



Collective Effervescence and Communitas: Processual Models of Ritual and Society in Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner

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Abstract. The author delineates a previously unnoticed equivalency between Emile Durkheim's concept of *collective effervescence* and Victor Turner's *communitas*. The processual model of ritual and society contained within Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, similar to the one later developed by Turner, is then outlined. Durkheim's and Turner's models are compared, including their emphases on the alienating nature of social structure, and the necessity of a dialectical tension between it and collective effervescence/communitas. Finally, the models are considered in light of recent scholarship in transpersonal anthropology and the anthropology of consciousness.

The lineage stretching from Emile Durkheim to the functionalist and structural functionalist theorists he influenced, such as Bronislaw Malinowski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Talcott Parsons, and Max Gluckman is commonly known. Victor Turner was one of Gluckman's students, and acknowledges in many of his publications that his pedigree was the structural functional school of British social anthropology. Turner can be placed in what S. Lukes¹ calls the neo-Durkheimian tradition that views religious thought and ritual as expressing and dramatizing social relationships. This includes writers such as Leach, Firth, and Beattie. On a macroscopic scale therefore, viewing Turner's work as a development of Durkheim's ideas is quite logical.

There is a link between Turner and Durkheim, however, that has gone relatively unnoticed, yet which carries with it a number of important implications for the anthropology of religion, especially in the light of recent renewed interest in Durkheim's work. In particular, there is a link between Durkheim's treatment of ritual and his notion of collective effervescence, and Turner's theories of ritual, the social process, and his concept of *communitas*. In fact, I will demonstrate that the outline of Turner's theory of ritual and society was present, in germinal form, in Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*,² and that striking similarities exist between the two writers' processual models of ritual and society. While Turner was obviously influenced by Durkheim to the same general degree as British structural functional anthro-

pologists, and in fact writes at one point that "In many ways my methodology is Durkheimian,"³ his theories of ritual and society, and his central concepts of liminality, *communitas*, and dialectic, appear not to have been borrowed directly from Durkheim; at least Turner has never acknowledged that they were.

Especially in the light of new interpretations of Durkheim's work on religion,⁴ a few commentators have enumerated similarities between certain of Durkheim's concepts and Turner's celebrated theory of ritual.⁵ But these comparisons have been superficial, neither going into great detail nor depth of analysis. However, a closer examination of the writings on religion of these two important figures of anthropological and sociological theory reveals the existence of similar models of the ritual and social process. Further, although both are often erroneously pigeonholed as theorists on the maintenance of social order and functional equilibrium, I will demonstrate that in fact *both* scholars were concerned with the problem of social creativity and change, and latent within their writings is an ideological, sometimes metaphysical conception of human society. I will also argue that both recognized the existence of religious phenomena for which they did not possess appropriate terminology, and were reluctant to write about, yet which they knew were important to their theories of religion. Finally, I will discuss how their models of the symbolic process, conceived in 1912 and the 1960's, are still valid, and are congruous with recent developments in the anthropology of consciousness.

Durkheim and Turner on Religion

My purpose in this paper is not to provide a comprehensive review of Durkheim's or Turner's theories, but to highlight striking similarities between some of the concepts and aspects within them. However, a brief recapitulation of the development of their thought on religion and ritual is in order.

W.S.F. Pickering, in the second edition of his collection of some of Durkheim's most important writings on religion and critical reactions to them, remarks that "Interest in Durkheim's life and work has probably never been as widespread as it is at the moment, both within the sociological world and beyond it."⁶ Although originally written in 1975, that statement applies equally well to the present day. Interest in Durkheim and reinterpretations and re-evaluations of his work are as popular now as ever, as evinced by the number of journals recently devoting entire issues to his ideas and writings, the continued publication of *Durkheim Studies/Études durkheimiennes* (now over 2 decades old), new translations of his works,⁷ and a host of new publications critically recasting his thought.⁸

Although Durkheim wrote on a wide variety of subjects, and is usually identified with the functionalist model of social analysis, he gave great prominence to religion in his thoughts and work throughout his career, particularly toward the end of his life,⁹ and more than one author has highlighted his belief that religion is the source of everything social,¹⁰ and indeed of the categories of thought itself.¹¹ Although an atheist himself, Durkheim had much exposure to religious life, and he recognized its power to move people. As a testament to how important a place religion held in Durkheim's thought, Pickering makes the observation that he used it as the basis to explain his lifelong obsession – society.¹²

Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: le système totémique en Australie is most often cited as Durkheim's magnum opus,¹³ and was the book that inspired Steven Lukes to write what is considered by many to be the definitive historical and intellectual biography on Durkheim.¹⁴ *The Elementary Forms* is without question Durkheim's most comprehensive and definitive treatment of religion – although he had written on the subject previously¹⁵ – and some claim the closest he came to a systematization and unification of his theories:

Although many issues raised in this book are clarified by reference to his other mature writings as well as those of his school, this book contains the fullest statement Durkheim ever achieved of his theory of society, religion, and the categories.¹⁶

Durkheim's understanding and investigation of religion can be roughly divided into two phases – the periods preceding and succeeding his 1894–1895 lecture course on religion, which he has described as the turning point in his study of the subject.¹⁷ It was around that time that he discovered Robertson Smith, and turned to “the cult” in examining religion. As Lukes notes, Robertson Smith's approach would naturally have appealed to him, since it allowed him to study religion sociologically, and it came at a time which was flourishing with psychological, illusionist, and nature-myth theories, such as those of Spencer, Tylor, and Müller.¹⁸ Up until this time, Durkheim had written on religion, but he had primarily conceived it as having the role of assuring the equilibrium of society and adapting it to external conditions. With the lecture course of 1894–1895, however, and with the publication of his 1899 article, “De la définition des phénomènes religieux” (On the Definition of Religious Phenomena), Durkheim began to look at religion sociologically, and began working out a hypothesis of its inherently social genesis and function. The crucial difference between the periods 1894–1899 and from 1899 to the publication of *The Elementary Forms* was the part that ethnography played in his work. Lukes remarks

that, in the pre-ethnographic phase of 1894–1899, “Durkheim’s approach was largely formal and rather simplistic,” while during the period from 1899 to the publication of *The Elementary Forms*, Durkheim buried himself primarily in the Australian ethnographic materials, and his treatment of religion became “considerably more nuanced and complex.”¹⁹ Although the results of this self-interment included both “On the Definition of Religious Phenomena” and *The Elementary Forms*, as noted above the latter publication is by far Durkheim’s most coherent and comprehensive exposition of his thoughts on the subject, and it is primarily upon its contents that I will base my arguments in this paper. The translation I use is the new one by Fields.²⁰

The numerous errors within *The Elementary Forms* have been pointed out,²¹ not least of which was the inherent evolutionism underlying it, its misuse of the ethnographic materials, its severely flawed methodology, and its logical fallacies. But as Lukes²² and Pickering²³ note, Durkheim’s work on religion is still valuable, especially for its ideas, provided that we are sure to conceive of the social realities to which religious phenomena are related in a much more complex and much less unitary fashion than Durkheim did.²⁴

Victor Turner

Victor Turner probably did more to raise the methods, understanding, and profile of the study of religion and ritual in anthropology than any other writer. Turner is considered by many to be the father of symbolic anthropology, perhaps even of the new field of ritual studies. He considered himself a generalist whose theories were applicable to a wide range of social formations.²⁵ His work has been translated into many languages, and has informed studies in such diverse fields as history,²⁶ theology,²⁷ psychotherapy,²⁸ theatre studies,²⁹ literature and art,³⁰ education,³¹ cultural studies,³² music,³³ tourism and play,³⁴ classical studies,³⁵ American studies,³⁶ and history of religion,³⁷ although, as D. Handelman notes,³⁸ many of these have poorly understood and used his ideas.³⁹

In ethnographic terms Turner was an Africanist. His primary fieldwork was among the Ndembu of Zambia, and it was to these experiences that he frequently returned when developing his theories, although he did later fieldwork in the Middle East, Mexico, and North America, especially on pilgrimage phenomena. His wife Edith, who has become a leading figure in ritual studies, writes that Turner’s theories were always born from his fieldwork, from the ground up.⁴⁰ Turner developed a theory of ritual that viewed it as a process, rather than as static or given, as virtually all of the anthropology before him had seen it. Under Turner’s methodology, rituals are to be analyzed as performances or dramas. In developing his model of the ritual process, Turner borrowed van Gennep’s three phase model of rites of

passage. He stated that van Gennep originally meant for his model to apply not only to rites of passage, but to all rituals,⁴¹ and this is what Turner in fact did. He emphasized the importance of the middle phase of ritual, the liminal phase, and focused his research on it, examining what he called liminoid phenomena that existed apart from formal rituals and in the interstices of social structure, especially in complex societies. Within the liminal phase of ritual, and within liminoid phenomena, Turner asserted that *communitas* could develop. We will examine *communitas* in more detail later, but in brief it refers to a state of equality, comradeship, and common humanity, outside of normal social distinctions, roles, and hierarchies. Turner saw all societies as dialectical processes of the interplay of social structure and "anti-structure," which is comprised of liminality and *communitas*. Toward the end of his career, he applied his concepts of liminality and *communitas* to the study of liminoid phenomena in complex societies, such as countercultural movements and pilgrimages. A number of excellent general discussions of Turner's thought are available,⁴² as are critical appraisals of it.⁴³

Ritual as the Basis of Religion and Society

Within the writings of both Durkheim and Turner can be found the idea of ritual as the basis of religion, and indeed of society. In agreement with Durkheim, Turner believed that ritual has the function of making and remaking society: "Ritual is a periodic re-statement of the terms in which men of a particular culture must interact if there is to be any kind of coherent social life."⁴⁴ Ritual to Turner is the "concentration of custom,"⁴⁵ it is the place where a society's values, norms, and deep knowledge of itself are reaffirmed, and sometimes, created.

To claim the primacy of ritual for Turner's writings is not difficult; his entire theory of the processual nature of society was spawned from his work on ritual and his model of the ritual process. Making the case for the primacy of ritual in Durkheim's work, while more difficult, is possible with a careful reading of *The Elementary Forms*, as well as the insight of some of Durkheim's commentators.

To begin with, Durkheim, like Turner, granted ontological status both to religion and ritual.⁴⁶ Criticizing as untenable the animist and naturist theories of religion, which ultimately rested upon the premise of the delusion and hallucination of believers, he states that from his viewpoint, "Religion ceases to be an inexplicable hallucination of some sort and gains a foothold in reality."⁴⁷ For Durkheim "religious forces are real," and while science is said to deny religion in principle, "... religion exists; it is a system of given facts; in short, it is a reality. How could science deny a reality?"⁴⁸ In the same sense,

neither is ritual foolish and delusional activity on the part of worshippers: "That is why we can be certain that acts of worship, whatever they may be, are something other than paralyzed force, gesture without motion."⁴⁹

Durkheim recognized that ritual is powerful; it has effects on people, and does not simply make them *feel* stronger, it *makes* them stronger.⁵⁰ As he notes in the conclusion of *The Elementary Forms*, although most of the theorists who came before him attempted to explain religion in terms of beliefs or knowledge, their slighting of ritual was erroneous, as "Its true function is to make us act and to help us live," and "... it is action that dominates religious life, for the very reason that society is its source."⁵¹ E. Wallwork describes how Durkheim realized, like Saint-Simon, that cold, sociological analysis was not enough to create solidarity and motivate citizens to moral behaviour; ritual was needed for this.⁵²

Yet not only did Durkheim believe that ritual was real and had inherent power, it played a vital part in his theory of religion and society. In his *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion*, considered the best exposition of Durkheim's thought on religion,⁵³ W.S.F. Pickering stresses the point that there has been a notable lack of attention to Durkheim's theory of ritual and collective effervescence.⁵⁴ As is well known, Durkheim follows the tradition of dividing religion into a twofold structure of belief and action. Pickering states that he does this because "he was convinced of the importance of ritual, something clearly demonstrated in his own work."⁵⁵ A number of other writers have come to this conclusion also,⁵⁶ despite the fact that Durkheim has traditionally been interpreted as emphasizing the role of belief in religion. Pickering also notes that little critical attention was paid to the sections on ritual in *The Elementary Forms* when it was published, and Durkheim himself even appears to have played down the sections on ritual, all of which is most likely due to the emphasis placed upon belief in the intellectual climate at the time.⁵⁷

However, a re-examination of *The Elementary Forms* and some of Durkheim's other writings illustrates that he viewed ritual not only as the basis of religion, but also as generative of society itself. For Durkheim, ritual was nothing less than a system for the making and remaking of society:

... [T]he effect of the cult is periodically to recreate a moral being on which we depend, as it depends upon us. Now, this being exists: It is society.⁵⁸

[Positive rites] ... are deemed to have an effect on things because they serve to remake individuals and groups morally.⁵⁹

Ritual, or what Durkheim often simply calls "assembly,"⁶⁰ "... is the act by which society makes itself, and remakes itself, periodically."⁶¹ Ritual exer-

cises a profound influence or force over its performers. Forces are reawakened in their *consciences*, and intense emotions are stirred up.⁶² Furthermore, "It is in these effervescent social milieux, and indeed from that very effervescence, that the religious idea seems to have been born."⁶³ Durkheim thus does not see ritual as secondary to belief, nor as mere epiphenomenon. As I will discuss later, he sees religious ideas, and social knowledge itself, as born in the collective effervescence of ritual enactments, and periodically strengthened in them as well.

Turner and Durkheim as Symbolic Anthropologists

Victor Turner revolutionized the way that anthropologists view ritual symbols. He viewed them not only as condensations of cultural meanings, even of entire cultures, but also as immensely powerful agents of change; to him symbols were instigative of action. Further, symbols were dynamic, not static entities, gathering and shedding meaning over time. Turner also developed a new methodology for studying ritual symbols, including investigating them in more depth, exploring and privileging multiple levels of exegesis, and comparing them with the total cultural context, outside of individual rituals. That Turner revolutionized the study of ritual and symbol, and created the field of symbolic anthropology, is commonly accepted. Less well recognized is the fact that Durkheim's ideas on religion presaged and predated Turner's symbolic focus by some 60 years.

Although Emile Durkheim is a cornerstone of sociology, and was a catalyst for the development of functionalist, and later structural functionalist theory,⁶⁴ he could also be considered an early symbolic anthropologist, although this interpretation of his work is more difficult to reach, and he certainly did not emphasize it.⁶⁵ Rather, it is a latent feature of his analysis of religion.

As Pickering notes, it has been asserted that Durkheim's intellectual and theoretical development led him toward the end of his career to such an emphasis.⁶⁶ While originally seeking to explain social facts through morphological factors, such as demographic and institutional influences, near the end of his career and during the time that he was working on *The Elementary Forms* Durkheim supposedly began "to search behind these – what might be called 'physical' or structural factors – to those directly related to ideas, to *représentations*, that is, to idealistic or 'spiritual' influences."⁶⁷ This conclusion is still debated, and although the debate originated while Durkheim was still alive, he himself never commented upon it. However, whether or not he made a wholesale shift to an ideological view of the bases of society, or merely emphasized what was already existent in his earlier thought, as

the contributors to *Durkheim and Representations* assert, an examination of the relevant passages of *The Elementary Forms* shows that Durkheim was actually moving toward a symbolic and processual model of religion and society.⁶⁸ Durkheim in fact says as much in several such passages.⁶⁹

An examination of relevant passages of *The Elementary Forms* suggests that, within the processual theory of ritual and social process that underlies the book is a theory of symbolic action. As the idealist metaphysics latent in his work for years began to be more explicitly manifested in his writings, Durkheim came to stress that social life was founded upon ideological factors, that at the heart of the reality of social life are *représentations*, which include symbols, concepts, categories, legends, and myths;⁷⁰ in fact, Durkheim held that *représentations* constitute the key to knowledge, to logic, and to an understanding of mankind,⁷¹ and only through *représentations* can human beings communicate with one another.⁷²

Durkheim stated that collective representations, which are necessary for the existence of society, must be periodically strengthened and recharged. This is the function he ascribed to ritual, as we noted earlier. This is also the function of re-creative effervescence, a term Pickering coins,⁷³ which I will discuss later in more detail. Durkheim thus presented in *The Elementary Forms* a symbolic model whereby society's mythological knowledge of itself, necessarily expressed in collective representations, are re-enacted in ritual, giving them strength, and in the process, giving society cohesion.⁷⁴

Certain passages more explicitly illustrate Durkheim's emphasis on symbolic enactment than others, and as one examines them, one can imagine him struggling to break free of the intellectual paradigms of his day. This is the exact process that Victor Turner underwent, as he too struggled with and finally broke free of the structural functionalism of Radcliffe Brown, Gluckman, and the Manchester school.⁷⁵ Both writers, however, began to drift toward ideological, even metaphysical, models of social processes toward the end of their careers. To focus upon a theorist's early writings, and to pigeon-hole their intellectual development to them, is not only unfair, but is illogical, since social science and indeed intellectual inquiry are by their very nature *processes*, whereby one constantly modifies and refines one's explanation of reality based upon experience and investigation. It is therefore not surprising that both Durkheim and Turner modified their conceptions and explanations of religion and society; if they hadn't, we would be left with their initial and erroneous insights on the subjects, and would not be engaged in discussions such as the present one.

Homo Duplex and Bipolar Binding in Ritual

Another similarity between the theories of Durkheim and Turner has to do with their positing of fundamental dichotomies. Not only did they view society as a process involving alternating experiences between normative and role-governed states, and affect-laden, de-differentiated states, but they viewed human beings and symbols dichotomously as well.

Durkheim conceived of human beings as possessing two *consciences* or beings within them. *Homo duplex* can be viewed in terms of the body and the soul (an extension of the profane and the sacred), the egoistic appetites and moral action, the individual and the social.⁷⁶ The individual self is identified with sensations, the sensual appetites, and egoistic drives. The social self is characterized by disinterest and attachment to something other than ourselves.⁷⁷ Moral behaviour therefore involves the second aspect of the self:

Precisely because society has its own specific nature that is different from our nature as individuals, it pursues ends that are also specifically its own; but because it can achieve those ends only by working through us, it categorically demands our cooperation. Society requires us to make ourselves its servants, forgetful of our own interests.⁷⁸

In concurrence with Durkheim, Turner saw individual needs and the needs of society as often being opposed and contrary:

People have to take sides in terms of deeply entrenched moral imperatives and constraints, often against their own personal preferences. Choice is overborne by duty.⁷⁹

Like Durkheim, he was interested in how societies encouraged their members to conform to norms of behaviour, especially when those norms often entailed the thwarting of individual needs and desires.

Durkheim also recognized the dual nature of effervescent assemblies. He saw that they aroused strong emotions and "psychic exaltation" in participants. He also saw that it is precisely during these exaltations that a society's collective ideals are presented or enacted in symbolic form, in *représentations*.

The representations it [effervescent assembly] works to arouse and maintain are not empty images that correspond to nothing in reality and that we call up for no purpose, merely for the pleasure of watching them appear and combine with one another before our eyes. They are as necessary to the good order of our moral life as food is to the nurture of our physical life. It is through them that the group affirms and maintains itself, and

we know how indispensable the group is to the individual. Thus a rite is something other than a game; it belongs to the serious side of life.⁸⁰

The key to effervescent assemblies and the collective representations they arouse is the joining of feelings and ideas. Emotions, especially intense ones, "spread to all the other mental states that occupy the mind," and pervade and contaminate representative objects, in other words, symbols.⁸¹ Effervescent assemblies thus impart to symbolic objects intense emotions, effectively "making the obligatory desirable," and binding people to the ideals of their social group.⁸²

Turner recognized, as did Durkheim, that ritual frequently involves the experience of strong emotions, that ritual symbols are stimuli of emotion and dominant symbols are saturated with an emotional quality.⁸³ He also saw that one of the crucial properties of ritual was its use of bipolar symbols. These symbols bind the orectic or sensory pole with the ideological pole, effectively linking biological functions and emotion to the moral and social order.⁸⁴ Bipolar symbols thus saturate goals and means with affect and desire. This is the mechanism through which ritual makes and remakes the moral community.

In *The Forest of Symbols*, Turner acknowledges Durkheim's earlier formulation of this model:

Durkheim was fascinated by the problem of why many social norms and imperatives were felt to be at the same time "obligatory" and "desirable." Ritual, scholars are coming to see, is precisely a mechanism that periodically converts the obligatory into the desirable.⁸⁵

Turner recognized, as did Durkheim, that "Ritual adapts and periodically readapts the biopsychical individual to the basic conditions and axiomatic values of human social life."⁸⁶

Durkheim and Turner thus both saw individual and societal drives and goals as sometimes being in conflict with one another. They both held that one of the functions of ritual, *though not the only one*, is to "make the obligatory desirable," in other words, to encourage a society's members to conform to the norms, values, and ultimately, moral behaviour embodied in its dominant symbols. Ritual does this, they saw, through its generation of strong emotions, and through its use of bipolar symbols. These symbols effectively bind strong emotional content with "higher," more abstract cognitive content such as behavioural norms, values, and cultural ideals. Ritual thus performs a constraining function in society, but both Turner and Durkheim recognized a quite opposite function as well.

Emile Durkheim's Collective Effervescence

Although the concept of collective effervescence has usually been kept in the background in Durkheimian studies, and for many years was not discussed in any systematic or comprehensive way, it has recently received increased attention,⁸⁷ and at least one group of authors has begun to recognize its importance in Durkheim's underlying model of social change and revitalization in *The Elementary Forms*.⁸⁸ Perhaps one reason for its relative neglect is the fact that Durkheim often uses it interchangeably with such terms as moral density, concentration, heat, sentiments, emotion, and delirium, and nowhere defines it precisely.⁸⁹

Some writers have posited a similarity between Durkheim's collective effervescence and Turner's *communitas*.⁹⁰ However, these analyses do not go into great detail, and in fact misunderstand the depth and the extent of the similarities between the two concepts and the models from which they derive. I will now show how in fact Durkheim's collective effervescence and Turner's *communitas* are functionally equivalent concepts, and how both were used in very similar models of ritual and social process, although Durkheim predated Turner by over 60 years, and Turner appears never to have acknowledged Durkheim in the development of *communitas* or his processual theories of ritual and society.

We have already established that an intrinsic part of Durkheim's theory of religion was the recognition of periodic effervescent assemblies or rituals. Collective effervescence was for Durkheim not epiphenomenon, but ontological fact. He describes it in a few passages in *The Elementary Forms*:

The very act of congregating is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation. Every emotion expressed resonates without interference in consciousnesses that are wide open to external impressions, each one echoing the others. The initial impulse is thereby amplified each time it is echoed, like an avalanche that grows as it goes along. And since passions so heated and so free from all control cannot help but spill over, from every side there are nothing but wild movements, shouts, downright howls, and deafening noises of all kinds that further intensify the state they are expressing.⁹¹

The effervescence often becomes so intense that it leads to outlandish behaviour; the passions unleashed are so torrential that nothing can hold them. People are so far outside the ordinary conditions of life, and so conscious of the fact, that they feel a certain need to set themselves above and beyond ordinary morality. . . . If it is added that the ceremonies are

generally held at night, in the midst of shadows pierced here and there by firelight, we can easily imagine the effect that scenes like these are bound to have on the minds of all those who take part. They bring about such an intense hyperexcitement of physical and mental life as a whole that they cannot be borne for very long. The celebrant who takes the leading role eventually falls exhausted to the ground.⁹²

Durkheim stresses that the most important characteristic of collective effervescence is the fact that it is communal, and collective. Its communal aspect gives rise to intense passions and emotions.⁹³ Moreover, it strengthens emotions about the cult by "bring[ing] all those who share them into more intimate and more dynamic relationship."⁹⁴ Durkheim states that the particular character of the sentiments and acts in collective effervescence are of secondary importance. It is the pureness of collective sentiment and social energy that he seems to stress.⁹⁵

Collective effervescence is also likened to a type of delirium, and to ecstatic states, especially as seen in prophets and great religious figures; further, collective effervescence is by its very nature temporary:

It is quite true that religious life cannot attain any degree of intensity and not carry with it a psychic exaltation that is connected to delirium. It is for this reason that men of extraordinarily sensitive religious consciousness – prophets, founders of religions, great saints – often show symptoms of an excitability that is extreme and even pathological: These physiological defects predisposed them to great religious roles. The religious use of intoxicating liquors is to be understood in the same way. ... If, for this reason, it can be said that religion does not do without a certain delirium, it must be added that a delirium with the causes I have attributed to it *is well founded*. The images of which it is made are not pure illusions, and unlike those the naturists and the animists put at the basis of religion, they correspond to something real. Doubtless, it is the nature of moral forces expressed merely by images that they cannot affect the human mind with any forcefulness without putting it outside itself, and plunging it into a state describable as "ecstatic" ... a very intense social life always does a sort of violence to the individual's body and mind and disrupts their normal functioning. This is why it can last for only a limited time.⁹⁶

As we will see with Turner's notion of *communitas*, Durkheim's collective effervescence was criticized as imprecisely referring to a broad range of phenomena, yet Durkheim himself did not intend such referents. Rather, and similar to Turner's *communitas*, collective effervescence refers not to a vague quality associated with any social gathering (as some authors have misinter-

preted it⁹⁷), but to a specific and real social entity involving intention and volition:

Every communion of *conscience* does not produce what is religious. It must moreover fulfil certain specific conditions. Notably, it must possess a degree of unity, of intimacy, and the forces which it releases must be sufficiently intense to take the individual outside himself and to raise him to a superior life. Also, the sentiments so roused must be fixed on an object or concrete objects which symbolize them.⁹⁸

Collective effervescence is thus characterized by intimacy, intensity, and immediacy, yet it involves will and intention, and symbolic focus. It is not simply mob psychology or camaraderie.

Important to a discussion of collective effervescence, especially in comparison with the concept of *communitas*, is the fact that Durkheim recognized its *inherently creative nature*. Effervescence is more present in revolutionary or creative epochs, and in times of social upheaval:

Under the influence of some great collective shock in certain historical periods, social interactions become much more frequent and active. Individuals seek one another out and come together more. The result is the general effervescence that is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs. The result of that heightened activity is a general stimulation of individual energies. People live differently and more intensely than in normal times. The changes are not simply of nuance and degree; man himself becomes something other than what he was.⁹⁹

Pickering notes this also, and as I mentioned earlier, suggests that Durkheim was referring to two different types of "effervescent assembly" in *The Elementary Forms: creative effervescence*, characterized by intense emotion, and in which the outcome is uncertain and may produce new ideas; and *re-creative effervescence*, in which there is also intense emotion and excitement, and a bond of community and unity among participants, such that they feel morally strengthened.¹⁰⁰ Talcott Parsons mentions a weakness of Durkheim's theory of collective effervescence, namely that many admired modes of social conduct defy those of the community, using Socrates as an example.¹⁰¹ But he fails to understand the distinction between creative effervescence and re-creative effervescence. Creative effervescence is a phenomenon during which new ideas in morality can emerge, as well as ideal conceptions of society, and people may believe that those ideal conceptions can be realized.¹⁰² D.A. Nielsen reiterates that new collective representations may, and usually do, result from collective effervescences,¹⁰³ and, in a statement that could easily be attributed to Victor Turner, describes collective effervescences as "settings

of intensely emotional assembly, association and, by implication, breakdown of established social barriers and structures."¹⁰⁴ William Ramp stresses the same characteristics, again in passages which could have been penned by Turner, with "communitas" substituted for "effervescent assemblies": "It is also seen in a compulsion to dissolve limits, differentiation and particularity ... Effervescent assemblies are in this light ambiguously dangerous arenas ..."; effervescence presents "a transgressive possibility fuelled by a de-differentiating impulse in moments of heightened emotional intensity."¹⁰⁵ Collective effervescence, especially creative effervescence, thus implies a dissolution of regular social and normative structures, and is sometimes seen as a danger to these structures. This is exactly the process Victor Turner describes in the emergence of *communitas*.

Re-creative effervescence is necessary for religious and social life. It is the place where moral and spiritual life are re-created and reaffirmed: "Man stands in need of recalling what he has experienced [in creative effervescence]. Such an anamnesis or symbolic re-enactment is achieved through sacred rituals."¹⁰⁶ By these acts, people become aware of and revivify their common bonds.¹⁰⁷ Without re-creative effervescence, religion and society would become listless or die.¹⁰⁸

The only way to renew the collective representations that refer to sacred beings is to plunge them again into the very source of religious life: assembled groups.¹⁰⁹

Re-creative effervescence is also necessary for the stability of society. It reinforces the collective representations society is based upon, and permits the existence of knowledge.¹¹⁰

To sum up to this point: some of the characteristics of collective effervescence are that it is at root an affective phenomenon: it involves states of intense emotion and excitement. It is also intrinsically collective in nature. Indeed, as Durkheim says, the mere fact of people gathering seems to be its genesis, and ritual's most important element.¹¹¹ Further, it possesses an essentially non-rational character.¹¹² Collective effervescence is also ephemeral or momentary in nature, an "active and fluctuating communion";¹¹³ although it is real, it cannot exist in a permanent or prolonged state. It is a temporary condition, and must be "recharged."¹¹⁴ The collective representations on which society is based must be "retempered" in the fires of collective effervescence. Durkheim also noted the ambivalence of effervescence: it can induce solidarity or barbarism.¹¹⁵ And Pickering interprets Durkheim's vague descriptions of the ambiguity of effervescence as his positing two different types: creative effervescence and re-creative effervescence. The first is a source of new religious and moral codes and ideas, and the second is a reviv-

ifying re-enactment of codes and ideas developed during periods of creative effervescence.

W.S.F. Pickering has written that "collective effervescence has something about it that is akin to ritual."¹¹⁶ This is not quite right. In actuality, collective effervescence, like Turner's *communitas*, is a phase or aspect of social existence that can arise in ritual – it is actually a feature of many rituals. During the period when he wrote *The Elementary Forms*, Durkheim was wrestling with social creativity, but, much like Victor Turner, he was stuck in his paradigm (although Turner did manage to escape to a greater degree and elaborate on his ideas of social creativity). He saw that the collective effervescence occurring in rituals was an extremely creative and liberating force, productive of new mythopoeia which could become the mythological and moral charter of a society. Yet he also recognized the integrative aspect of collective effervescence: its function and role as an intense collective experience in the re-enactment and revivification of the mythological and moral identity of a society. When we examine Victor Turner's concept of *communitas*, we find an undeniable similarity with Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence, and we see that the two had very similar understandings of the ritual process, as well as of social creativity and society itself. In fact, Turner once wrote that Durkheim's proposition that social creativity occurs in collective effervescence was his "best moment,"¹¹⁷ and also likened liminal phenomena to Durkheim's collective representations.¹¹⁸

Victor Turner's *Communitas*

Similar to Durkheim and collective effervescence, Turner did not view *communitas* as epiphenomenon. It is not regression to infancy, nor is it fantasy;¹¹⁹ it is an ontological reality:

Just because the *communitas* component is elusive, hard to pin down, it is not unimportant.¹²⁰

Communitas is a fact of everyone's experience, yet it has almost never been regarded as a reputable or coherent object of study by social scientists. It is, however, central to religion, literature, drama, and art, and its traces may be found deeply engraven in law, ethics, kinship, and even economics.¹²¹

Turner acknowledged borrowing the term *communitas* from Paul Goodman.¹²² One can find numerous descriptions of it in his writings, yet his conception of it remained essentially the same throughout them. He repeatedly likened it to Buber's sense of *I-Thou*,¹²³ and in his later writings to Csikszentmihalyi's concept of *flow*,¹²⁴ although neither analogy accurately

captures it. *Communitas* is an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and undifferentiated communion or community of equal individuals.¹²⁵ It is an essential and generic human bond;¹²⁶ "it involves the whole man in relation to other whole men," and is the "quick" of human inter-relatedness,¹²⁷ devoid of judgementality;¹²⁸ it is comprised of egalitarian, direct, non-rational bonds between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals who are equal in terms of a shared humanity;¹²⁹ it is a modality of human interrelatedness,¹³⁰ "human beings stripped of status role characteristics – people 'just as they are,' getting through to each other . . ." ¹³¹ The experience of *communitas* is also usually a "deep" or intense one, and belongs in the intuitive or emotional realm, as opposed to the rational one.¹³²

Turner defined *communitas* as fundamentally opposed to what he called "structure." As he often reiterated, what he meant by structure was the Mertonian sense of "the patterned arrangements of role-sets, status-sets and status sequences" consciously recognized and regularly operative in a given society and closely bound up with legal and political norms and sanctions."¹³³ Although Turner has been interpreted incorrectly by many as a structural functionalist,¹³⁴ he repeated many times in his writings that his models of ritual and society were reactions and alternatives to traditional functional and structural functional interpretations of society. He asserted that sociologists and anthropologists who equated society with social structure were on the wrong track, and even that he had become disillusioned with the stress on congruence and fit shared by functionalism and different types of structuralism.¹³⁵

... [I]t is too often held by sociologists and anthropologists that "the social" is at all times identical with the "social-structural," that man is nothing but a *homo hierarchicus*.¹³⁶

In fact, for Turner social structure has a limiting or negative impact upon people. It causes them to be segmented into roles they must play,¹³⁷ it ultimately limits individuals and society,¹³⁸ it holds people apart, defines their differences, and constrains their actions,¹³⁹ and it separates man from man, and man from absolute reality; it attempts to describe the continuous in discontinuous terms.¹⁴⁰ Turner believed that sociologists and anthropologists who held the structural functional view of society could ultimately see it only as "a structure of jural, political, and economic positions, offices, statuses, and roles, in which the individual is only ambiguously grasped behind the social persona."¹⁴¹ Further, he believed that previous thinkers and writers, such as Heidegger, who stated that society or the social self holds the individual back or is the root of the inauthentic self, were in error. Their problem was that they mistook "society" for social structure.¹⁴² There are two parts to society, only one of which is social structure.

Also in contradistinction to structure, *communitas* is in its very nature a transitory and temporary entity.¹⁴³ It is intrinsically dynamic, never quite being realized.¹⁴⁴ In addition, "... the spontaneity and immediacy of *communitas* – as opposed to the jural-political character of structure – can seldom be maintained for very long."¹⁴⁵ In fact, liminality, the state in which *communitas* can emerge, can be both creative and destructive.¹⁴⁶ It is equated with movement and change,¹⁴⁷ and with transient humility or modelessness.¹⁴⁸ Descriptions of *communitas* by members of religious or millenarian or revivalist groups often resemble an Edenic, paradisiacal, or utopian state.¹⁴⁹ It is portrayed as a timeless condition, the eternal now, a moment in and out of time.¹⁵⁰

Turner distinguished between three different types of *communitas*: existential or spontaneous *communitas*, such as the type that occurs during a counter-culture "happening"; normative *communitas*, which occurs as *communitas* is transformed from its existential state due to the need for social control; and ideological *communitas*, such as found in utopian societies.¹⁵¹ Normative and ideological *communitas* are in a sense diluted, as they are already imbued with social structure. Turner believed that all spontaneous *communitas* in the course of history would suffer this fate. He used this idea to present a model for the development and decline of millenarian and charismatic movements, and even of major religions, which closely resembles the one proposed by Durkheim.

In the sense that "pure," or existential *communitas* is not yet impinged by structure, it is spontaneous and self-generating, another feature which opposes it to the specialized and constructed nature of social structure.¹⁵² Sharing another similarity with Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence, Turner's *communitas* does not, however, refer to a purely instinctual or unconscious process. As we saw with Durkheim, he was incorrectly criticized for proffering collective effervescence as nothing more than a type of crowd psychology. In actuality, he demonstrated that collective effervescence involved will and intention. The same is true for *communitas*: "*Communitas* is not merely instinctual; it involves consciousness and volition."¹⁵³ It is not just the "herd instinct,"¹⁵⁴ nor is it simply the "pleasurable and effortless comradeship that can arise between friends, co-workers, or professional colleagues any day." It is a transformative experience that goes to the heart of each person's being and finds in it something profoundly communal and shared.¹⁵⁵

Turner also made the link between holiness or sacredness and *communitas*, as did Durkheim between sacredness and collective effervescence. In that it is set apart from social structure and the regular workings of society, it often possesses a sacred character, especially when it occurs as a feature of

ritual. Turner discusses mendicant orders, pilgrimages, and rites of passage as examples of sacred *communitas*. However, he cautions that it should not simply be equated with the sacred, nor should social structure simply be equated with the profane.

A final aspect of Turner's *communitas* relevant to a comparison with Durkheim's collective effervescence is its creative function. Turner stated that while *communitas* can function as an aid to the imparting of gnostic instruction in a culture's norms, values, and axioms through the presenting of the *sacra*,¹⁵⁶ it can also be subversive of the social order.¹⁵⁷ In liminality, the state in which *communitas* occurs, culture is analyzed into factors and freely recombined and experimented with.¹⁵⁸ "The novices are taught that they did not know what they thought they knew. Beneath the surface structure of custom was a deep structure, whose rules they had to learn, through paradox and shock."¹⁵⁹ Skepticism and initiative are encouraged,¹⁶⁰ as well as scrutinization and questioning of the governing moral order:

We find social relationships simplified, while myth and ritual are elaborated. That this is so is really quite simple to understand: if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from nominal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period of scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs.¹⁶¹

Anti-structure can thus be a positive and generative force,¹⁶² and is a condition in which myths, symbols, rituals, philosophy, and art are generated, which are templates for the periodical reclassification of reality and man's relationship to society, nature, and culture. And strongly echoing Durkheim, Turner continues, "But they are more than classifications, since they incite men to action as well as to thought. . . . each is capable of moving people at many psychological levels simultaneously."¹⁶³ Turner thus stated, as did Durkheim, that *communitas* (collective effervescence) produces new symbols, myths, and other mythopoeia, which often go on to form utopian or alternative models, or new symbolic bases for societies.¹⁶⁴ In fact, Turner states that a whole cultural structure, embodied in symbols, may suddenly emerge from the creativity of *communitas*.¹⁶⁵

Collective Effervescence/Communitas

After the foregoing analysis of Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence and Turner's *communitas*, it should be apparent that both men were writing about the same phenomenon, although to differing degrees of depth and precision. While Turner spent most of his academic life exploring the concepts and historical manifestations of liminality and *communitas*, which together

comprise what he called anti-structure, many writers have pointed out that Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence was relatively undeveloped in his work on religion. Nevertheless, we can delineate fundamental similarities between the two.

First, both terms are defined vaguely by their creators, and what definitions exist are ideological, almost metaphysical, in quality. At times collective effervescence/communitas refers to a moral force, an intense emotional surge, and a type of collective delirium or ecstasy. Second, both collective effervescence and communitas are social *realities* in the writings of both men. Rather than epiphenomena, they are real and crucial parts of the ritual and social process. Third, the fundamental character of both concepts is their collective nature. Durkheim and Turner both developed them in the study of ritual,¹⁶⁶ and both attributed to them a de-differentiating, transgressive, levelling, and equalizing nature. Fourth, both phenomena are associated with intense experiences, and especially with intense emotional content. In addition, both Durkheim and Turner recognized the mechanism through which emotions and natural biological functions were linked with higher cognitive processes, such as the formation of norms, values, axioms, and other cultural content – the bipolar symbol. Fifth, both saw the concepts as existing outside of the normal social existence of a group, and also as permitting behaviour not normally accepted within normal social existence. Further, both recognized the crucial point that collective effervescence/communitas is immediate, spontaneous, and of the now; it can only possess a temporary existence. While it is necessary in the ritual and social process, it cannot last indefinitely. Sixth, both Durkheim and Turner saw the intrinsically creative side of collective effervescence/communitas. They recognized it as both a tool in the re-enactment function of ritual – renewing the mythological and moral charter of a society – and also in the revitalizing function – the creation of new ideas, values, norms, myths, and ways of being in a society. Seventh, both writers recognized the ambiguous character of collective effervescence/communitas. While it can be an enormously creative force, it can be destructive also.

And finally, Durkheim and Turner both recognized that social structure, while necessary to facilitate the physical survival of a society, is in its intrinsic nature *alienating*. The experience of collective effervescence/communitas is a fundamental human need which acts to counterbalance this alienation. Society cannot exist but in a dialectical tension between collective effervescence/communitas and social structure, and in fact the achievement of a harmonious balance between the two has been the goal of all societies throughout history, and presents a model for the rise and fall of religious

groups, including the major religions. We will now turn to a discussion of this dialectic.

Ritual and Society as Dialectical Process

Not only are Durkheim's collective effervescence and Turner's *communitas* functionally equivalent, but they are also used in nearly identical models of the ritual and social processes. As we noted earlier, both Turner and Durkheim posited a dual nature of humanity. On one hand, they recognized that if society is to function, if material needs are to be met, there must be a division of labour and specialization of tasks. And in complex societies, those divisions and specializations multiply and increase in complexity. All societies, and especially complex societies, cannot function without social structure, in order for them to meet their physical needs. In the course of this structuring and specialization of roles and tasks, society's needs are often pitted against those of the individual. Durkheim sometimes took this to an extreme and essentially equated individualism with amorality. To serve the needs of society, which in turn serves *some of their needs*, individuals must be constrained, must be checked in the fulfillment of egoistic drives and desires. This reading of Durkheim, and of Turner, is commonly accepted.

However, both Turner and Durkheim realized that social structure and the constraints that it places upon people are essentially *alienating*. Although not widely acknowledged, this interpretation of Durkheim and Turner, if correct, would place them in the company of such social thinkers as Marx, Gramsci, and Heidegger. In fact, such an interpretation is possible.

Turner states explicitly, especially towards the end of his career, that social structure creates alienation.

Class structures are only one species of structures so defined, and a measure of alienation adheres to all, including so-called tribal structures, insofar as all tend to produce distance and inequality, often leading to exploitation between man and man, man and woman, and old and young.¹⁶⁷

Life as a series and structure of status incumbencies inhibits the full utilization of human capacities, or as Karl Marx would have said, in a singularly Augustinian fashion, "the powers that slumber within man."¹⁶⁸

Turner believed that although it is necessary to ensure the satisfaction of the physical and material needs of society, and to prevent anomie, social structure divides, differentiates, and segments human beings.¹⁶⁹ Human existence solely within social structure would quickly stagnate and die without some kind of revitalizing force. Turner believed that force to be *communitas*.

For Turner, society can only be viewed as processual. More specifically, Turner believed that all societies are dialectical processes of alternating experiences of structure and *communitas*:

"Societas," or "society," as we all experience it, is a process involving both social structure and *communitas*, separately and united in varying proportions.¹⁷⁰

In human history, I see a continuous tension between structure and communitas, at all levels of scale and complexity. Structure, or all that which holds people apart, defines their differences and constrains their actions, is one pole in a charged field, for which the opposite pole is *communitas*, or anti-structure, the egalitarian "sentiment for humanity" of which David Hume speaks, representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship between person and person, a relationship which nevertheless does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness. *Communitas* does not merge identities, it liberates them from conformity to general norms, though this is necessarily a transient condition if society is to continue to operate in an orderly fashion.¹⁷¹

Liminality and *communitas*, together comprising anti-structure, contain "the germ of future social developments, of societal change, in a way that the central tendencies of a social system can never quite succeed in being ..."¹⁷² Their alternation with social structure is thus necessary for the generation of new social ideas, and the regeneration of society.¹⁷³ Innovation takes place in liminal and liminoid phenomena, and often exhibits the values of *communitas*, and then becomes legitimized in social structure.¹⁷⁴ This process applies not only to small-scale, tribal societies, but to complex, industrial ones also. Turner held that "the *communitas* experience, the subjective sense of anti-structure ... has had so many important objective results in the history of religion."¹⁷⁵

The experience of *communitas* is also a necessity for the proper functioning of social structure. Without it, structure can begin to stagnate and die, or become too partisan and individualistic. It must be periodically imbued with the anti-structural values of *communitas*, and made to serve the common good.¹⁷⁶ This occurs in ritual.

Turner argues that religious orders, and millenarian, revivalist, and countercultural groups attempt to perpetuate or normalize *communitas*, to establish "the kingdom of heaven on earth."¹⁷⁸ Yet *communitas* by its nature resists permanence, and social structure inevitably seeps into these movements, routinizing them in the Weberian sense. *Communitas* then becomes regarded as a symbol. Turner uses this model to explain not only new social and reli-

gious movements, but also major religions.¹⁷⁹ The ideal, Turner states, and what religions actually strive for, is to achieve a harmonious balance between structure and *communitas*. The ideal is to place social structure in the service of *communitas*: "The ultimate desideratum, however, is to act in terms of *communitas* values even while playing structural roles ..." *Communitas* in this sense "purifies" and strengthens structure.¹⁸⁰

Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* contains a model of ritual and society as process almost identical to Turner's. While Durkheim did not emphasize ritual as much as he might have, favouring instead his concern for morality, order, and ethics, the model is undeniably present in the book.

Durkheim saw collective effervescence, similar to *communitas*, as an emotion-laden, energizing, revitalizing force within society. He gave it ontological status, and saw it as an eternal feature of human society. Indeed, as mentioned above, he saw religion as being born from effervescent assemblies.¹⁸¹ Collective effervescence, as a transgressive, de-differentiating,¹⁸² creative, and liberating force, is a counterbalance to normal, structured, and morally regulated social existence. It is an experience of intense creativity, definitively outside of normal social life, from which new myths and ideas spring. But due to its volatile, de-stabilizing, and even sacred nature, collective effervescence can only be temporary in nature. Similar to *communitas*, collective effervescence must exist in dialectical tension with social structure;¹⁸³ too much of either one can lead to a type of militancy. Collective effervescence increases the intimacy of human relationships, and makes them more human, as opposed to the partisan, self-interested nature of material existence that can develop in social structure:

In fact, if religious ceremonies have any importance at all, it is that they set collectivity in motion: groups come together to celebrate them. Thus their first result is to bring individuals together, multiply the contacts between them, and make those contacts more intimate. That in itself modifies the content of consciousnesses. On ordinary days, the mind is chiefly occupied with utilitarian and individualistic affairs. Everyone goes about his own personal business; for most people, what is most important is to meet the demands of material life; the principal motive of economic activity has always been private interest. Of course, social feelings could not be absent altogether. We remain in relationship with our fellow men; the habits, ideas, and tendencies that upbringing has stamped on us, and that ordinarily preside over our relations with others, continue to make their influence felt. But they are constantly frustrated and held in check by the opposing tendencies that the requirements of the day-in, day-out struggle produce and perpetuate. Depending on the intrinsic energy of those social feelings, they hold up more or less successfully; but that

energy is not renewed. They live on their past, and, in consequence, they would in time be depleted if nothing came to give back a little of the strength they lose through this incessant conflict and friction.¹⁸⁴

Durkheim saw this renewal as fundamental and necessary to a healthy, functioning society. A society must be periodically renewed or *revitalized* by rites such as the ones he analyzed in Australian societies:

And so when men feel there is something outside themselves that is reborn, forces that are reanimated, and a life that reawakens, they are not deluded. This renewal is in no way imaginary, and the individuals themselves benefit from it, for the particle of social being that each individual bears within himself necessarily participates in this collective remaking.¹⁸⁵

Durkheim saw rituals, as well as social life, not as static entities, existing in a state of occasionally disturbed equilibrium, but as processual, as fluid: "Like ritual life, social life in fact moves in a circle,"¹⁸⁶ and "social life oscillates" between successive experiences of sacredness and profanity.¹⁸⁷ There is a dialectic constituting society, between the idealized, intimate, and deeply human, and the differentiated, legitimized, and structured.¹⁸⁸ Like Turner, Durkheim stated that social existence was simply not possible without it, and actually lamented the time in which he lived as one of moral and creative stagnation.¹⁸⁹ He longed for a period of renewal, which would come about through an infusion of "*effervescence creatrice*" (creative effervescence).¹⁹⁰

Thus, contrary to their popular interpretations, Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner *both* posited processual models of ritual and society in their writings. Although concerned with the problem of social order, they *both* knew there was more to the social than simply order. They also *both* saw society as resting on symbolism, and they saw symbols as essentially constituting and making durable the experiences had in collective effervescence/communitas, so that their ethos and wisdom could be stored and transmitted to future generations. They also saw social structure as essentially alienating, and posited models whereby it is infused with doses of humanity, intimacy, creativity, and equality, in the form of effervescent- or communitas-laden performances and events. Without the healthy dialectic between collective effervescence/communitas and social structure, social existence could not be. The dialectic constitutes society itself.

Finally, both men saw certain classes of ritual as having a revitalizing force or function upon society, and as involving states of collective effervescence/communitas.¹⁹¹ Although extant in Durkheim, the concept of revitalization rituals in his work has not been taken up in earnest. Other writers have investigated them since him and described a similar process,

right up to the work of Turner. Turner¹⁹² himself acknowledges E.D. Chapple and C.S. Coon¹⁹³ as two of the few writers to take up van Gennep's conceptualization of rites of passage as processual and apply it to other types of ritual – rites of intensification.¹⁹⁴ Anthony Wallace also belongs in this group. His work on revitalization rituals¹⁹⁵ bucked the trend of focusing on the transformation ritual effects on the individual. Wallace described, in the tradition I am crediting to Durkheim, Turner, van Gennep, and Chapple and Coon, how certain communal rites focus on the transformation not of the individual but of the entire social group. Without such revitalizing rituals, he wrote, a society is apt to disintegrate as a system.¹⁹⁶ Revitalization occurs with the formulation of a new, utopian or idealized vision of society (often embodied in a charismatic leader), its dissemination and ritualization, and then its routinization into formal codes of behaviour. Once this code begins to lose its efficacy for the group, a new one will appear, and the process will begin again. Wallace saw all societies as following this cycle. This model should sound familiar.

Conclusion: Bringing Durkheim and Turner into the 21st Century

The critical works on Durkheim written by sociologists and philosophers provide little clarity or precision in the discussion of collective effervescence and its role in ritual and the formation of new ideals and social creativity. Perhaps this is because sociology for the most part ignores symbolic and transpersonal anthropological approaches to the study of ritual and symbolic phenomena. It could also be because, as Pickering states in the introduction to *On Durkheim's Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, "it was thought that such a phenomenon [as collective effervescence] could not be fitted into a scientific approach to social change in society as well as religion."¹⁹⁷ However, engaging symbolic and transpersonal approaches in an examination of Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms* sheds light on the murkiness of previous discussions of the nature and role of collective effervescence in symbolic performance, which are often characterized by such meaningless statements as "The force of the moment [in collective effervescence] may create the ideal. Ideals emerge which are part of the real."¹⁹⁸ Certainly this is not the greatest clarity we can bring to Durkheim's already vaguely defined concept of collective effervescence.¹⁹⁹

Instead, I believe that it is clear from examining Durkheim's and Turner's writings that both were discussing phenomena such as possession trance and other dissociative states in the rituals they read about or, in Turner's case, observed and *experienced*. As I alluded to above, both defined collective effervescence/communitas in terms that often invoke concepts of oneness,

mystical experience, delirium, etc. But not only did they describe it in this way, they actually linked the existential experience of collective effervescence/communitas with such things as ecstasy, ascetic practices, the ingestion of psychotropic substances, physical hardships, etc. Take for example two of Durkheim's descriptions of collective effervescence, one of which was already quoted above:

It is quite true that religious life cannot attain any degree of intensity and not carry with it a psychic exaltation that is connected to delirium. It is for this reason that men of extraordinarily sensitive religious consciousness – prophets, founders of religions, great saints – often show symptoms of an excitability that is extreme and even pathological: These physiological defects predisposed them to great religious roles. The ritual use of intoxicating liquors is to be understood in the same way.²⁰⁰

Probably because a collective emotion cannot be expressed collectively without some order that permits harmony and unison of movement, these gestures and cries tend to fall into rhythm and regularity, and from there into songs and dances. . . . The human voice is inadequate to the task and is given artificial reinforcement: Boomerangs are knocked against one another; bull roarers are whirled. The original function of these instruments, used widely in the religious ceremonies of Australia, probably was to give more satisfying expression to the excitement felt.²⁰¹

Durkheim also discussed ascetic practices, involving physical deprivation and pain,²⁰² and the feeling of being invaded and transformed by strange forces, during effervescent rituals.²⁰³ Similarly, in his writings Turner explicitly linked the experience of communitas with such things as ingestion of psychotropic drugs and rhythmic stimulation through singing and dancing, for example in relation to the communitas emerging in the American counterculture of the 1960's.²⁰⁴ He also repeatedly discussed how communitas is an emergent property of the liminality of mendicant orders, with their emphasis on meditation, fasting, and general physical hardship, and he took a theoretical interest in the neurobiology of ritual toward the end of his career.

I believe that it is not just a coincidence that both Durkheim and Turner discussed such phenomena as rhythmic percussion, singing, dancing, ascetic practices, physical hardship and pain, and ingestion of psychotropic substances, specifically in relation to their concepts of collective effervescence and communitas. Although they somewhat misunderstood the functions and meanings of such phenomena, as when Durkheim says in the passage above that their function is expressive, they were in fact discussing real ritual phenomena which had important implications for their theories; they either simply did not have the terminology or the science to realize it, or

were constrained by their intellectual paradigms from delving further into the real roles and functions of these phenomena.²⁰⁵

I assert that when Durkheim and Turner were discussing collective effervescence/communitas, they were often referring to physiological phenomena occurring both within ritual and outside of it which can result in the production of altered states of consciousness (ASCs). There now exists a sizeable literature on the existence and function of ASCs in ritual and religious phenomena, which permits us to make some brief conclusions about the concept of collective effervescence/communitas.

First, it is apparent that Durkheim and Turner were discussing phenomena that have been widely recognized as driving mechanisms which can produce ASCs. Such mechanisms have been shown to be ubiquitous in religious practices in the majority of known cultures, as are ASCs.²⁰⁶ Drivers are typically associated with repetitive rhythmic stimuli, sensory deprivation and stimulation, fasting, meditation, ingestion of psychotropic drugs, and communal rituals,²⁰⁷ and are believed to function by "retuning" the autonomic nervous system and/or affecting the production, synthesis or inhibition of certain biochemicals in the brain,²⁰⁸ resulting in the production of what Durkheim repeatedly referred to in *The Elementary Forms* as an experience markedly "outside of normal social life."

Second, it has been recognized that ASCs are not only associated with instruction in a culture's mythopoeia, or as Turner would say, its "gnostic," deep knowledge of itself, but also with the production of *new* mythopoeia. Perhaps precisely because they are so qualitatively different from normal waking consciousness, ASCs are productive of new symbols, ideas, and values which are often created or interpreted by a shaman or religious leader and become the foundation of new cosmologies, myths, and norms, even of entire religious movements or cultures.

It should now be clear that the various physiological phenomena that Durkheim and Turner relate to the rituals, countercultural happenings, and ascetic practices they discuss are driving mechanisms, and that when they refer to collective effervescence/communitas as being "outside the normal," they are often referring to ASCs. Their models of the re-creative and creative function of collective effervescence/communitas in ritual map well to current hermeneutic models involving ritual enactment of mythopoeia, experience of ASCs, and verification/modification of cosmology/cultural norms.²⁰⁹ In short, their attempts to model ritual and social process fit well with what we now know about ritual and consciousness.

In this essay I have tried to illustrate how Emile Durkheim, although popularly perceived as a staunch positivist obsessed with the problem of social order, was actually much concerned with creativity, emotion, and

social change. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, his last and best work, presented a model of ritual and the social process that closely matched and predated Victor Turner's novel approach to studying ritual and social change. A detailed comparison demonstrates that the two scholars' concepts of collective effervescence and *communitas* are functionally equivalent, and that both scholars were discussing real ritual phenomena in the form of dissociative and other extraordinary states of consciousness, for which they were perhaps scientifically and paradigmatically unprepared. Nevertheless, the models they presented 30 and 90 years ago still have much to tell us about contemporary ritual phenomena.

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 60. By assemblies, Durkheim does not simply mean crowds, mobs, or hordes. He was sometimes criticized for placing at the heart of his notion of effervescent assembly a type of crowd psychology or hysteria; see M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 20; Evans-Pritchard, *Primitive Religion*, p. 68; A.A. Goldenweiser, review of *Les*

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61. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 425.
62. Ibid., pp. 327–328.
63. Ibid., p. 220.
64. Several authors have recently pointed out the decades-old erroneous interpretation of Durkheim as a staunch positivist when in fact an idealist conception of human existence and society was present in his thought throughout his career. See Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*; Pickering, ed., *Durkheim and Representations*.
65. An interesting point is made in relation to this idea under the entry "symbolic anthropology," in T. Barfield, ed., *The Dictionary of Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 460: "... the agenda of symbolic anthropology was already worked out in large part by the students of Emile Durkheim in the early decades of this century. Had World War I not intervened, they might well have carried it through to field research."
66. W.S.F. Pickering, "Introduction," in *Durkheim and Representations*, ed. W.S.F. Pickering (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.
67. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*, p. 48. See also Nielsen, *Three Faces*; Ono, "Collective Effervescence."
68. See also K. Thompson, "Durkheim, Ideology and the Sacred," *Social Compass* 40, no. 3 (1993): 451–461, p. 457.
69. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, pp. 221–223, 232–233, 386.
70. Parsons, *Structure*, p. 441ff; Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*, pp. 278, 293; W. Schmaus, "Representations in Durkheim's Sens Lectures," in *Durkheim and Representations*, ed. W.S.F. Pickering (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 30; S. Steadman Jones, "Representations in Durkheim's Masters: Kant and Renouvier," in *Durkheim and Representations*, ed. W.S.F. Pickering (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 37.
71. Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*; W.S.F. Pickering, "What Do Representations Represent?" in *Durkheim and Representations*, ed. W. S. F. Pickering (London: Routledge, 2000). At times, Durkheim even seemed to be approaching a type of structuralism, in the Levi-Straussian sense. See Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 285.
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74. Ibid; Pickering, "What Do Representations Represent?"
75. Although many of his critics incorrectly emphasize his early writings, which were very much concerned with the problem of conflict and equilibrium in small-scale societies.
76. Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, pp. 432–434; Mellor, "Sacred Contagion," pp. 92–95; Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*, pp. 78–79; Shilling and Mellor, "Durkheim, Morality and Modernity," pp. 195–197; Wallwork, "Durkheim's Early Sociology."
77. Durkheim, "Le Dualisme."
78. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 209. See also pp. 266–267.
79. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 35. See also V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 37; V. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1982),

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82. Shilling and Mellor, "Durkheim, Morality and Modernity," p. 196.
83. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, pp. 29, 39, 51, 54.
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93. See also Carlton-Ford, *Ritual and Charisma*; Mellor, "Sacred Contagion"; Mellor and Shilling, *Re-Forming the Body*; Nielsen, *Three Faces*, pp. 156, 207; Ramp, "Effervescence, Differentiation"; Shilling and Mellor, "Durkheim, Morality and Modernity," p. 197.
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98. E. Durkheim and M. Mauss, "Contribution to Discussion: 'Le Problème Religieux Et La Dualité De La Nature Humaine,'" *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* XIII (1913): 63–75, 80–87, 90–100, 108–111, pp. 84, qtd. in Pickering, "Durkheim's Sociology," p. 407. See also Carlton-Ford, *Ritual and Charisma*, pp. 16–17.
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104. Nielsen, *Three Faces*, p. 208.
105. Ibid., pp. 144, 146.
106. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*, p. 389.
107. Alpert, "Durkheim's Functional Theory"; Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*.
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110. See Pickering, "What Do Representations Represent?"
111. See Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*, p. 345.
112. Mellor, "Sacred Contagion," pp. 87–88; Mellor and Shilling, *Re-Forming the Body*; Nisbet, *Emile Durkheim*, p. 74; Ono, "Collective Effervescence," p. 80.
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114. Shilling and Mellor, "Durkheim, Morality and Modernity," p. 197.
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119. Turner, *Process, Performance*, p. 142.
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133. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 201.
134. Alexander, "Correcting Misinterpretations."
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137. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 234.
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141. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 177.
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143. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 153; Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 44.
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145. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 132.
146. Turner, *Process, Performance*, p. 44.
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148. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 96.
149. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, pp. 231, 237.
150. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
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152. Turner, *Dramas, fields*, p. 243.
153. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 188.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
155. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
156. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, p. 102ff; Turner, *Process, Performance*, p. 20.
157. This part of his theory of ritual has been widely taken up by other writers. See, for example, Alexander, "Pentecostal Ritual"; Alexander, "Correcting Misinterpretations"; Alexander, *Victor Turner*; Handelman, "Intellectual Due"; Schechner, *Performance Theory*; L. Smadar, K. Narayan, and R. Rosaldo, eds., *Creativity/Anthropology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
158. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, p. 106; Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 255; V. Turner, "Comments and Conclusions," in *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. B. Babcock (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 295; Turner, *Process, Performance*.
159. Turner, *Process, Performance*, p. 38.
160. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 256.
161. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 167.
162. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 273.
163. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp. 128-129.
164. Turner, *Process, Performance*, pp. 21, 27, 40.
165. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 110.
166. Although, as Pickering notes, (*Durkheim's Sociology*, p. 382), Durkheim may have derived the concept of effervescence from M. Mauss and H. Beuchat, "Essai Sur Les Variations Saisonnières Des Sociétés Eskimos: Étude De Morphologie Sociale," *L'Année sociologique* IX (1906): 39-132.
167. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 272.
168. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.
169. See also Alexander, "Correcting Misinterpretations"; Alexander, *Victor Turner*.
170. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 238.
171. *Ibid.*, p. 274, emphasis mine. See also p. 252.
172. Turner, *Process, Performance*, p. 41.
173. Turner, *Edge of the Bush*, p. 159.
174. *Ibid.*
175. Turner, *Process, Performance*, p. 132.
176. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp. 104-105, 178, 184; Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, pp. 259-260; Turner, *Edge of the Bush*, p. 198.
177. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 111.

178. Interestingly, Turner shared Durkheim's belief that the cult of the individual was replacing small-scale and also main religious traditions, even within his fieldwork locales. See Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*, pp. 22–23.
179. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 177.
180. Ibid.
181. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 220.
182. Ramp, "Effervescence, Differentiation."
183. Mellor, "Sacred Contagion"; Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*; Ramp, "Effervescence, Differentiation."
184. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 352.
185. Ibid., pp. 352–353. See also pp. 424–425, 212.
186. Ibid., p. 351.
187. See also Mellor, "Sacred Contagion."
188. Douglas expands somewhat upon the model I am ascribing to Durkheim and Turner in M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Barrie & Rockliffe, 1970).
189. Rather than the conservative that he is popularly perceived as, Durkheim was actually a liberal and a leftist, as clearly evinced by the tone of his writing on the Revolution, although he avoided partisan politics.
190. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, pp. 429–430. See also Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, p. 476ff; A. Mansueto, "Marx, Durkheim and Gramsci on the Religion Question," *Social Compass* 35, no. 2–3 (1988): 261–277; Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology*, p. 392.
191. Ramp, "Effervescence, Differentiation," p. 141.
192. Turner, *Edge of the Bush*, pp. 159, 210.
193. E.D. Chapple and C.S. Coon, *Principles of Anthropology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1942).
194. See also J.P. Schojdt, "Initiation and the Classification of Rituals," *Temenos* 22 (1986): 93–108.
195. A.F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 264–281; A.F.C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 157–166.
196. Wallace, *Religion*, p. 160.
197. Pickering, "Introduction," *On Durkheim's*, p. 2.
198. Pickering, "What do Representations Represent?" p. 110.
199. For all of the attention they pay to Durkheim's collective effervescence in a number of recent publications, Mellor and Shilling still do not bring any more precision to the discussion, aside from the already long-recognized fact in anthropological literature that ritual is an embodied phenomenon and involves emotion. See Mellor, "Sacred Contagion"; Mellor and Shilling, *Re-Forming the Body*; Shilling and Mellor, "Durkheim, Morality and Modernity."
200. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 228.
201. Ibid., p. 218.
202. Ibid., pp. 315–320.
203. Ibid., p. 220.
204. Turner, *Dramas, Fields*, p. 261ff.
205. And in Durkheim's case, there was a complete lack of experiential understanding of such phenomena, as he used other writers' ethnographies to construct his theory. His presaging of Turner's symbolic and processual models by some 60 years is thus all

- the more remarkable, achieved as it was without the rich ethnographic observation, experience, and detail that characterized Turner's work.
206. E. Bourguignon, *Cross-Cultural Study of Dissociational States* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968).
 207. For a review of the literature, see M. Winkelman, "Altered States of Consciousness and Religious Behaviour," in *The Anthropology of Religion*, ed. S.E. Glazier (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).
 208. E. Gellhorn, "Further Studies on the Physiology and Pathophysiology of the Tuning of the Central Nervous System," *Psychosomatics* 10 (1969): 94-104; C.D. Laughlin, J. McManus, and E.G. d'Aquili, *Brain, Symbol, and Experience: Toward a Neuropsychology of Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); A. Mandell, "Toward a Psychobiology of Transcendence: God in the Brain," in *The Psychobiology of Consciousness*, ed. D. Davidson and R. Davidson (New York: Plenum, 1980); M. Winkelman, "Trance States: A Theoretical Model and Cross-Cultural Analysis," *Ethos* 14 (1986): 174-203.
 209. C.D. Laughlin, "The Cycle of Meaning: Some Methodological Implications of Biogenetic Structural Theory," in *Anthropology of Religion*, ed. S.E. Glazier (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997); J.I. Prattis, *Anthropology at the Edge: Essays on Culture, Symbol and Consciousness* (Washington: University Press of America, 1997).

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