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H. RITUALIZATION IN MAN IN RELATION TO THE MODERN CRISIS

Emotive rituals in industrial organisms

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Rituals are formalized behaviour patterns, methods of communication, verbal and non-verbal, necessary for the establishment of relations among members of a group or between groups; for the relations among organisms of any kind are governed to a large extent by the forms of communication, both expected and required.

Apart from the many symbols of unity and of function in modern social organisms, ceremonies and ritualistic practices are common (Arnold 1937). There are *rites of passage*, as initiation of apprentices into occupational groups, *rites of intensification*, as conventions, regular meetings and conferences, and *rites of sanctification*, as 'proper channels', formalized reporting systems and the like, not just utilitarian but reinforcing common purpose and solidarity.

Such rituals have an overtly rational basis in that they are apprehended as, or believed to be necessary or ancillary to the purposes of groups, as in Sir Julian Huxley's (a), (b) and (c) (see p. 267). However, there are other rituals more akin to those seen in the higher vertebrates in not being rational, the word 'rational' implying a process of brain functioning, thought or mind, limited to man. The higher vertebrates show awareness (perception) and consciousness (perception of causality) but not, as distinct from man, mind (conception) which is a process stemming from the development of verbal communication. These non-rational rituals are 'emotive', the result of ritualization of behaviour at a 'subconscious' level, just as routine, or habit can be a Pavlovian reflex.

Some of these emotive rituals are specific to organisms, such as those between superordinate and subordinate in particular firms, but several appear to be universal in their distribution and have been observed in African, European and North American cultural systems, and even in a most primitive society like the Eskimo. There are variations which have a cultural background, but the universality of the basic rituals suggest a biological, an hereditary element in this kind of social behaviour of the species *Homo sapiens*. These rituals are biologically necessary. Hence change of environment, such as cultural unfamiliarity, will inhibit their functioning producing a biological 'stress', shown often as somatic symptoms, or, in the social organism, those phenomena classed as 'social pathology' or 'social neurosis'.

Many basic, emotive rituals are associated with situations where there is necessity for resolution of disagreement among members of social organisms, either small or large. These disagreements can be internal to the organism (intra-specific) or external (inter-specific) between members of a larger or looser social organism; as, for example, within firms, or between firms and trade unions and government. If mankind is taken as one

specific organism the rituals of international relations are intra-specific, but are inter-specific if states are regarded as species. The failure in agreement in international relations frequently comes from disturbance of ritual or use of inappropriate ritual, that is, of formalized behaviour patterns. Two examples, for small groups and large groups, may illustrate this general proposition and lay bare the universal and necessary process that requires basic ritual.

A. SMALL GROUPS, up to about a dozen members, which seems to be a rough maximum in size, e.g. the jury, coven, symposium, triclinium, platoon. (This may have relevance to the size of primary groups in both man and the higher vertebrates.) There are five 'leader' and other roles each with expected behaviour patterns. Social psychologists have described at least twenty-three but they are either variants of these five or they are not universal. Above a group membership of twelve there is rapidly increasing competition for role-taking and the group tends to break into subgroups. One example is a meeting, the 'Committee', a form of group that occurs in every society.

The most obvious role is *exdominus* the 'spokesman-leader' who relates the group in action to the external world.* His role-behaviour is relatively aggressive and vociferous, aggressiveness shown by forms of facial expression, tensed musculature as in clenching fists and the like, with concordant oral expressions. Within the group the relations between members are governed by one who has the role of *indominus*, who does not use aggressive mannerisms but is relatively vociferous. A chairman is *indominus*, but, if he is weak, another member acts for the body of the committee—'a good committee man'.

The feelings of the group on matters of principle, 'the sense of the meeting', is expounded by the *exemplar* whose role behaviour is relatively non-aggressive and non-vociferous, typical of the 'sound man' or 'good man on a committee'. The role of *eccentric* is that of one who thinks and/or acts abnormally to the group yet is within its limits of permissible behaviour. His role-behaviour corresponds to his particular eccentricity—one who 'holds strong views' is expected to show in-group aggressiveness in airing them, and one who is 'intellectual' is expected not to be aggressive. The fifth role is *mimetic*. When the other role-takers are in action and their behaviour is normative the rest mimic or tend to mimic that behaviour, through a process of identification.

The bestowal and adoption of role is subconscious, the role behaviours are normative for the culture, the roles are permanent and universal, the role-takers change with the demands of the environment.

B. LARGE GROUPS, but not so large as to prevent face-to-face communication. An example is strike behaviour of a large group in a firm.

Before a strike (a group activity) takes place, there appears to be a regular, consistent sequence of events. Throughout the gathering members meet in *turbate foci* (figure 1) composed of opposing members (usually two or multiples of two) who assume apparently aggressive and vociferous behaviour *at* each other—it is not in-group aggressiveness, it is *at* not *towards*. In this focus there is a recital of 'wrongs', i.e. of threatening, external stimuli. The bystanders who are orientated towards a focus join in with repetitive

* Methectic roles: methectics is the study of social behaviour in terms of bestowed and adopted roles, from 'methexis', participation (Paterson 1955, 1960).

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statements and mimic aggressive gestures. The foci are ephemeral, being reconstituted in other parts of the meeting. Figure 1 *A* and *B* illustrate this change in a gathering of miners in process of coming out on strike (Paterson 1951), and figure 2 *A* and *B* show the change in

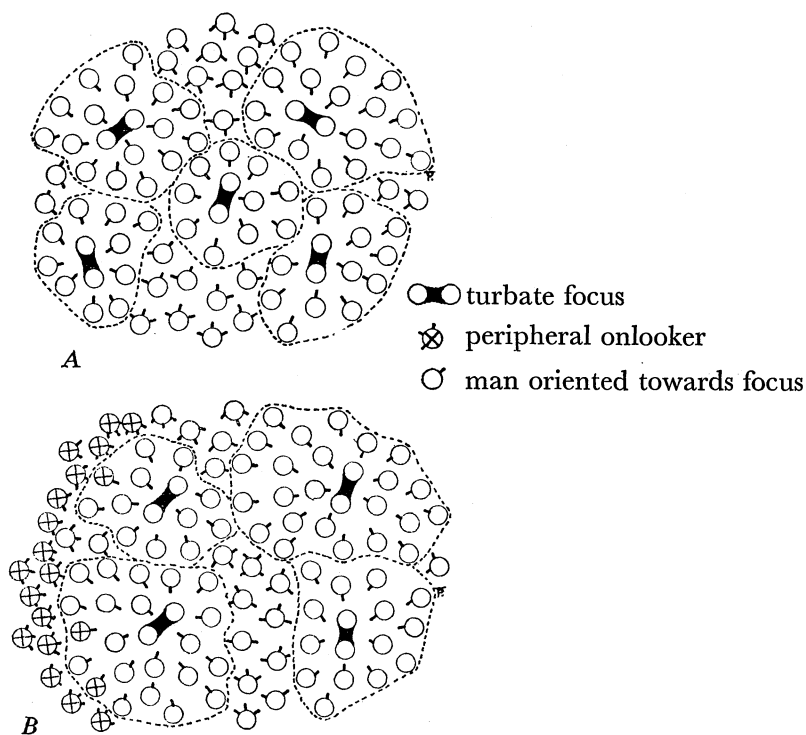


FIGURE 1. Turbate focus.

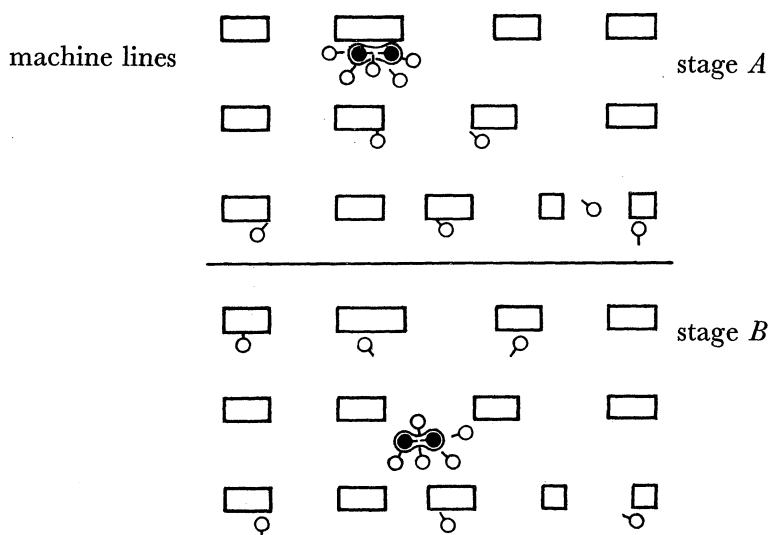


FIGURE 2. Turbate focus. (Key as in figure 1.)

position of the turbate focus among men in a large machine shop. From this welter of information emerges a conclusion which becomes the rationale for a social group coming into being, that is, having a common purpose.

In a matter of seconds in a gathering closely face-to-face (as among the miners of figure 1) or longer, where the members are more dispersed (as among the machinememen

of figure 2) a decision is agreed upon to achieve the purpose. A new focus comes into being, the *disputant focus* in which the kind of action to be taken is decided. This focus may be composed of subgroups or of two parts of a small group, and the members show relatively aggressive and vociferous behaviour directed this time towards the opposing side of the focus. When kind of action is agreed, the strike leader (*exdominus*) emerges. Figure 3 shows the form of the disputant focus in the gathering of miners of figure 1. On the shop floor of figure 2 the disputant focus was composed of shop stewards, who are usually aggressive in their role-behaviour as shop stewards in any case. The strike arguments among shop stewards before a strike are well known.

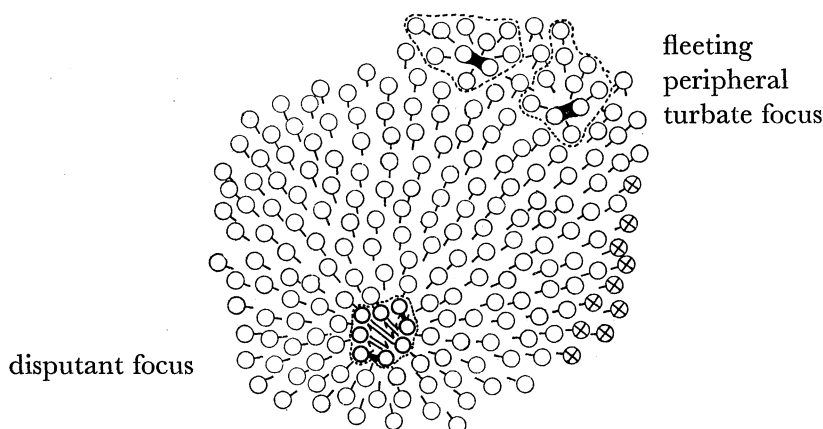


FIGURE 3. The disputant focus. (Key as in figure 1.)

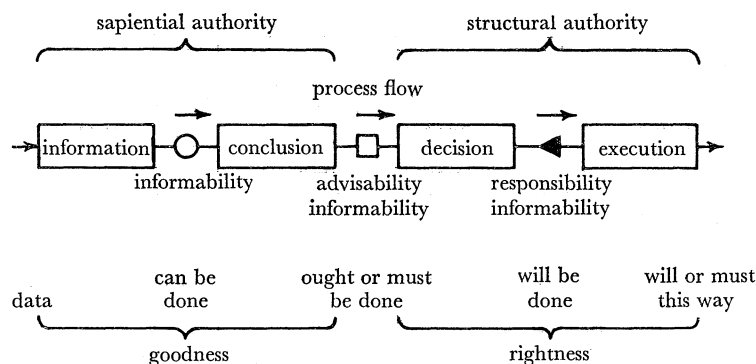


FIGURE 4. The decision process.

Through time strike action can be triggered off by symbols of action; for instance, 'putting on a jacket' by a stevedore coming off a ship to get medical attention is enough to make every docker within visual range stop work. But this reaction to a routine stimulus does not occur unless there has been preceding turbate and disputant activity.

In *larger groups*, in which the members are not in face-to-face contact, the methectic roles are bestowed upon and are adopted by subgroups, with their respective behaviour patterns (modified by cultural differences). For example, one trade union, the exemplar, can be seen to 'set the pace' for the others in the annual round of wage negotiations. The academic body within the nation group is typically an eccentric subgroup, its authority is sapiential and it is not expected to be, nor is it aggressive; although within smaller subgroups, as in senates, the forms of behaviour show ritualized aggression.

All rituals of participation in social organisms can be shown to have their basis in the decision-process, the process by which an organism reacts to stimuli from the environment and by which it can adapt and so survive, survival being the ultimate and biological basis of necessity. Figure 3 illustrates the general systems theory. The process occurs, broadly speaking, in four stages, analysis and categorization of *information*, assessment and judgement of information on possible alternatives of action which is a *conclusion*, a resolution to act, or *decision*, by selection of an alternative, and an *execution*, being a decision on the appropriate way to carry out the alternative.

In the small group information from the environment is categorized and analysed (through eccentric activity mainly) and conclusions reached in the exemplar role. These two roles involve, subconsciously, the vesting with sapiential authority—the right to be heard by reason of knowledge—which is the basis of ‘betteringness’ or ‘goodness’, that is, ‘fittingness’ in change to adapt. (In human social organisms such expressions are ‘naturally’ the basic symbols of a social philosophy.) Upon the conclusion a decision is made to react to the stimulus, the decision-making being controlled by the structural authority—the right to command—of the indominus. The appropriate execution is carried out under the leadership of the exdominus, also vested with structural authority, which is the basis of that which is necessary—proper—for survival, and so ‘rightness’. All our verbal and other signals in this process of ritualized communication for adaptive behaviour carry the imperatives of ‘can’, ‘ought’, ‘must’ and ‘will’. In the strike example the information and conclusion parts of the process are carried out in the ritual of the turbate focus, and the decision on action in the ritual of the disputant focus.

Through this structural decision-process and role-taking each member of a human social organism participates, even though it be only in a mimetic fashion, and he has constructive expression of his idiosyncratic personality, necessary to his recognition of self, through such group activity. Even status differentiation is based upon the hierarchic structure of the decision-process and so has appropriate symbols. To repeat, if the rituals are disturbed, or are inappropriate, or cannot cope with a new stimulus, or a new ritual cannot be devised to cope with a new stimulus, the social organism is under stress, and the members correspondingly react in ways indicating individual stress.

Every form of meeting (subgroup) of members of a social organism can be categorized as a ritual procedure in the decision-system for that organism. There are informative and conclusive conferences and directive and executive committees, and combinations of them. Each may have its own culturally elaborated ritual, but that ritual is an overlay to the universal process. Cultures can be differentiated by the manner in which the forms of authority in the ritualized decision-process are elaborated. For example, in an ‘authoritarian’ culture there is accent upon structural authority.

Generalizing:

(1) The same terms could be used about one of the functions of rituals in industrial society as are used by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard about rituals in African societies. ‘Their mystical form is due to the ultimate and axiomatic character of the body of moral and legal norms which could not be kept in being, as a body, by secular sanctions.... Their symbolic content reflects the basic needs of existence and the basic social relations because

these are the most concrete and tangible elements of all social and political relations'. The basic need is biological survival of the social organism, which requires basic social relations dependent upon the adaptive, decision-making process. The rituals are axiomatic and ultimate; they are mystical because the decision-process of a social organism proceeds at the subconscious level.

(2) Rituals symbolize and have a function in stressing the needs of the whole social organism (the survival of the stock) against the unique needs of the individual, but allow the individual expression by giving him freedom to adapt the needs of his own peculiar personality to those of the whole. This is the essence of the age-old battle between freedom and duty which, in systems-theory terms, is the equilibrium between goodness and rightness (since sapiential authority is individualistic and structural authority stems from the group). There is polarization of these two aspects of the process of progressive adaptation of the human social organism, in the centripetal movements of federations, corporations and similar organisms, as over and against the centrifugal movement of adaptive autonomy of the constituent parts. This often leads to conflict, and rituals assist in reducing it.

(3) Rituals are necessary to the decision-process of human social organisms in their adaptation to the rapidly changing environment of the modern age. The development of rituals to deal with technological change is proceeding in a most primitive, trial-and-error fashion, with the resulting cry that 'social change is not keeping pace with technological'. Strikes, for example, may be good in the sense that they are group methods towards bettering the system, forcing development of rituals (procedures) to deal with employer-employee relations. There is a grave danger that the inability to develop rituals on the international plane may lead to extinction of the species.

(4) The decision system, which includes the communications between its units, is reflected in the brain structure of all vertebrate organisms. Information, conclusion, decision and execution units have their parallels in J. Z. Young's sensory, memory, command and motor cells. Logically, the same decision system holds for the social organism, i.e. where the vertebrate members are mobile. Hence a common approach to the study of rituals as biological phenomena can be made through the general theory of systems; and a part solution of the problems of modern living can be achieved by using the methods of biological science.

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