

Contextualizing the Ritual Dimension:

Enabling Transitions, Making Actions Meaningful

The Ritual Dimension

- Ritual in general refers to actions which have symbolic value.
- From simple greeting rituals to formal state occasions, rituals are embedded in every culture.
- Finding ways to contextualize the ritual dimension of religious experience will involve
 - General understanding the concept of ritual and
 - Particular understanding of the actions, symbolism, and myth(s) undergirding the particular ritual under consideration.

Purposes of Rituals

- Affirm or establish social identity
- Restore or bring order to the universe and facilitate transcendence
- Establish psychological and intellectual identity
- Fix historical identity (e.g., "I have now participated in a ritual that my great-great-great-grandfather went through").
- Store cultural information (through the use of symbolism, much is packed into formal rituals which serve as living dramatized cultural libraries)
- Keep the society from falling apart (acting as a social glue holding things together by providing identity for the culture as a whole)
- Help the culture move from one way of living to another (in the case of social transition, rituals can pave the way for people to feel continuity with the old ways while simultaneously stepping into the new).

Types of Rituals

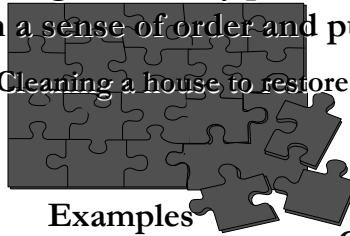
- Rituals of intensification
- Rituals of transition
- Rituals of crisis

Rituals of Intensification

Explanation:

Restore order to a world that is degenerating into chaos and meaninglessness by providing the participant with a sense of order and purpose.

Metaphor: Cleaning a house to restore order



Individual Examples Group

- △ Birthdays
- △ Anniversaries

- △ Festivals
- △ Weekly and lunar rites
- △ National holidays

Rituals of Transition

Explanation:

Change people from one state to another, or mark some transformation in their belief, status, or being. There is great freedom in creativity and newness in transition rites.

Metaphor: Becoming a home owner

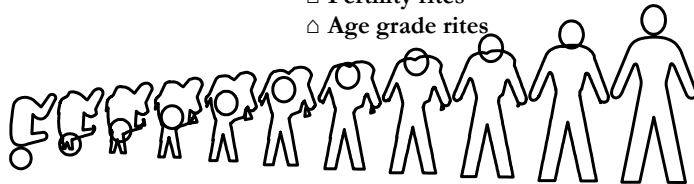
Examples

Individual

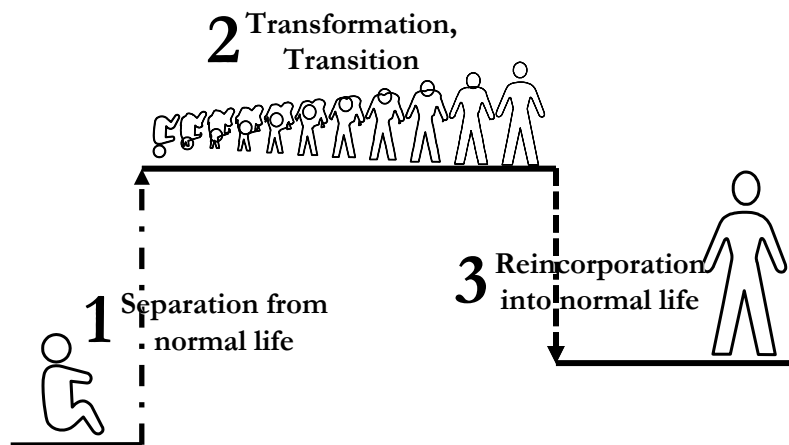
- △ Life cycle rites:
- △ Pre-birth
- △ Birth
- △ Naming
- △ Puberty
- △ Marriage
- △ Eldership
- △ Funerals
- △ Pilgrimages
- △ Conversion
- △ Revival

Group

- △ Life cycles of the powers
- △ New Year
- △ Fertility rites
- △ Age grade rites



Stages in Rituals of Transition



Rituals of Crisis

Explanation:

Used to prevent or deal with crises. Performed as needed, not necessarily on a regular basis.

Metaphors: Locking the doors at night;
Dealing with a loud bang

Examples

Individual

- △ Healing
- △ Love
- △ Guidance
- △ Success rituals



Group

- △ Ending drought
- △ War preparation
- △ Choosing a ruler
- △ Witch identification