alive/dead, child/woman, outsider/adherent), involves a general "leveling" of rights, rank, and privileges that is entirely antithetical to the "normal" or structural state of affairs. Turner (1997, 106), for example, notes the following "binary opposites" where the first represents *communitas* and the second structure: equality/inequality, absence of status/status, humility/just pride of position, silence/speech, and total obedience/obedience only to superior rank, just to mention a few. It should not be assumed here, however, that the "liminite" is powerless in a general sense. After all, if one is "outside" structure, he or she is not controlled by it. Consider, for example, the "hippies" and "flower children" of the sixties, quintessential liminites who staked out a social position that was distinctly antistructural or, in their terms, "antisocial." Falling outside the purview of proper culture, so to speak, they engaged in activities that were socially unacceptable in a general sense, for example, the consumption of psychoactive substances and rather unrestricted sexual practices.

The power, so to speak, of *communitas* is also evident in the interplay between structure and *communitas*. Turner notes that both processes are essential for the "well-being" of each other. In fact, one might view society diachronically as a manifestation of the dialectic process involving this continual interplay between structure and *communitas*.

One important example of this process might be referred to as "the normalization of *communitas*." Consider, for example, the "mourning" ritual practiced in the Orisha religion of Trinidad. According to James Houk, the individual "pilgrim" involved in the ritual gains certain knowledge regarding spirits, rituals, etc., during a series of spiritual travels. The information and knowledge gained during mourning, however novel or traditional, or, put another way, however heretical or heterodox, eventually becomes part of the complex of beliefs and practices that comprise the Orisha religion. It is in this sense that *communitas* is normalized. The subversion of standard social roles that occurs during mourning allows even neophyte and rank and file adherents to influence the religion along idiosyncratic lines, since everyone's experiences are equally valid and, thus, equally important. Looked at in this way, the *communitas* of mourning periodically revitalizes the structure of the belief system. In a similar way, Turner speaks of the purging and purification effect *communitas* has on structure.

In a broad and general way, it is during such religious rites that mythology is legitimized, the strong become weak, the weak strong, and traditional status categories are reinforced by contrasting them with the potential anarchy and statuslessness of liminality. In an important sense, without structure there is no *communitas* and without *communitas* there is no structure.

James Houk

See also Communitas, Rites of; Liminoid; Passage, Rites of

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Communitas, Rites of

In the 1960s Victor Turner adapted the word "communitas" from Paul Goodman's usage, which connoted town planning on community lines. Turner uses "communitas" extensively in anthropology to mean a relational quality of full, unmediated communication, even communion, between people of definite and determinate identity, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations, and circumstances. The *Random House Webster Unexpurgated Dictionary* (1998) defines "communitas" as: "*Anthropol.* The sense of sharing and intimacy that develops among persons who experience liminality as a group." Turner first noted this phenomenon—then not recognized in the social sciences—in the healing ritual of Chihamba among the Ndembu of Zambia in 1953. He observed and experienced it among the Chihamba patients who were in passage between illness and health, and also

found it among novices changing from childhood to adulthood, and in other changes in social status. Furthermore he recognized it in many different societies among those in betwixt-and-between circumstances, those going through some threshold or limen in life together, that is, in a time of liminality.

Description

The bonds of communitas that are felt at liminal times are undifferentiated, egalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational, existential, and "I–Thou" (in Martin Buber's sense). The original sense of communitas is spontaneous and concrete, not abstract. The experience of communitas matters much to the participants. It does not merge identities; the gifts of each person are alive to the full, along with those of every other person. Communitas liberates individuals from conformity to general norms. It is the fount and origin of the gift of togetherness, and thus of the gifts of organization, and therefore of all structures of social behavior, and at the same time it is the critique of structure that is overly law-bound. Communitas should be distinguished from Durkheim's "mechanical solidarity," which is a bond between individuals who are collectively in opposition to another solidary group. In "mechanical solidarity," unity depends on "in-group versus out-group" opposition. But in the genesis and central tendency of communitas, communitas is universalistic. Structures, like living species, become specialized; communitas, as in the case of the biology of the human species and its direct evolutionary forebears, remains open and unspecialized, a spring of pure possibility as well as giving release from day-to-day structural role-playing, and it seeks oneness. This does not involve a withdrawal from multiplicity but eliminates divisiveness and realizes nonduality. Communitas strains toward universalism and openness; it is richly charged with feeling, mainly pleasurable. It has something magical about it. Those who experience communitas feel the presence of spiritual power.

Victor Turner emphasizes, first, "spontaneous communitas": a feeling that comes unexpectedly like the wind and warms everyone to each other. It defies deliberate cognitive and volitional construction and is at the opposite pole to social structures, that is, the role sets, status sets, and status sequences consciously recognized and regulated in society and closely bound up with legal and political norms and sanctions. Communitas or the feeling of communion or oneness is therefore often expressed in rituals of reversal in which the lowly and high-ups reverse social roles.

After the inception of spontaneous communitas a structuring process often develops and a cycle of communitas/structure/communitas ensues. For example, religious vision becomes sect, then church, then a prop for a dominant political system, until communitas resurges once more, emerging from the spaces of freedom often found in betwixt-and-between situations. Revivals are of this nature.

Much of religious observance consists of "normative communitas," the attempt to capture and preserve spontaneous communitas in systems of ethical precepts and legal rules. These are often gathered in documents of "ideological communitas," in which are formulated the remembered attributes of the communitas experience in the form of a utopian blueprint for the reform of society. Yet in the stories usually recorded within them reside the seeds of the realization of spontaneous communitas once again, whether these consist of poems, sacred history, sincere accounts of visions, or even music and art. In the works of prophets and artists we may catch glimpses of the unused evolutionary potential of communitas, a potential not yet externalized and fixed in structure.

Sources of Communitas

The spaces of freedom in society from which communitas emerges are various. Communitas breaks into society (1) through the interstices of structure in *liminality*, times of change of status; (2) at the edges of structure, in *marginality;* and (3) from beneath structure, in *inferiority*. Liminality, marginality, and inferiority frequently generate sacred accounts, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art.

Liminality

Liminality is the process of midtransition in a rite of passage. During the liminal period, the characteristics of those passing through are ambiguous, for where they find themselves has few or none of the attributes of either the past or the coming state. They are betwixt and between. In nonindustrial societies their secular powerlessness may be compensated for by a sacred power—the power of the weak, derived on the one hand from the resurgence of nature when structural power is removed, and on the other from the

experience of the sacred. Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated in liminality, notably the sense of comradeship and communitas. The kind of people in our society who are liminal are teenagers, students, trainees, travelers, those with new jobs, and people in times of major disaster. In Western society there is a paucity of ritual for these occasions; nevertheless, new or spontaneous rituals sometimes arise. The birthday party is a common example of a regular rite-of-passage ritual.

Marginality

Marginality is a category whose individuals often look to their group of origin, the so-called inferior group (see below), for communitas, and to the more prestigious group in which they mainly live for their structural position. Marginals may become critics of the structure from the perspective of communitas; many writers, artists, philosophers, and postmoderns are marginals, as well as New Agers, environmentalists, gays, and those in monastic orders.

Inferiority

Inferiority is a value-bearing category that refers to the powers of the weak, countervailing against structural power, fostering continuity, creating the sentiment of the wholeness of the total community, and positing the model of an undifferentiated whole whose units are total human beings. The powers of the weak are often assigned in hierarchic and stratified societies to women, the poor, original inhabitants, and outcasts, as well as members of minorities, holy mendicants, children, and human rights advocates such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. To quote Liz Locke (1999, 3): "The non-athletes, the readers, the musicians, the skate rats, the gamers, the geeks, the metal-heads, the ravers, the stoners, the net-heads, the writers, the outcasts, the refugees—we find a way to create communities."

Communitas and Pilgrimage

The journey to sacred shrines, usually undertaken by large groups of religious people seeking help at a faraway saint's tomb or birthplace, is an activity in which communitas flowers. Friends are made and a sense of sacredness grows as the days of travel go by. The religion and the forward urging of the people, often in collective prayer, together produce an elated sense of sisterhood among all, something that draws pilgrims to come again year after year. While the pilgrimage situation does not eliminate structural divisions, it attenuates them and removes their sting. Moreover, pilgrimage liberates the individual from the obligatory everyday constraints of status and role, defines her as an integral human being with a capacity for free choice, and within the limits of her religious orthodoxy presents for her a living model of human sisterhood and brotherhood. It should be noted that the study of this element in pilgrimage has been critiqued by Michael Sallnow and John Eade (1991), who turn back to the structured stage of communitas development and claim that conflict is endemic in pilgrimage and that religious power hierarchies decide the major outcome of pilgrimage, so that pilgrimage has the effect of enhancing the existing power structures of society.

The Presence of Communitas

Negative capability, that is, an open readiness without preconceived ideas, provides the circumstances. There exists a democracy and humility about communitas: no one can claim it as their own. This is seen in Victor Turner's vision of it as residing in the poor and inferior, a gift coming up from below. As for the concrete circumstances, they can be found when people engage in a collective task with full attention. They may find themselves in flow, that is, they experience a merging of action and awareness—a crucial component of enjoyment. Flow is the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement, with no apparent need for conscious intervention on our part. There is a loss of ego; the self becomes irrelevant. In the group, what is sought and what happens is unity, seamless unity, so that even joshing is cause for delight and there is often much laughter.

The benefits of communitas are joy, healing, the gift of "seeing," mutual help, religious experience, the gift of knowledge, long-term ties with others, a humanistic conscience, and the human rights ideal.

Communitas takes place in the rituals of Africa and other preindustrial cultures, and also in churches, temples, mosques, and shrines all over the world, achieved by collective prayer. Pentecostal and charismatic churches seek and find moments of universal love, praying for the sick. Sufi brotherhoods in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, in intense, collective, submissive chants to Allah, find that sense of unity. Communitas, not always achieved, is sought in the world Olympic games, where the finely tuned human body is the common factor, an achievement possible

for all humans. The presence of communitas in music and the change of consciousness in groups are two themes in need of further study.

Other Definitions

The term "communitas" has been further elaborated by later anthropologists, particularly Roy Willis and Stephen Friedson citing African ritual. They refer to a time of "intersubjective objectivity," "a space of communitas" (Willis 1999, 120), when people are tuned in to one another and live together through the same flow of experience. In a Lungu healing rite Willis himself experienced this liberated communitas. He was aware of being lifted out of normal consciousness into a state where ordinary perceptions of time and space were drastically altered. The participants, including himself, were all in relation, different versions of each other, but there were no fixed boundaries to selfhood, there existed a permeability and flexibility between self and other, an infinite reflexivity, with a sense of everything flowing within the all-encompassing rhythm of the drum (Willis et al. 1999, 103). Stephen Friedson (1996), similarly participating in Malawi ritual, tells how the spirits caused his "self" to expand, creating a space within him, an opening, a clearing, where he became aware of a rich lived experience of the equiprimordiality of human being and world. This was spiritual communitas, both experiences showing how this can develop between anthropologists and practitioners of religion.

A prime example of communitas has been described by Matt Bierce (personal communication, April 2001), who cites jam sessions in Victor Turner's terms: liminality and communitas. He says of his jamming group

> We have been writing songs together for six years now and our cooperative powers have grown immensely. We are intimately aware of each other and our abilities, tendencies, favoritisms, styles, moods, and emotions. This intimacy allows us a form of jamming or improvisation that I think is a rare and cultivated closeness bordering on telepathic intuition. Above all else, we are friends. In the context of a jam, we communicate in a way that superceded speech and cognitive logic, in a language of suggestions, weavings, liminal stances, pattern formations and dissolutions, patience, intensity and calm, and private exploration. You have to give yourself totally, without reservations. It's not enough that you believe this or that is going to happen. By beholding behind the closed eyes of your co-musicians and in sensing the nerve impulses and the movements of the muscles in their bodies, you will attain a security in relation to what is going to happen. We are also working together to keep the song whole or coherent. This often happens as one new pattern is woven into the mix, that others pick up on its inherent beauty, and find ways to integrate what they are doing into this new structure. Strummings and pluckings are added on by other instruments until a new structure is implicitly agreed to. Once this new structure is found and woven in, the improvisation really can commence. The conscious mind is put on the back burner and the unconscious is given more control. One has to become like a child.

And he adds, "It almost becomes like a trance, a religious experience."

Understanding communitas entails a recognition of a certain kind of medium in which we all live that is permeable from person to person and which nourishes what is "spiritual." The nature of this consciousness, in healing or music for instance, is felt when connecting with others. A kind of power exists that is implicit in this connective "spirit" between people. We can tap into shadowy abysses where there is a "reservoir," a rising and flooding medium that can waken the existing spirit connections into activity, a kind of power store that can join people. Then the soul is in tune with others. Souls in communitas may even connect with the dead; may experience the power of switching back and forth in time; may receive and send unmistakable messages where vitally needed; and are conscious of purposes throughout the spiritual web—a huge visionary purpose sometimes.

The implications follow that if one responds to communitas one can no longer treat another human being as an object, because each person is too much part of the other. We find ourselves, as in the Copernican revolution, smaller than we thought, even on a par with the animals and not above them. We exist in a vast interchange of spirit personality—often glimpsed, sometimes seen clearly in the acts of spirit sociality. The social itself becomes a matter of intuitions passed between people and a joyous sense of bonding, sometimes providing the power of collective healing and of acting in visionary harmony.

Edith Turner

See also Communitas; Liminoid

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Crisis Rituals

Crisis rituals are called rites of intensification. These are employed when an unfavorable change has affected the group, or the group faces a danger or calamity of some kind. Such situations spread anxiety, uncertainty, and fear that can be alleviated through the performance of mass rituals that provide security and hope by reinforcing social ties and pointing to the transcendent dimension beyond everyday experience.

Individual Crisis Is Community Crisis

In traditional village communities, a problem experienced by an individual or family becomes a community problem. An illness in a Jordanian village studied by anthropologist Hilma Granqvist brought the members together in collective support that helped restore the sick person's vitality. Bringing flowers to someone in a hospital or food to the home of a sick person are Western equivalents. The death of someone disrupts a community even more, and collective rituals help reinforce social bonds, relieve tensions, and commemorate the dead person. For example, women in the Trobriand Islands distribute large quantities of banana-fiber skirts and banana leaves upon the death of a relative, and in America, a fund for some social purpose is often established at the passing of a notable person, to keep his memory alive.

Among a Melanesian group, the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski observed a commemoration in which people were required to eat some of the dead person's flesh. This ritual cannibalism was performed with "extreme repugnance and dread" and was usually followed by violent vomiting, but it was "felt to be a supreme act of reverence, love, and devotion." Outlawed by the government but still done in secret at the time of Malinowski's study, the act was considered a sacred duty that expressed "the longing for all that remains of the dead person and the disgust and fear of the dreadful transformation wrought by death" (Malinowski 1954, 49–50). Death rituals make the loss of a person less disruptive socially while helping the community readjust.

Some cultures' response to crime is highly ritualized. An eyewitness account of a Turkish execution in Jerusalem in the late nineteenth century depicts the mother of the slain person drinking some of the blood of the murderer after his execution, exclaiming, "My son is avenged!" (Granqvist 1965, 126–27). Capital punishment in the United States carries some of this public outrage, but among Southwest Native American tribes, a man who has killed an enemy, even in self-defense, "must purify himself for sixteen days, to cure his spirit of the madness of shedding blood" (Erdoes 1976, 35).

Social Change as Crisis

New situations or practices, caused by some larger social change, may also threaten people's security