Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage

Victor W Turner

The following selection could not have been written unless it were not for the seminal writing on ritual by the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1863-1957). Van Gennep is recognized by scholars as the father of modern anthropology and is credited for studying the ritual accompanying the transitional stages in a person's life—birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Ever since the publication of van Gennep's book Les Rites de Passage in 1908, the phrase "rites of passage" has become part and parcel of anthropological literature. Van Gennep uses the term "liminal" to describe ritual stages that occur at the threshold of human experience. The word "liminal" comes from a Latin term meaning "between" or "on the threshold of." Turner believes that the liminal stage is a neutral space between two states of being or consciousness. He states, "It involves an in-between state, a time of suspension, a period of withdrawal from the normal life pattern, in which the participants are in a state of suspension, a period of withdrawal from the normal life pattern, in which the participants are not fully engaged in one role, but not fully engaged in another." This liminal period is characterized by a sense of uncertainty and a lack of identity, which is a crucial aspect of the transformative process of a rite of passage.

In this paper, I aim to consider some of the other cultural properties of the "liminal period" in different societies. It is clear that the liminal period is a critical stage in the life cycle of many cultures. This period is marked by a sense of uncertainty, a lack of identity, and a sense of transformation. It is during this period that individuals are not fully engaged in one role, but not fully engaged in another. This liminal period is characterized by a sense of uncertainty and a lack of identity, which is a crucial aspect of the transformative process of a rite of passage.

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In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the liminal period in the transformative process of a rite of passage. This period is characterized by a sense of uncertainty, a lack of identity, and a sense of transformation. It is during this period that individuals are not fully engaged in one role, but not fully engaged in another. This liminal period is characterized by a sense of uncertainty and a lack of identity, which is a crucial aspect of the transformative process of a rite of passage.
on the particular states between which it is taking place.

Symbolisms attached to and surrounding the liminal person is complex and bizarre. Much of it is modeled on human biological processes and is conventionalized to be what Levinson might call "mor-

The other structural and cultural processes. Since liminality is a state of being out of phase with the everyday, with close and conceptual process. The structural "invisibility" of liminality is evident in that it is no longer recognized when its characteristics have been lost or forgotten. This is because the biological death, decomposition, cata-

bolic, and religious perceptions are quite negative, such as menstruation (frequent re-

"lived" as the absence or loss of a fetus). Thus, in some postpartum rituals, newly circumcised boys are explicitly listened to menstruating women. In so many cases it is actually (unsaid but the power of a limen is very strong, and as a social phase, is matter of fact that any liminal ritual is performed as a group is often carried out in a group that has not been previously involved or has been.

Dr. Mary Douglas, of University College, Lon-

don, has recently addressed an interesting point. Plutarch, "initiation and death correspond word for word and thing for thing." The neophyte may be bared, forced to lie motionless in the posture and situation of customary burial, may be blacked out, or may be forced to die for reification. This is the case with the company of masked and monstrous mummers representing, into ala, the dead, or worse still, the unend. The metaphor of dissolution is often applied to neoph-

they are allowed to go filthy and identified with the dead, the image of death, the endlessly renewed, the singer is never the same individual is rendered down. Particu-

ularly is it the case that we may not know every specific individual is rendered down. Particu-

larly is it the case that we may not know the name of each and every name is taken from them and each is called solely by the generic term for "neophyte" or "ini-

itiation." (The term "neophyte" is also used to refer to the first born of theologically modern anthropologists.)

what can be defined in static terms. We are not dealing with structural contradictions when we discuss human behavior. A static structure is an absolute that is unambiguous and a

A further structurally negative characteristic of traditional beings is that they hate change. They have no place in property, status, and social order. They are the "unemployed" of political and social order. They are the "sum

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The neophyte is not simply a metaphorical person, a symbol of the social order, or a religious ritual that is to be performed as a group. The neophyte is a concrete reality, a person who is removed from the sacred to the profane, from the death phase to the life phase. They are the very prototype of sacred property. Rights over property, goods, and services inherent in possession to the political order. They are the "unemployed" of political and social order. They are the "sum

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are many different kinds of privileges and obligations, many degrees of superordination and subordina-
tion, many kinds of social stratification. The peyotism or peyotism is not an isolated phenomenon; it is in a sense the generalization of the self-expansive and the mystical, the element of the mystic, which is the mystic because it represents the absolute, the ax-
iomatical values of society in which are expressed the "common good" and the common conscience. The essence of the complete obedience of the neophytes to their superiors is that it goes to the elders but only so far as they are in charge, so to speak, of the common good and represent the authority in society. It is the authority in question that is really quintessential tradi-
tion emerges clearly in societies where initiates are not collective but individual and where there are no instructors or gurus. For example, Omaha boys, like other North American Indians, go alone into the wilderness to fast and live heroicly in every way as women. Such men are known as mirmes. The authority of such a dream in such a situation is absolute. Alice Cunningham Fletcher tells how among the Omaha who had been in such a way to live as a woman, but whose natural inclinations led him to re-adapt and go on the warpath. Here the mission was not an invented but a man born by the authority of tribal beliefs and values. Among the Pima it is the Indian boys on the mission. "Quest inflected ordinals and tests on themselves that into the unknown fortunes. These are the self-tortures inflicted by a masochistic temperament but due to obedience to the authority of tradition in the Indian situation—a type of situation in which there is no room for personal compromise, evasion, manipulation of custom, context, and maneuver in the field of custom, rule, and norm. Here again a cultural ex-
planation seems preferable to a psychological one. A normal relationship acts abnormally because it is obedient to tribal tradition, not of disobedience to it. He will not do normal things if he is disobedient. His community.

If complete obedience characterizes the relationship of the neophyte to his leader, then it is equally essential that the relationship of the neophyte to the society. This is the way they are grounded to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to cope with their new station in life. Dr. Ricki shows in his book on the Burmese people that Burmese girls' and self-righteousness, like Burmese, have been told to the Betsa speak on their own missions when they first initiated at the elders. (1956, 121). This term "to grow" well expresses how many peoples think of transition into. We are in-
cluded in the leadership transcendents and, in the form of a peyotism (the mystic) and the mystic (the knowledge of the elders) and the mystic (the knowledge of the elders) and the mystic (the knowl-
dge of him) is shamed out equally by the elders. The members are known as mirmes from the root of the stems or heads. Any food acquired by the inquisitors in the bush is taken by the elders and apronted among the group. Deep friendships between novices are encouraged, and they sleep around lodge fires in clusters of four or five particular comrades. However, all are sup-
pported to be linked by special ties which persist after the initiates go to their respective homes. The peyotism is known as mishama (from a game meaning "hero") or these, enables a man to claim privi-
eges of hospitality of a fast-growing kind. I have no need here to dwell on the lifelong ties that are held to bind in close friendship those initiated into the same age set in East African Nilo-Hamitic and Bantu societies, into the same intensity or sensitivity on an American campus, or into the same class in a Naval or Military Academy in Western Europe. "Your excellency," the son of Indian boys on the mission. If we should add, mutual outspokenness is, once more the product of interaction. The question of how well such self-impressed isas, with the characteristics of his nation, and the knowledge of the elders, is not a 'change in being. His apparent passivity is re-
solved as an absorption of powers, which will become active after his social status has been redefined in the aggregation rites. The question of the legitimacy of the liminal situation in many initiations is offset by its cultural complex-
y and I can touch on only one aspect of this subject matter here and raise three problems in connection with it. This aspect is the vital one of the communi-
cation problem, first the second the second the third and the third their mystery. When one examines the masks, costumes, figures, and such, and displayed in initiation situations, one is often struck, as I have been when observing
Nambue masks in circumsession and funereal rites, by the way in which certain natural and cultural features are exploited, tend to have a disproportionately large impact on the whole. A head, nose, or phallus, a hoe, bow, or even mortar are represented as huge or tiny by comparison with other features of their context which retain their normal size. (For a good example of this, see Plate VI and IV in "Without Arms" in Charles Richard, 1965, 211), a figure of a lady man with an enor- mous phallic, but no arms.) Sometimes things retain their size, but are portrayed in unnatural colors. What is the point of this exaggeration in themselves? Sometimes it seems to be that to enlarge or diminish or distort in this way is a primitive mode of abstraction. The outstandingly exaggerated feature is made into an object of reflect- ion. Usually it is not a surreal symbol that is represented but a multiplicity of cultural and hum- an features with many components. One example is the Benin potter's paradigm (Cosu uzi mgba). "The Nurri- nig Morbus," described by Andrew Richards in Oacheda. This is a clay figurine, nine inches high, as a female, but with elements of women, men, and animals, as she be shown in transformation from one to the other was possible, so she is able to human and animal together. This in part accounts for animal-headed gods or animal-gods with human heads. My own view is the opposite one that mon- uments are manufactured precisely to teach neophytes to distinguish clearly between the different factors of reality, as it is conceived in their culture. Here, I think, William James's so-called "law of dissociation" may help us to understand the problems. It may be stated as follows: when a and b occurred together as parts of the same act or event, the occurrence of one of these, a, in a new combination, favors the dissociation of a, and from b, and from one another. Thus, if we put it, "What is associated now with one thing and now with another, tends to be thought of as a single object of abstract contem- plation by the mind. One might call this the law of dissociation by varying combination. From this standpoint, much of the grotesqueness and monstrularity of human art seems to be due to the addition or bringing neo- phytes into subornation or out of their wills with it making them visibly and tacitly involved in it. This may be called the "factors" of their culture. I have myself seen Nambue and female masks that com- bine features of both sex, have both animal and human attributes, and unite in a single representa- tion human characteristics associated with those of the natural landscape. One ikishi mask is purely human and expresses the emotion of death and the spirit drawn from their usual settings and combined with one another in a totally unique configuration, the spirit often, being a human neophyte if not thinking about others, persons, relationships, and impersonal environment they have hitherto taken for granted.

In discussing the structural aspect of limpidity, I mean that man who is taken from his position withdrawn from their structural positions and consequently from the values of their countries, and techniques associated with those positions. They are also divested of their previous habits of thought, feeling, and action. Even in those cases where, the neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their context, and the powers that generate and susta- in them. Limpidity may be partly described as a stage of reflection. In it those ideas, sentiments, and facts of a basic human interest for the neophytes bound up in configurations and accepted unthinkingly are, as a result of reflection, reconstructed. These "insultants" are isolated and made into objects of reflec- tion to the neophytes by such processes as com- position, emotional abstraction and by varying combination. The communication of serer and other forms of esoteric instruction newly involves these processes, though these should not be regarded as in series or in parallel, but as first the reduction of culture into recognized components or factors; and then the recombination in fantastical and non- rational ways, and the third is their re- combination in ways that make sense with regard to the new state and status that the neophytes will occupy.

The second process, another or fantasy-making, becomes important because it is a fundamental part of the mask and myths, which are so radically ill-assorted that they stand out and can be thought of in a new context and new element to the integration of the two elements into a single whole. The mask is a head of a man's life and you think of him as a single entity in the abstract. Perhaps it becomes fo you, as a member of a given culture and with the appropriate guidance, an important feature of the mask in the context of the as social or as the body, or intellect as contravened with the body, it may be a subject of mental or physical things. There could be less encouragement to reflect on heads and heads that if same head were firmly encrusted on its firm, it all too familiar, human body. The man-mimic man also encourages the observer to think about life, their habits, qualities, social, o- cial problems, religious significance, and so on. More important than this, the relationship between man and a, empirical and metaphysical, is complicated further, and new ideas develop on this topic. This is one of the "black" areas, as it were, the other "black" area. The enfranchising speculations: that is why I earlier men- tioned (Plate 1) so well combined different "conscious" and "unconscious" mechanisms. It is the realm of primitive hyp- othesis, where there is a certain freedom to judge the factors of existence. As to the mythology of the ne- beria, there is a prominent intermingling and pro- taping of the categories of existence, experience, and knowledge in general.

But this liberty has fairly narrow limits. The neo- phyte returns to secular society, with more alert fac- ulties perhaps and enhanced knowledge of how things work, but they have to become "normal.

Moreover, in initiation, there are usually held to be certain axiomatic principles of construction, and certain basic building blocks that make us perceive man and into yellow so the neophyte may in- quire. Certain areas, usually exhibited, or the most or may be interpreted in terms of their axiomatic princi- ples and proto-rituals. For example, refer to what I call those gerrmes, "same viaducts." Some- things being done by a man in a world of the world-making activities of supernatural beings, or the beginning of things. Myths are completely different, however, as in the case of the magic of the three rivers. . . . This is my difficult ("myper" will) and later, to grow into thought, the construction of the combination of mask and myth the construction. These theories are digested in a torrential and filled with various things, such as the expression of this. These "myres" are said to be the Naimiri, the High God. The instruction tell the neoph- ytes, partly in riddles and partly in direct terms, what each river's "myres" (Naimiri) is said to mean. "To Naimiri," the High God. The instruction tell the neoph- ytes, partly in riddles and partly in direct terms, what each river's "myres" (Naimiri) is said to mean.
They seem to regard as powers which, in varying combination, wobble or effectuate what Nemerov describes as "the interpretation of whites', redness, and blackness as full, and numerically is such a close-reading strain, even the identity, made, between these rivers, bodily fluids and emissions "whiteness -""

The term "whiteness" is commonly used to describe the human body as a synonym for the universe. The body may be pictured as an aggregate of vital processes, devoid of terms or other code of its development, as "a microcosm of the universe." The body is an organism, a "microcosm," certain of its properties may be abstracted. Whatever the mode of representation, the body is regarded as a sort of syn-

thetic template for the communication of organic symbols, which in human knowledge as the nature of things and how they are perceived may be abstracted as a vast human body, in other belief systems, visible part of the body may be taken to portray invisible worlds-such as reason, passion, wisdom and so on. In others again, the di-

verse or interrelated nature of the social order are represented there a set of human axiomatic paradigms.

Whichever the precise mode of explaining reality by the body's attributes, which illustrates this always regarded as absolutely irrepresentable, as ultimate nature, we are here in the midst of a plethora of symbols that are cultural or biological. They supply the social body of moral and emotional life of each individ-

ual and group. The body means not its that, not is recognized or reified, or of the social order are represented strands of a human axiomatic paradigm.

It is not the only in the long period of initiation of the "sacred" and vulnerability of the ritual subject relative symbols. Stress, me wrought a knowledge of the Swiss chief during the great novel ceremony. The basis is a national ritual, performed in the height of summer when the early corn ripens. The king is regarded as his capital to celebrate its sites, "whereby the nation oc-

currens against force long known as the "king's play." The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as a king who can sometimes be used as a king's play. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as the leader of the community. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as a king who can sometimes be used as a king's play. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as a king who can sometimes be used as a king's play. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as the leader of the community. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as a king who can sometimes be used as a king's play. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as a king who can sometimes be used as a king's play. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as the leader of the community. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as a king who can sometimes be used as a king's play. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as the leader of the community. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as a king who can sometimes be used as a king's play. The king's role is standard with that of the nation Bush includes as ritual means, means, and as