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Ritual Today

Abstract

The article presents a suggestion for a new approach towards ritual, one of the key anthropological concepts. Generations of anthropologists have used the term to describe and interpret cultural practices related to different types of liminality and transgression (social relations, religious beliefs, theatrical practices, etc.) in a rigid meaning limited to describing a formalized scenario of symbolic behavior, sanctioned with ancient beliefs and values cherished by a given community. This case makes room for similar symbolic practices, thinned down and scattered among the whole cultural reality (e.g. in fashion, politics, ways of spending free time, etc.), which serve the same purpose, but are deprived of formalized scenarios and boundaries of tradition. Because of all this, a new term – rituality – needs to be used to better convey the essence of the numerous modern-day rituals. This advance in terminology helps to interpret and understand several cultural practices, and to create new terms, necessary for describing the fast-changing modern cultural landscape. Accepting a broad meaning of rituality requires an interdisciplinary approach, in which classic anthropological theories by Malinowski, Redcliff-Brown or Geertz are equally important as Goffman's symbolic interactionism, Austin's speech acts philosophy, Rothenbuhler's social communication, or Csikszentmihalyi's emotional flow psychology.

Keywords: heritage, material culture, ritual, rituality.

Introduction: Malinowski, Redcliff-Brown, Turner

„Rituals are the oil for the human machine” – this statement can be found in one of the numerous contemporary guidebooks on etiquette and good manners. Such guidebooks do not refrain from presenting advantages of following certain rules of human cooperation and interaction (Herriger 1998: 8). At first this statement seems direct and explicit, but it fails to traverse beyond colloquiality, and simply common guidebook knowledge in relation to the very essence of the ritual and

similar practices. In this case, the difference between a simple “hunch” and academic knowledge lies in jargon used. The latter uses particular terms and quotes from respected academic sources, enabling proper argumentation. For numerous important reasons I decided to follow the academic approach, whose another characteristic feature is that it is based on, or related to, former, accumulated knowledge. To begin with, I wish to refer to the views presented by the “founding fathers” of the 20th-century anthropology – Bronisław Malinowski and Alfred Radcliff-Brown, whose vividness of thought, and constructive competitiveness led to timeless conclusions.

Malinowski, in a well known supplement to Ogden and Richard’s book, *The Meaning of Meaning*, presented a breakthrough idea at the time, about the function of the language overlooked before, that is the meaning of human utterances in situational contexts. Following this idea, the language, apart from being descriptive and referential, is also functional, operational, when used in various social situations: two housewives exchanging gossip in the street, or preacher performing a liturgical utterance in a temple. The meaning of such utterances depends on the situational context, therefore the meaning of such speech acts would differ if gossiping took place in a temple, or liturgy was performed in the street. Out of this concept emerges another advantage, that is, an ability to create specific *status quo* by using utterances in various circumstances. Although the presented examples refer to some sort of information transfer, the function may be totally different, and information scarce or simply non-existent. Instances of such figures of speech are common phrases used during occasional meetings, such as: “Good morning”, “Nice to meet you”, or even questions: “How’s it going?”. As far as the latter are concerned, answers are only superficially informative, with no regard as to the origin of the speaker: in Anglo-Saxon culture the answer could be: “Great!”, “Fine!”, whereas a Polish native speaker might say: *Stara bida* (“Same old bad stuff”) or *Do kitu* (“Not so good”). Instead, they are customary phrases, whose obviousness relates to nothing but a null set of meaning. Malinowski described this type of speech as “phatic communion” (Malinowski 1983: 267), and introduced it to the theory of language as a new term relating to its function. Sadly, Malinowski’s contribution in this matter is shrouded in obscurity.

Alfred Radcliff-Brown follows another path in his research, directly referring to the ritual: “We observe a ritual relation whenever a society forces its members to assume a particular attitude towards an object, which involves expressing respect towards it by a traditional way of behaving” (Radcliff-Brown 1953: 123; quoted in: Goffman 2006: 58). Undoubtedly, it is not the broadest definition of the ritual, but it is useful for initial emphasis of the existence of ritual in the present day, by pointing to an element of intentional actions of a subject in the context of social expectations. Erving Goffman, who recalls Radcliff-Brown’s definition, presents numerous instances of interaction ritual in his work on the subject: from body language techniques, to rhetoric, to sports rivalry, or even “greetings, compliments,

and apologies so frequent in human relations, which may be called 'status rituals' or 'interpersonal rituals'" (Goffman 2006: 58).

Thus, we are dealing with examples of interactions between subjects and a sort of identity discourse (identity talk), which is used to determine rules of ranking subjects and groups in relation to other members of the society (comp. Hunt, Miller 1997). Treating those particular, and omnipresent types of behavior and actions in the context of discourse, or speech (including, apart from verbal utterances, gestures, appearances, facial expressions, etc.) can be allowed in the light of the aforementioned concept of "phatic communion". Although Malinowski, limited by the thematic scope of the article, related phatic communion to functions of verbal communication, it could also be successfully related to non-verbal forms of expression – signification or communication through practice. In reality we are experiencing a specific verbal act syndrome, and also – quoting Goffman: embellishments, "theatrical means of expression" (Goffman 1981: 61); a personal exterior comprising, among other things, "apparel, gender, age, racial features, posture and appearance, way of speaking, mime, gestures, etc." (Goffman 1981: 61); an outside self, which "refers to stimuli telling us about the subject's social status" (Goffman 1981: 61); finally, a manner we can relate "to stimuli whose function is to communicate to us what role in the interaction the subject is anticipating to take on" (Goffman 1981: 62). In reality, in "phatic communion" speaking is action to the same extent as action is speaking, including equally substantial constant *theatrum* in this meaning of a discourse. Malinowski emphasizes here that "phatic communion leads both the savage and the civilized into a pleasant atmosphere characterized with mutual politeness in social relations" (Malinowski 1983: 268).

From Radcliff-Brown/Goffman's remarks we get to know that „greetings, compliments, apologies" comprise a broader type of rituals. Goffman himself emphasizes such behaviors' ritual character by stating: "Showing respect reflects paying tribute, tributary gestures and propitiary rituals performed by a subject to someone who is in the position of power" (Goffman 2006: 59). Obviously, respect is another term for etiquette here, also in situations where someone apologizes for running into another person in the doorway, or addresses an older, or younger, person – in a different way respectively. The last example may be related to expressing social superiority/inferiority, perhaps dominance/subjection, in any case – status depending on age.

Nevertheless, there is another acclaimed researcher of rituals, who should be mentioned, namely Victor Turner. His understanding of the ritual, which justifies various instances of symbolic behavior, including customs and habits, in categories of Malinowski's phatic communion, that is, a ritual – so to say – in dissipation. Turner uses the term *communitas* referring to the sphere of liminal exclusion in a ritual process. The term is similar to Malinowski's (phatic) communion, and in both instances refers to a sense of community. Turner uses this term in reference to the state of liminal indefiniteness, antistructure, but is a case of socially

defined interaction not a state of obliquity, where participants meet in the middle of the way, at the same time integrating and forming a variety within a group, following the criteria of the status? It should be maintained, not only through symbolic ritual expressions, often formalized periods of transition, but through symbols not necessarily related to temporal switch off, but those constantly showing the process of social becoming, social dynamics which comprise the custom as a regulator of this dynamics. Turner himself admits that *communitas*, formally an antistructure is, in fact a “structure of symbols and ideas, a training structure (...), a way of instilling in the minds of neophytes generative rules, codes and means of transmission, according to which they could process symbols of speech and culture to clarify the experience which constantly transcends linguistic capabilities” (Turner 2005: 203). Indeed, we learn various customs and habits all our lives, and at times we must apply considerable corrections at an old age.

Therefore, we should notice that through their expressive quality, bearing the function of significance and communication, the following share common characteristics: custom, habit, fashion, and lifestyle, with the ritual being a superior category. The ritual has been a subject of empirical research, and theoretical investigation in the history of social sciences, and consequently has been a sort of metacategory for all forms of symbolic practices, hence it shall become the subject of the following remarks. For if we agree that turning up at a funeral, which is, undoubtedly, a ritual, wearing a bright flowery dress, or a white suit, would be considered bad mannered, so would be eating a pork chop with a spoon, using foul language in church, or presenting the State of the World Address wearing jeans and a t-shirt. Contrary to common belief, these symbolic behaviors and actions are not very different in their function from the well known form of institutionalized rituals; I would like to develop that idea.

In considerations concerning rituals, and any symbolic forms of behavior, one should bear in mind the historical changeability of cultural practices, hidden under terms and definitions born from academic theories. Such is the case with the ritual which seems to disappear in forms known in yesterday's ethnology, sociology, or religious studies. It calls for a necessary change in the perception of similar practices of symbolic meaning, but also gives access to new areas for exploration, helps to notice unexpected and unpredicted similarities in those domains of life which used to be separate, and opens possibilities for new questions concerning human actions and practices. As it turns out, which I intend to prove, how important in life are rituals, or various forms of symbolic behavior which fall into this category, which need to be linguistically described in a slightly different way, that is in the terms of semantics.

From ritual to rituality

Let us start with the first terminological aspect concerning the ritual. Several authors writing on the ritual use the term “performance” which, apart from its primary meaning, among other instances, also refers to the following: to perform – a piece of music, – a duty, – a (church) service, and, above all, fulfilling a task. Obviously the meanings refer to both – the noun and the verb forms. Especially the last mentioned meaning reflects an active, dynamic and creative aspect of performance.

This meaning of the term inclined John Austin (1993), in the light of his speech acts philosophy, to coin the term “performative utterances” – that is utterances of fulfillment, execution or achievement, whose production is equal to simultaneous fulfillment of a particular conjuncture. Examples of such utterances include: “I now pronounce you husband and wife”, or “The court sentences Mr. Barański to pay a fine”. Such utterances are not evaluated – unlike ascertainties – in terms of truth, but in terms of felicity. They need to be produced in particular circumstances to ensure their casual power. If forced, or produced in inappropriate conditions, they are infelicitous, and will not fulfill their performative function. There is a thin line between a performative utterance and performance, or action itself. For example, the ritual of promoting someone to the rank of colonel, makes him or her a colonel, or putting a wedding ring on the sweetheart’s finger fulfills the act of engagement. It often happens that performative utterances go along with performative actions depending on, and justifying each other. Explained by Austin, it is an example of Malinowski’s phatic communion in which various conjunctures constitute in, so to say, self explanatory way. In this case, speech is only an element of cultural practice.

Until the 1970’s, the predominant approach was to focus on symbolic, textual understanding of the ritual as a fulfillment of cultural scenarios, like baptism, initiation, wedding, state ceremonies, presidential oath, funeral, nominations, etc., and all sorts of religious rituals. It appears that Austin’s address, Goffman’s version of symbolic interactionism (e.g. 1981), Turner’s later works (e.g. 1986), or the independent works of creators and theorists of the experimental theatre, like Jerzy Grotowski, made the performative aspect of casual, daily behavior noticeable. This discovery was facilitated by the inconspicuous word “performance”, thanks to which symbolic types of behavior could be noticed not only in the classically understood theatre or ritual. Everyday gestures, poses and utterances turn out to be equally ritual and theatrical, although not fully conventionalized. In brief, performativeness can be ascribed to conventionalized forms of behavior, used to express certain cultural qualities, like weddings, prayer or funerals, but also to those unconventional, used for personal expression of aesthetic preferences or attitudes towards other people. In each case one needs to speak of a degree of performance, expression and fulfillment. In this approach, performativeness can

be considered as a genre notion in comparison to its specific examples, here they include – theatre, ritual, rite, custom, fashion or lifestyle.

Thus, if we are dealing with any form of performativeness, like those mentioned above, it is not enough to say that a ritual, rite or custom mean something, but they are something, they are not symbolic instruments, it is symbols that are instruments of rituals. Performance is primary, symbols are secondary, expression is primary, and its means secondary. This transfer of emphasis makes it easier to understand that – for instance – causative power is in the pouring of water over a baby's head by a member of the clergy, putting wedding rings on each other's hands by a wedding couple, giving up a seat for an elderly person, or even a particular outfit or hairstyle which – in the case of long hair worn by teenagers in the 1960's – was an expression of disrespect towards the older generations and respect for the idols of the era. Do the last examples not show the performative function, the function of fulfillment – mutual relation of social statuses which comprise the self-regulating dynamics of social continuation and change? It is through countless similar forms of self-explanatory cultural practices that a sort of relative social balance, with a hint of social change, is maintained. One may simply state that various forms of symbolic behavior and actions create one's reality through performativeness, without them even noticing.

The disappearing of pre-industrial communities, and with them the ritual in its classical form (institutionalized and formalized in a sense), does not mean the disappearance of a superior phenomenon, that is performativeness. Roland Barthes once stated, in relation to myth, that it was “discontinued, non-existent in great novels, but in the discourse itself, instead it is a phraseology, a collection of sentences (stereotypes). The myth has disappeared, and all that remained is the trickier mythicity” (Barthes 1985: 63) He showed the presence of this mythicity in literature and striptease, fashion and engineering, photography and politics. This is because, according to another theoretician – Leszek Kołakowski, myth as a universal form of awareness – roughly an equivalent of Barthes' mythicity – is an inalienable component of any culture, present in religious contexts, love ideals and rights of logic (Kołakowski 1986). Ethologists suggest that the ritual is even more inalienable as a carrier of information and a catalyst for fulfilling existential-cultural conjunctures like the change of marital status, political system, social group, etc. or confirmation of: political orientation, religious faith, moral values, etc. One can paraphrase Barthes' statement that the modern ritual is non-continuous, non-existent in omnipresent practices, but in behavior itself. The ritual is non-existent but rituality is what remains. Similarly to mythicity, not “what” is important but “how”. Not the contents, but the form. Rituality is present in wedding ceremonies and political addresses, in lifting curses and sports rivalry, in prayer and good manners. Rituality would be a symbol of performativity, where all sorts of cultural practices not only have meaning, but also work, and serve their purpose.

Certain researchers of the ritual have shown some intuition in the matter. In such cases they usually use the term ritualization taken from the ethology dictionary, like Ronald L. Grimes. According to him, ritualization does not refer to actions put in a frame of a cultural ritual, but to infra-, quasi-, or pre-ritual actions. He states: "Ritualization relates to the ritual the same way as the forest relates to the house" (Grimes 1990: 10). In the light of this metaphor, the carpenter will consider the forest as a source of building material, but a bird may consider it a home. Therefore ritualization refers to behaviors which remain beyond the reach of social formalization, behaviors which are shaped without an explicitly formulated permission concerning their form. In such a case, even the manner of walking can be considered ritualized: from dignified pace of the royalty, through marching on a parade, to the "swaying" of ladies and swaggering of hip-hop fans. This superficially unimportant element of social interaction will have, apart from a particular dress, hairdo, way of speaking, chat topics, place, gestures, and the whole social *theatrum* so incisively presented by Goffman – the power to fulfill a certain existential-cultural conjuncture.

Ritualization, especially in Polish, and especially after having been introduced by Stefan Czarnowski into the set of terms describing folk religiousness (Czarnowski 1958), seems to be encumbered with meanings referring – *summa summarum* – to the sphere of formalization, while the understanding of rituality is better represented by the element of scattering and collective unawareness of socially shared meanings, which emphasizes the performative character of this phenomenon. It should also be emphasized that the mentioned unawareness is of an incomplete, sometimes referred to as flow nature, which means that actions and awareness fuse together. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi claims that: "A person in the flow does not experience a double perspective: he or she is aware of their actions, but is not aware of their own awareness" (Csikszentmihalyi 1975: 53; in: Schechner 2000: 256). In other words, there exists an awareness of conventional actions, but it does not undergo any validating process – the participant remains on the primary level of understanding *per se*. The category of "flow" or "stream", corrects the common Durkheimian view about the separation of social and mental facts (see: Parker 1988: 373).

Especially the fusion of orders of expression takes place in the ritual. "In a ritual, the world as we experience it, thanks to a particular set of symbolic forms, fuses with the imagined world – the ritual makes the two worlds one" (Geertz 2005: 134). What is more, the collective and individual dimensions undergo a mutual synthesis. Admittedly, this opinion especially refers to religion, upon which Geertz reflects here, nevertheless in the assumed broad perspective of understanding religion as a cultural system the ritual belongs to the mundane world and is always a type of framework in which a subject places his or her faith (attitudes and motivations) and through which he or she expresses them. Each ritual carries

a meaning (social, national or religious) and *vice versa* – the meaning of things is sanctioned by the ritual.

Such broadened meaning of the ritual is formulated directly by Eric Rothenbuhler, a researcher of social communication. He states that the ritual is “a voluntary execution of a specifically shaped behavior in order to symbolically affect the serious life or participate in it”. Undoubtedly, the crowning of a head of state or knocking of a mallet in a court house after a verdict is inseparably connected with a specific scenario of behaviors. However, can the term “specifically shaped behavior” be used in reference to: a manager putting on a suit before setting off to work, a heavy-metal fan putting on a leather “uniform”, a teenager, under a watchful, but not ostentatious eye of his peers, driving off from the school parking lot with a screech of tires, or – the other way round – the same teenager driving his sick grandmother to the doctor. These few examples do not seem to present any ritual character, but undoubtedly, because of their expressiveness, their particular meanings cannot be denied.

Indeed, Rothenbuhler’s definition seems to eliminate from its scope the mentioned instances, but the term “specifically shaped behavior” has a broad meaning here. It would seem that the only examples falling in this category would be: weddings, nominations, accolades, initiations or liturgies – highly and specifically shaped behaviors. Nevertheless the aforementioned, everyday, mundane types of behavior, not specifically shaped, or rigid in their frameworks do have their meanings and social reference reflecting particular values and norms, being catalysts for a relation of statuses. The mentioned manager puts on the suit partly because of the existing norms, similarly, the heavy-metal fan, who, by putting on specific clothes, expresses a number of collective social values (protest, solidarity, originality), the young driver’s show-off is an element of teenage culture and motorists’ culture at the same time, known since the invention of the car (e.g. see *Rebel Without a Cause* starring James Dean), and other vehicles (Charlton Heston as Ben-Hur). Finally helping grandmother out of the car is an expression and fulfillment of the relation between age and family statuses respectively.

Let us agree that the suits, cars, and attitude towards one’s grandmother, or in other instances, towards other women in different ways, can be attributes for the rituality of behavior, the rituality which more represents the general category of behavior than the ritual itself. It does not mean that the type of suit, brand of car, or even grandmother’s condition are irrelevant, left alone the women being the subject of affection. A promising manager does not wear second-hand suits. Similarly, the teenager would not try to grasp anybody’s attention driving a *trabant*, *syrenka* or *polonez*; Paul Gilroy is not mistaken calling this sort of car use an element of “ritualized passage into maturity” (Gilroy 2001: 82). In both cases the agents, by deviating from a certain norm, would expose themselves to ridicule, because they failed to follow... the norm of high-quality brand suit, or a car with proper aesthetic and/or technical parameters. Finally, even though good manners

require neat looks in grandmother's presence, the case is somewhat different in the presence of a would-be sweetheart – calling for alternativeness, or uniqueness (one of the appearance elements in these different situations – “neatly combed” and “spiky” hair – could be treated as homologous analogues of the lack of, or presence of this sensual intention). Therefore, following Rothenbuhler, one may consider these instances as “shaped behaviors”, and there is no doubt that they refer to the “serious life”, since they involve integrating human relations or introducing them as new relational qualities.

Here appears a question in need of an answer: what makes the ritual behaviors – those with a generations-old traditional scenarios, those shaped by temporal changeability of etiquette, and those blurred in between – so important? It happens, because their realization leads to constituting a sort of existential-cultural conjuncture, for example: an heir to the throne becomes king during a ceremony; a wedding couple become a married couple; a stream management trainee of: behavior (giving orders, market data analysis), facial expressions (self-confident look, creative and focused looks), material attributes (office, car, suit) – becomes a manager. On the other hand, failing to follow the mentioned norms of behavior, speech, gestures, etc. may lead to serious consequences. It does not have to mean that the king, the couple, or the manager would fail to achieve their position, but it could weaken their social status achieved as a result of those practices, or brand them ignorant and undervalued, as those who do not know the behavior proper for their desired status. Hence so much attention is given to expressive behaviors in similar cultural practices.

However, it is not an easy task, to discern peculiarities of one's own culture, like in the above examples, without a sort of anthropological *epoché*. Let us consider a more detailed example, an important part of life in the Western civilization, namely, education connected to the discussed topic, and focused on by Stephen Muecke. He scrutinized the annals of anthropological knowledge and brought up examples of classical rituals of initiation known to all cultures, in which a young man must undergo a series of trials and carry out numerous tasks in order to prove his readiness to enter the ranks of adult men. It often involved, like in Australian Aranda's practices exemplified by the author, gaining knowledge possessed by men exclusively, often being arcane knowledge, by memorizing various formulas and passages referring to numerous different domains: from family genealogy to mythical topography of the inhabited land. It needs to be emphasized that it was not a care-free school-type education, but a complex initiation process, involving many different practices, including self-inflicting of wounds. In this system of gerontocracy the eldest members of the society were the keepers of knowledge, and they charged for sharing their knowledge (Muecke 1999: 7).

The author's recollection of particular practices is facilitated by a bridge drawn between the Australian “dream world” and his contemporary Western world, with all its practices that need to be understood. He notices, that there exists

a somewhat similar practice in the Western-style education, with equally strong rituality, but is not noticeable by the inhabitants of the Western world. It takes distance to discern the ritual aspect of the Western education, with memorizing and studying of classical passages, becoming a member of the chosen initiates by receiving one's index book (student's progress record in form of a special booklet), or being admitted to a seminar led by an acclaimed professor. Sometimes students need to pay for their education with "sweat and blood" like in the most expensive private colleges, similar to the Aborigines' drawing of blood during their initiation rites. Obviously, a considerable difference can be pointed out: in an Aboriginal tribe the initiate had to learn secret formulas and stories about forefathers, and here they are expected to interpret and explain them, which, according to Muecke, is the European way of text sacralization, a way of "renewing" it by giving it a current, up-to-date meaning (Muecke 1999: 7). It appears that in order to discern a ritual character of various spheres of human life, including the types of behavior that comprise it, one needs to consider Malinowski's situational context, whose elements will determine the rituality of human behaviors and actions.

Is there not, apart from rituality, a strong element of theatricality present? Without any doubt, hence the idea of theatre and ritual have been the subject of numerous considerations concerning symbolic behavior. Richard Schechner (2002: 622) claims that every instance of the theater has an element of a ritual and *vice versa*. The line between the two is very thin, and a whole set of phenomena – from theatre, to religious rituals, prayer, secular traditions, public ceremonies, state ceremonies, folk festivals, fashion, spiritistic sessions, alternative healing, current affairs in the media, to simple every-day interaction – are examples of performativeness.

Conclusion: toward the aestheticization

It needs to be emphasized that various symbolic behaviors possess a strong aesthetic value. The two categories – the ritual, and aesthetics – seem to be inseparable, and it is difficult to isolate any of them, because written or codified formulas are but a small part of the whole of human practices characterized by fully aware, or totally unconscious shaping. Hence, the border between the conscious and the unconscious in human behavior remains very fluent. In brief, generally, the way we behave is not a subject of consideration, since this sphere is a sort of "second nature", an instance of collective unconscious, unawareness, as described by Pierre Bourdieu (1984). The most important is that within this sphere take place most processes of socializing, internalizing and externalizing of practices, values, cultural meanings, which include a considerable dose of reflection blurring the outline of social sanctions.

The mentioned tendency to consider performativeness in the theatre-ritual relation corresponds to the division between aesthetics and social dimension. Not surprisingly one of the scholars advocated a research on anthropology of ritual aesthetics (Hirsch 1988: 220). Performativeness always means that a form is present, and form is an element of the theatre, “ritual arts” – as suggested by Grotowski – or Goffman’s “every-day theatre”, expressed by various types of rituality. Another element is expression, which means that there is always some substance present, and the mentioned substance is codified in a way which allows both communication and creation of particular existential-cultural conjunctures through various forms of symbolic expression. It needs to be stressed, after Roch Sulima, that such expression radiates in various ways: onto the participants of a *theatrum*, onto the audience, and at times within an individual’s (un)conscious, as an example of self-expression (Sulima 2000: 18). Taking this into consideration, it is easier to provide the answer to the old, seemingly unimportant, question: why do women “dress up” and want to “look good”? For men, for other women, or for themselves? Similarly, what is the main reason for putting on particular clothes, depending on the occasion (going to church, going to a party)? Is it only about living up to the set norms in relations between congregation and god, or relations between party guests? Perhaps the sense of identity with oneself, and concordance of one’s self-image with social expectations are equally important?

However, can “dressing up” or simply putting on clothes be considered as elements of aesthetics or rituality? Without any doubt, although they are far different from Grotowski’s esoteric “theatrical plays”. Nevertheless, the mentioned “dressing up”, or more generally – fashion, style, etiquette – cannot be considered separately from body-language techniques, adapted to circumstances, age, sex, social class... Goffman in his concept of integrative ritual speaks of “facial techniques” which strongly facilitate the needs of expressing (in particular situations by particular people) submission, superiority, respect, confidence, etc.; suffice it to say, that they are as important elements as proper dress or the way of speaking (Goffman 2006: 5). Here is “the every-day theatre”, equally ritualistic as acting in “poor theatre”, shamanic trance, liturgy, sacrifice, presidential oath, the order of introducing guests, lifting curses, asking for a date, wedding, handshake, behavior at work or ways of spending free time.

Especially the last category is connected – according to Victor Turner – to the art and rituals in the Western communities, where the former liminality of compulsory ritual in pre-industrial communities was replaced by voluntary liminality of post-industrial communities, where art is dominant. But in the post-aesthetic era, is not “dressing up for the occasion” a form of art? And together with it, a broad scope of human behaviors, whose number is directly proportional to the amount of spare time available, to the surplus of means and meanings to be used-up? Those are all elements of life aesthetics, where not only artists transform every-day objects into works of art, but also ordinary people shape their lives in

terms of aesthetics, which is today related predominantly with consumption and spare time (see: Featherstone 1997).

It seems that aestheticization is similar to the ritual – ever existent, although in different shapes, which could be grasped within different terms, like rituality or performativeness. Various forms of embellishments, beautification, or stylization can be found everywhere: in self-images of individuals, social relations with their rules of etiquette, economics, and ecology. The term, which describes the modern man, *homo aestheticus*, seems to outrun Cassirer's *homo symbolicus*, and even the modernist *homo economicus*. Economics seems to focus not on the need to obtain goods but meanings related with them. Even ecology has become a domain which shapes people's natural surroundings. Finally, genetic engineering turns out to be a sort of genetic plastic surgery. The conclusion is that, from anthropologist's point of view, it would be advisable to call it a synthesis of the above elements – symbolism, aesthetics, economics, and others which comprise ritualistic interpersonal relations. They express, as Geertz would put it, individual attitudes and motivations which seem "uniquely realistic", in the same way each instance of rituality (custom, style, fashion) which reinforces the old and introduces the new, is uniquely realistic. Inalienability of rituality equals the inalienability of all those various forms of symbolic behavior and actions which invariably regulate interpersonal relations. They are the "oil for the human machine".

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