

act of abstaining, of holding oneself back (*schein*) from the ordinary activities determined by our daily wants (*hē tōn anagkaiōn scholē*), in order to act out leisure (*scholēn agein*), which in turn was the true goal of all other activities, just as peace, for Aristotle, was the true goal of war. Recreation and play, in our understanding the natural activities of leisure, belonged, on the contrary, still to *a-scholia*, the state of being deprived of leisure, since play and recreation are necessary for the restoration of the human labor force charged with taking care of life's necessities.

We find this act of deliberate, active non-participation in life's daily business, probably in its earliest, certainly its simplest, form, in a parable ascribed to Pythagoras and reported by Diogenes Laertius:

Life . . . is like a festival; just as some come to the festival to compete, some to ply their trade, but the best people come as spectators [*theatai*], so in life the slavish men go hunting for fame [*doxa*] or gain, the philosophers for truth.<sup>51</sup>

What is stressed here as more noble than the competition for fame and gain is by no means a truth invisible and inaccessible to ordinary men; nor does the place the spectators withdraw to belong to any "higher" region such as Parmenides and Plato later envisioned; their place is in the world and their "nobility" is only that they do not participate in what is going on but look on it as a mere spectacle. From the Greek word for spectators, *theatai*, the later philosophical term "theory" was derived, and the word "theoretical" until a few hundred years ago meant "contemplating," looking upon something from the outside, from a position implying a view that is hidden from those who take part in the spectacle and actualize it. The inference to be drawn from this early distinction between doing and understanding is obvious: as a spectator you may understand the "truth" of what the spectacle is about; but the price you have to pay is withdrawal from participating in it.

The first datum underlying this estimate is that only the spectator occupies a position that enables him to see the whole play—as the philosopher is able to see the *kosmos* as a harmonious ordered whole. The actor, being part of the whole,