Likewise, several of the activities described in other essays may be seen as important to some type of human survival (social, intellectual, ethical, economic, or political).

Of all the authors of the fourteen essays, only three attempt to establish a relationship between the activities they describe and theories of play. This lack of systematic conceptualization of the relationship between play and the activities described may lead one to suspect that some of the essays, though they may be worthy pieces of scholarship, are neither about activities superfluous to survival nor about play. It could even be objected that on several occasions too much is left to presumption, the presumption here being that the title of each category is enough to define the activities described as play.

Two examples may suffice to illustrate this point. In his essay, "Social Skin," Terence S. Turner writes (p. 115) that body adornment among the Amazonian Kayapo tribesmen is not just a decorous design or accolade, but a social dress full of social-psychological meaning, constraints, and connotations, the apparently naked savage being "as fully covered in a fabric of cultural meaning as the most elaborately draped Victorian lady or gentleman." Turner makes no reference to this

form of bodily adornment as play, nor does he draw any parallels between "social skin" socialization of the Kayapo tribesmen and play. In fact, he may intend this essay to be a treatise on socialization, rather than on play. Turner does not claim that the activity he describes is superfluous to survival. In fact, given the importance of bodily adornment among the Kayapo, one could argue that it is not only not superfluous, but necessary for the survival of the Kayapo culture (and by close association and interdependency, of the social survival of the Kayapo young in their community, of the legal-political survival of the Kayapo status hierarchy, of the ethical survival of the Kayapo value system, or of the ritual survival of the Kayapo tradition). Thus, what might seem superfluous to survival to a Western observer may not be superfluous to the Kayapo. To what extent have the editors fallen victim to their own cultural bias in selecting essays that describe activities that are not necessarily "superfluous to the survival" of those who actually participate in them?

In another essay, by Laurence G. Avery and James L. Peacock, *ludruk,* a form of Javanese drama, is analyzed in light of the forms that drama has taken in Western history. As in the essay on social skin socialization, the authors do not inquire into the relationship between *ludruk* and either play or activities superfluous to survival. (Since not all activities that are superfluous to survival are also play, I have carefully distinguished between the two.) Unless we are willing to assume, with Huizinga, that *all* culture is play, and that this is so obvious that there is no need to discuss it any further (the authors did neither), there is no compelling reason that *ludruk,* which is presumably a cultural activity, should also qualify as play.

In her essay, "The Purpose of Play," Dorothy Einon briefly reviews theories of play, mainly Herbert Spencer's "excess energy" theory and Karl Groos's propaedeutic theory. Though Einon makes an attempt to integrate theories of play with empirical data and observation (a pattern that is strikingly absent in most of the other essays), her logic, or development of arguments, is not consistently valid. For example, she concludes, fallaciously, that since early social deprivation has been shown to retard intellectual ability, it follows that early social interaction facilitates learning (p. 28). This conclusion does not follow, since there *may* be *some* kinds or types of social interaction that do *not* facilitate learning. And again, Einon fallaciously concludes (p. 30) that if research can show that certain "behavioural deficits" among animals

that play "are due to play deprivation and not to other forms of social deprivation," then animals that do not play "should not show these permanent abnormalities following early isolation." But animals which, by nature, never play may still exhibit these "behavioural deficits" for reasons other than the fact that they do not play. What may be true for cases in which "play deprivation" may apply (since there is at least potential for play) may not be true in cases in which it makes no sense to talk of "play deprivation" (since the possibility for play does not exist, even in potential form).

In a concluding essay, "Images of Man," Peter Loizos (p. 233) modestly admits that the term "play" is "curious and ambiguous." Sounding almost apologetic, he writes (p. 234) that the essays that constitute *Not Work Alone* "do seem to have a loose, 'family resemblance.'" Will this Wittgensteinian comment save the book from the acid criticism that is often leveled against scholarship on play, namely, that no systematic attempt has been made to define play, to compare it to nonplay activities, to understand what we really mean by it? If play is "curious and ambiguous," has this book contributed to unraveling its mystery?

According to Loizos, the essays "describe behaviour which is *voluntary, rule-governed, non-routine* and which is *intrinsically rewarding,* that is, people do it mainly for its own sake, for the pleasures or excitements it yields" (p. 234; italics in original). If the activities share all or some of the characteristics that Loizos mentions, are they also, for that reason, either play or superfluous to survival? Are these characteristics *sufficient,* or simply *necessary,* for defining any activity, including the activities described in this book, as either play or superfluous to survival? And why? Unfortunately, Loizos does not explicitly state his opinion on this, sending the reader searching for clues from the context in which he writes. Let us assume that he meant that, if the activities described share these characteristics, then they are play, or "not-work" or "not-survival." This may be highly presumptuous and unnecessarily confusing, since not all activities that are "not-work" (or "not-survival") are also play, but it is the best that can be inferred from the context in which Loizos writes. The question may now be asked (aside from the issue of whether or not these characteristics define an activity as being play), can we realistically assign these characteristics to the activities described?

Loizos offers no explanation for his statement that the activities described in the essays share *all* or even any *one* of the characteristics that he assigns to them; he simply states categorically what can be concluded only after careful case-by-case analysis. In fact, some of the activities described in the essays share *none* of these characteristics, while others may share only one or two.

Of course, not all of the activities mentioned are *voluntarily* engaged in by the participants, such as the compulsory socialization of young Kayapo into the Kayapo community, or, in another essay ("Institutions of Violence"), the social-psychological constraints placed on Massim islanders to "fight back." Though not all of the young among the Kayapo, or all Massim islanders, may "feel" forced to participate in these activities, the fact that these activities have been ritualized to the point where there are no alternatives but to participate or be punished or "drop out" socially, lends them an involuntary or unfree character—especially in situations where they are imposed early in the lives of the young (and in most cases they are). Those who participate in activities they cannot question cannot be said to be able to choose them voluntarily.

Likewise, some of the activities mentioned in the essays are not *rule-governed,* if "rule-governed" is taken to mean activities governed by rules that are as binding and explicitly stated as are game rules. (Otherwise, it would make no sense to talk about activities that are "governed by rules," since *all* activities are so governed to a certain degree and in certain ways.) Laughing, profanity, and some types of verbal dueling are some of the activities described in the essays that are not rule-governed. There are several activities in the essays that are anything but *non-routine*, also. Some forms of gambling, *abutu, buzkashi,* social skin adornment, professional football (to the football player), and children's games (to children involved in them) are all more or less routine activities in the daily lives of those who participate in them. Finally, Loizos's fourth characteristic, *intrinsically rewarding,* is very difficult to judge, because it requires knowledge of how participants feel. Unless one saddles these activities with preconceived notions of what they entail personally for those who engage in them, there is little objective evidence in the essays that the activities described are intrinsically rewarding (though they may be, as most activities are, intrinsically rewarding for only some people, or only some of the time).

In conclusion, unless one is interested generally in cross-cultural research tinged with an emphasis on the culturally unusual, this book should be of little interest to the reader who, guided by the title or subtitle, or even play classifications, expects a notable selection (and not merely a collection) of articles on play or work, or activities superfluous to survival.