

Thresholds, liminality and fruitful chaos: revolutionary change in education?

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Abstract.

Crossing the threshold between childhood and adulthood in his African fieldwork inspired the anthropologist Victor Turner to unpack the significance of the “betwixt and between” state he termed *liminal*, applying both to the individual and to the community. Convinced that social ritual had a crucial role of changing attitudes, he applied this to western society by emphasising processes of social change, particularly where they involved ceremony, performance and carnival. He viewed this process as healing social rifts and psychic disharmony, whether expressed in religious or secular language. Extending this, he argued for the importance of social drama/performance generally as an aspect of social change, which he argued can have a therapeutic role to people and communities. For this community action he coined the term *communitas* within a general process of ‘anti-structure’ (that is, pressure to change structure). This article applies this analysis to education, covering both the liminality of growing up, and the fruitful chaos of learning as process, to determine the extent to which it might contribute to educational philosophy and the management of change.

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Victor Turner: The Development of a Thesis.

Liminality, or threshold crossing, has dominated the pioneering work of Victor Turner from his time as an anthropologist in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. He extended his theorising to western performance studies and theatre (St. John, 2008, reviewed in Bigger, 2009), but this article explores the potential of this discussion of liminality for education generally. I trace the concept from its origin, offer critique of its development, and suggest new uses.

Turner, after fieldwork in Africa, read Arnold van Gennep's 1908 *Rites of Passage* (1960/1908) and realised that it made sense of his own findings. Van Gennep, from Australian aborigine data, produced a schema to describe dangerous life transitions or thresholds (birth, puberty, marriage and death). The French word *passage* for passing through such a threshold has since become a loan word in English. His argument was rooted in tribal superstition in which people saw ‘life crises’ as moments of psychic or spiritual (i.e. “magico-religious”) danger as evil spirits or ancestors might interfere to harm the child or the community – “perils of an ultra-human order” (Turner, 1962: 37, 249) which require religious rites. Ritual attempted to pacify the evil forces and bring their world back to a state of equilibrium. Interested in ‘the sacred’, Van Gennep explored notions of animism and dynamism, spirits and powers to explain the purpose of such rites. A contemporary of Émile Durkheim, he was a positivist rationalist who wished to explain ritual and religion naturalistically and socially. For issues of life and death (pregnancy, birth, beginning sexuality and marriage, death, his order) he proposed a

three-part schema described as *separation* (that is, spiritual retreat), *transition* (French *marge*) and *incorporation* (French *agrégation*). If we picture society as a house (Van Gennep, 1960 [1908] p.26) people need permission to enter new rooms. The threshold, or *limen*, was the key to their passage or transition from one room [state] to another. For a short time the person is in-between statuses. Turner's favourite phrase was 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1967). Liminality ritual aimed to reduce the potential threat of this.

Van Gennep concludes (p.189):

"Our brief examination of the ceremonies through which an individual passes on all the most important occasions of his life has now been completed....We have seen that an individual is placed in various sections of society, synchronically and in succession; in order to pass from one category to another and join individuals in other sections, he must submit, from the day of his birth to that of his death, to ceremonies whose forms often vary but whose function is similar."

This sounds very general, and he gives a few examples of other changes of status, such as a slave changing owners, or a stranger moving into a new territory. This is however less well defined than his chapters on life crises. The anthropology is primitive, and his assumption of evolutionary cultural progress, a fad of his time, is now seen as flawed. His interest in the *function* of ritual did develop further in anthropology, but Van Gennep was largely ignored, even after the translation of his work into English in 1960. For example, a study of "life crises" (birth, puberty, marriage, death) in Ethiopia in 1971 (Callender and Guindi, 1970) makes no mention of 'rites of passage' or Van Gennep. Their emphasis was on the evil eye, sorcery, and unknown dangers connected with the moon. Always vulnerable to disease and disaster, these life rituals attempted to protect people from dangers they do not understand. Ashley Montagu (1974/1937), writing about Australian Aboriginal beliefs about conception and including detailed work on initiation, makes no mention of rites of passage and his only reference to Van Gennep, despite extensive footnotes, is dismissive of his early study of Australian aborigines. Van Gennep's reputation was therefore resuscitated by Turner from perhaps deserved neglect.

Van Gennep's work was however taken more seriously in the study of religion, since world religions tend to have ceremonial stage-changes, for example baptism, circumcision), bar mitzvah, confirmation, marriage and funerals. However, *separation* is a feature only of superstitious groups who fear evil spirits, and religions tend to focus on commitment and dedication rather than psychic dangers. Chapple and Coon (1942) critiqued Van Gennep for overgeneralising, preferring the phrase *rite of intensification* for group ceremonies. In Africa, there were initiation rites for into a cult (Raboteau, 1978). In short, the only lasting aspect of van Gennep's work is the title 'rites of passage'. There is nevertheless the germ of an idea worth exploring.

Liminality and communitas.

Turner's first enthusiasm for van Gennep's schema was to shed light upon his own African data which had similar tribal religious assumptions to spiritual life crisis events. Early experiences predisposed him to be interested in ritual and later drew him towards Catholicism. As a Marxist he viewed transition rites as social drama which enacted revolution to 'incorporate' change, and establish a new *status quo*. He viewed other social dramas as potentially revolutionary also, in particular where a dispute or breach was resolved and the parties reconciled. The process of potential change he called *liminality*, as it involved an in-between state 'betwixt and between', reshaping the status quo. He argued that communities were more dominated by dynamic change-processes than they were with static structures, as contemporary structuralists taught: he therefore preferred the term *processual* to *structural* and spoke of 'anti-structure' (Turner, 1969) for processes that broke structures down.

'Thresholds' lie between states or statuses, which the individual needs to cross and the community needs to recognise the change. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (1969), his 'processual' model describes change as a dynamic process. 'Structure' means the social and power structure, the current *status quo*, the top-down authority system. Turner's 'anti-structure' refers to aspects beyond this, which puts pressure on structure, the bottom up struggle for change. This produces social action and cooperation which he calls *communitas*, meaning all positive aspects of community and togetherness.

Communitas ...is...part of the "serious life". It tends to ignore, reverse, cut across, or occur outside of structural relationships... representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship which nevertheless does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness. (Turner, 1974a:274)

Communitas is marked by individual freedom, ignoring structure and promoting spontaneity. It is playful but serious, functioning as a change agent; for Turner it was *eufunctional*, making the social structure "work without too much friction" (Turner, 1982: 54), having the potential for stability but not destruction.

Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities...a striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation (sic!) of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal experience (Turner, cited by Ian Maxwell in St. John, 2008: 59-60).

Disorder and chaos can be fruitful in that new ideas and forms can emerge from it. We should value the potential. To Turner, *communitas* ensures that the welfare of individuals takes precedence over structure, status and authority. Where structure/authority is a straitjacket, ordinary people do not have a voice and are not free to be involved. Social performances and carnival in contrast encourages free heart-felt participation, entertaining yet serious.

Turner's use of Kurt Lewin's field theory (1952) emphasises the point: Lewin's work was pioneering on feedback, change, action research and "the social field" – that is that individual behaviour is inextricably connected to the social context. His change schema parallels the liminal process: current structures have to be 'unfrozen' (separating people from how things used to be); then the change or transition takes place (the locus of liminality) in some memorable form such as ceremony or ritual; then the new *status quo* has to be consolidated through 'freezing/refreezing'. At a point of transition, the old has to metamorphose into the new. The less this change is feared, the smoother the transition will be.

Theatre, carnival and the liminoid.

He viewed theatre as a form of secular ritual, noting differences between real liminality, and its artistic cousin, individually creative performance (theatre) for entertainment which he termed *liminoid*, or liminal-like (Turner, 1974b). This proposes an indirect psychological relationship between theatre and primitive ritual, developed most clearly in *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982). His view was that performance involves *process*, is dynamic, and is part of the change process. Against the view that ritual is a conservative replication of tradition, he views it as *at its best* creative, playful, generating contemporary meaning and personal reflexivity. The performance is a time out, a pause for reflection, for self evaluation generated by interrelationships within community. This time-out he called "the discontinuum of action" (1988:22):

I would add here that the discontinuum of action among the same collection of people, culturally made possible by setting aside times and places for cultural performances, is equally part of the social process – the part where those people become conscious, through witnessing and often participating in such performances, of the nature, texture, style and given meanings of their own lives as members of the sociocultural community".

A dead ritual is carried out as a habit, and not for any vital reason. A dead play in the theatre has no meaning for the present. The concept of liminality views the performance as a conduit of meaning which changes something within both players and actors. Method acting for example requires deep empathy which engages the audience. Ritual (marriage or initiation for example) should be life changing, charging up the individual to act and feel differently. What makes the difference? This inner 'fructile chaos' churning up old attitudes and requiring new syntheses.

This contemplative process involves reflection and reflexivity. *Reflection* means looking at ourselves in the mirror, as others might see us. Reflective practice is behaviour improved through honest dialogue. *Reflexivity* is suggested by reflexive verbs where the subject is also the object, such as 'he overrated himself'. Reflexivity in research is when our subjectivity is the object of the research. Turner notes (1988: p.24):

Performative reflexivity is a condition in which a sociocultural group, or its most perceptive members acting representatively, turn, bend or reflect back

upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components which make up their public "selves". Performative reflexivity... is highly contrived, artificial, of culture and not nature, a deliberate and voluntary work of art.

Turner distinguished between secret and public liminality (pp. 25f): the hidden or unvoiced 'betwixt and between' experiences are less likely to be resolved and incorporated into the everyday world (Turner, 1988:101) until they are articulated.

Liminality was in origins an approach to "the sacred" which Turner sought to widen and secularise (1988:25):

They are performed in privileged spaces and times, set off from the periods and areas reserved for work, food and sleep. You can call these "sacred" if you like, provided that you recognize that they are scenes of play and experimentation, as much as of solemnity and rules ... the social flow bends back on itself, in a way that does violence to its own development, meanders, inverts, perhaps lies to itself, and puts everything so to speak into the subjunctive mood as well as the reflexive voice.

The subjunctive expresses "supposition, desire, hypothesis, or possibility"; so liminality plays around with previously fixed ideas and attitudes. The supremely honest vision of the creative artist "reserves to himself [sic!] the privilege of seeing straight what all cultures build crooked" (p.122). The sacred in a pre-scientific premodern society assumes spirits of place, ancestors and other phenomena – the *animae* which suggested E. B. Tylor's (1871) term *animism*. For Turner, in the modern world, we start with whatever we hold sacred.

Implications for Education.

Since children are growing up throughout their school years, it would make sense to explore more critically the threshold between childhood and adulthood, and the assumptions we make about children and adults. Prolonging inappropriate models of childhood to the end of compulsory school may contribute to dysfunctions we can observe in particular in secondary schooling. In a parallel paper (Bigger, in press) I explore the role of fiction for young people in overturning assumptions of child dependence and adult authority and tackling juvenile self concept and anxiety.

A. Rites of Passage

On the surface, we might see pupils' transitions between schools and phases as rites of passage, but this is not an exact match. Separation (social isolation) does not structurally feature. Throughout, before and after, children are treated as children with no change of status 'incorporated'. There are anxieties caused by the changes, and an induction ceremony (with preliminaries and follow-up) might ease these; but this is not essentially the status change that Van Gennep and Turner imply. Ghaye and Pascal (1988)

apply van Gennep's schema to transition between nursery and school as a rite of passage. Nowak (in St. John, 2008: 258-271) applied Turner's version to special needs education, and in particular for pupils with invisible disability such as ADHD or autism, viewing parental pressure as a social performance to heal a breach, that is the poor provision the children were receiving. Neither are convincing. The process was intended for something entirely different. Any transition needs to be well managed within its own terms: the terms applying to a different transition in a different culture are not appropriate.

Anxieties and neuroses today replace the angry spirits of pre-modern belief and these are prevalent both in our individual pupils and in the community generally. We could apply the liminality concept to therapeutic strategies with which the community (and its individuals) can be 'mended', implying interlinked changes in both social attitudes and self concept. Such changes are not easy. Pre-modern communities visualise the anxiety, as a spirit or ancestor, and drive the visualisation out. When faced with apathy and aggression in the classroom, what do we visualise as its cause? And how do we drive it out? In other words, how best could we encourage an attitude and status change not only in pupils but in the school and community? The state answer has been exclusion and authoritarianism; *communitas* would suggest it is more appropriate to win hearts and minds by treating pupils as adults much earlier.

B. Pedagogic Performance

Turner thought of theatre as "the human seriousness of play", the subtitle of *From Ritual to Theatre*. Turner sought an anthropological rationale for theatre: it is recreation, leisure, but something else also. We can view this differently as actor or audience. An actor has to become a character, work out how this character ticks, and what kind of person it is, and then live out this person through their own body. The actor becomes other, and has to understand other in the process. The audience views the end result of this process and finds the character exposed and dissected in a narrative way they have to enter into. Teachers are also performers: their performances should empower learning and reduce emotional traumas.

Turner used performance, viewed as liminal, as a teaching tool within anthropology. His students were encouraged to act out rituals in order to begin to understand their existential power, in order to appreciate to some extent what the ritual/ceremonial meant to those involved with it for real. Scientifically trained students in this way imaginatively crossed a threshold into a different world-view. It is described as the same process as an actor going into rôle. His students, as he described in 'Performing Ethnography' (Turner, 1988: 139-155) designed and performed a cannibal ceremony, a rite of passage, a wedding, a midwinter ceremony. How else could a trainee anthropologist approach a cannibal feast with anything like objectivity? It is play, but it is also serious. These enacted rituals encourage them to understand both tribal and contemporary ceremonials and mindsets. As a

consequence, the students for the first time appreciated the existential power of the beliefs they were meeting in rôle. Rational belief is suspended, and the inner logic of pre-scientific beliefs revealed.

Performance can change mindsets in schools also. Performing plays such as *The Crucible* offer a deeper understanding of witchcraft accusations, and indeed any witch-hunt. Romeo and Juliet were shown to have a modern gang-relevance in Bernstein's *West Side Story*. Drama has been one way of getting across sexual health in HIV-infected Africa. Drama, in short, is an effective way of tackling spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of knowledge (Bigger and Thomas, 1999). Dramatisations for television, including historical reconstructions and modern drama, should become more than a time filler; and pupils should be enabled to develop as critics. The act of criticism is where education takes over from entertainment.

C. Education, Active Learning and Play.

Mindset change is crucial for teachers. Many pupils come in with attitude, with learned helplessness, with low self-esteem and minimal moral and ethical consciousness. In terms of schooling, they are unmotivated, and not convinced that schooling is relevant to their future lives. Crime, celebrity, and the lottery seem better ways to make money. Workbooks, authoritarianism and being talked down to are common experiences but not answers. Nevertheless pupils may not be mature enough to engage with a softer more respectful style.

John Dewey long ago (1938/1963) emphasised the importance of learning through experience, participation and democracy (giving learners a voice). This is education that is active and not passive. For it also to be creative, and fun, work and play begins to merge. The word 'play' needs some redefinition: Turner uses the term as active, carnivalesque, socially overturning and socially involving, whereas play can also be repetitive and unchallenging, and solitary play on a computer has become common. 'Playful' presumes a active personal quality but 'playing' sounds unfocused and non-productive time-filling. Much of what is called play in a school context is educationally unhelpful, that is, it does not promote learning or thinking. Turner encourages a playful reconsideration of dominant ideas and assumptions as a communal effort. Juggling with ideas should be fun. This is not unrelated to what Lewin calls 'action research', which for him is a community researching together (Lewin, 1997/1948). Play is the mantra of early years education; but play to occupy time is different from play for learning. Participative learning activities deepen learning at all ages.

D. Thinking Outside the Box.

Liminality, in Turner's sense, involves letting go of previously held views, attitudes, and status, and being prepared to reconsider and recalibrate. It means living life as transitional, in between, taking nothing for granted, recognising oneself perpetually at a crossroads, reconsidering choices. He

describes this process as creative and liberating. In education, knowledge-acquisition needs to be a process of deepening understanding and playing with ideas rather than filling the brain uncritically with 'accepted facts'. Unfortunately, the current curriculum and assessment regimes is packed with facts to be remembered and regurgitated. If the thinking process is to be valued more than information, more interesting and challenging assessments will be needed, rewarding creative thought processes and not memory and compliance.

For the organisation of educational institutions, *communitas* suggests more creativity and experimentation, and less playing safe. Turner used the Latin term *communitas* instead of community to represent an active partnership process rather than to describe a particular community. The partnership which is *communitas* is 'positive community action'. This is also what Lewin means by action research. It is bottom-up, values-laden, implying decisions about what is right. This is, in short, all members of the community discussing together what is holistically right for everyone, and listening to everyone who is affected. In education, this includes the children themselves and their parents. This is a status-free process, since its purpose is to break down the current status quo and power assumptions. Liminality may need to be facilitated and channelled if the potential chaos is to be fruitful. It is fluid, responsive, fast flowing, with everyone embracing the change process. It means therefore teachers, parents and pupils thinking outside the box within a community of practice, thinking as a communal effort, pooling ideas. Its aim is revolution – that is, turning pupils around in their tracks and showing them an alternative path.

E. Revolutionary change in education.

For Turner, revolutionary change came from ritual, which mended a breach and healed the community, a Hegelian synthesis. As a Marxist, he would not expect evolutionary change to bring political progress but would assume that direct revolutionary action would be needed to overturn the old system and to get rid of old attitudes. Struggle against reactionary forces would have to succeed. In his view, ritual is an important mechanism for social change, in that it mobilises whole populations to refocus themselves. Calling it 'social drama' he broadened the notion of ritual to ceremony and carnival.

Unfortunately, ritual and carnival can oppose change and be a force of reaction. Bonfire Night commemorates anti-Catholic intolerance. Ritual can be used to solve social problems; but not all ritual does so and most western ritual does not. Dead ritual may be the problem, not the solution. Religious differences divide. Reconciliation is not possible so long as the Orange March winds through Belfast or paramilitaries of both sides fire fusillades at the funerals of killers. Only grass-roots discussions dissolved hostilities, Turner's concept of *communitas*, that is community in positive participation, which made a peace process possible. It is this dialogue that provides the revolution, not ritual. When the revolution has taken place, then ritual (performance, participation and publicity) might seal it.

For schools, desire for gradual evolutionary change has to face up to the reality of school conservatism, which will return to the old ways as soon as pressure is released. Top-down inspection-led strategies (as opposed to bottom-up teacher creativity and inspiration) has lasted for two decades, and is all that many teachers know. These two decades have not produced revolutionary change, so there are annual post-mortems about standards. Education is heavily structured, and 'progress' or otherwise, strictly defined, is advertised on league tables. However there are pressures against these structures both from pupils and teachers, pupils resisting over-authoritarianism, and teachers resisting top-down demands. The true quality of a school requires more than high performance indicators. Schools should motivate children, add value, and rescue children from deep senses of failure.

Turner's 'liminality' is a bottom-up reassessment of our values and strategies, *democratically* reached; and *communitas* is the social partnership process which brings people into positive relationships which encourage change. This encourages debate at its most open-minded, after putting aside status and personal benefit, for the common good. This means valuing all perspectives, re-negotiating mission and vision to rescue needy children, and then deciding how best to achieve the resulting ambitions, without the distractions of historic agendas and empires. Liminality gives schools a vision of a new journey into possible futures if we dare to cross over this change-threshold. This is exhilarating, but is a counterculture and has its dangers. It exists because it is telling the power in the land that the vision behind the money - that is, education funding - and behind inspection (that is, policing) is wrong. And, whether Labour or Conservative, it has been wrong for some time.

Many children grow up with deep emotional and relationship problems which prevent their educational progress. Society and the education system has struggled to turn children round from apathy or revolt to having a positive approach to life. Psychic dangers may not be demons but they can powerfully shape lives to underachieve. The threshold metaphor implies bringing someone to the edge of something new, a doorway into something better, a recognition of future changes and a vision of a new direction. We might call it a crossroads, a junction of ways, a border crossing. People, children and adults, find it difficult to cross borders and thresholds. They have a comfort zone and mentally resist crossing it. This conservatism holds back new ideas as people hang on to old explanations in case their certainties are shattered. The processes of challenging oneself to cross boundaries has to be guided and taught; and once a person has succeeded, no other boundaries worry them unduly. Boundary crossing is therefore an empowerment activity, and many children (and not a few adults) need it desperately (see Bigger, 2008 on empowering teenagers, and Bigger S. and Bigger J. 2003 on empowering NHS staff).

F. Authority

Children are caught in networks of authority, at home and school. Partly this is helpful, providing boundaries for behaviour without which some might become out of control and self-orientated. Once such boundaries are established, individual freedoms can be developed. Authoritarianism without reasonable freedom diminishes their ability to become independent as it emphasises compliance and obedience rather than decision-making. Turner called this process towards self governance *processual* emphasising dynamic social process. He called it *liminal* in the sense that it involved a threshold to newly negotiated social understanding. He called it *anti-structure* because it is dynamic and change producing, in contrast to static changeless structure. The attitude of an educational establishment to authority comes within this continuum: if too authoritarian it is repressive, forcing compliance rather than enabling independence; or if there are no boundaries and rules, a pecking order will quickly establish who holds the real authority, by dominance and aggression rather than through wisdom.

Between these extremes, authority is necessary and desirable: but authority over what, for what purpose, based on what values, asserted by who, and for whose benefit? These issues need to be open to inspection and discussed by stakeholders. For example, rules created for safety purposes are scarcely negotiable. So too rules based on equity and fairness. There will be core values that are built into discussions at an early stage and to which decisions have to comply. In educational institutions, the balance currently is towards adult authority rather than negotiated rules. For reasons any teacher can recognize, bad behaviour has to be controlled. The question in this paper is to ask how in the longer term this might be tackled. Anti-social behaviour still needs to be tackled, but reducing the need for rebellion by establishing consistent adult to adult relationships with pupils is a step to building a good working ethos with the majority. The earlier this can happen, even before the secondary school years, the more accepted it can become. Processual liminality is Turner's term. It is certainly part of the betwixt and between journey from childhood to adulthood, though not a transitional event but a transitional state of being in which more responsibility is given to the young person who is seen as a young adult and not a child. John Holt and Ivan Illich made these points nearly fifty years ago; why children fail, to Holt (1984a/1964; 1984b/1967), was because schools failed them; they succeed when they are empowered. Illich (1971, 1974), in despair, favoured deschooling – broadening the notion of education and not leaving it to schools. Schools survived; but how to broaden the nature of schooling is an important issue for the future.

Conclusion.

Sacred dangers characterised tribal transitions but needs interpreting today in psychological and emotional ways. The 'sacred' is what we define and rule our lives by, our highest values. The non-religious express these in secular terms, as justice, respect, human rights and community. Profanity, the

opposite, are disrespectful and inequitable values of which the holocaust offers an extreme case, Hannah Arendt's 'banality of evil' (1994), where evil is a routine day in the office. Direct action against profanity is exactly Turner's liminality, direct action to secure positive relationships. Pacifying tribal spirits is a similar process to calming psychological realities such as tensions, jealousies, reaction to repressions, injustice, uncaring actions which break up the ethos of a community. In an organisation concerned only to get through each day, a focus of social critique (pupil voice, equity, democracy) might be the last and not the first concern.

I have argued that liminality is a creative group attitude of mind which accepts that solutions are likely to be beyond the threshold of established assumptions. We need for example to look beyond behaviourist assumptions to find ways of re-engaging and motivating failing pupils. To achieve this freedom and openness, is Turner's concept of bottom-up community action, *communitas*. In applying Turner's analysis to education, I have emphasised that the transition from childhood to adulthood has psychic dangers such as low self esteem, rebelliousness to excessive authority, aggression and learned powerlessness, all of which threaten well-being and future prospects. Behavioural punishment regimes such as exclusion and detention are not effective as first interventions to change mindsets. Prioritising mindset change initiates a social change process which affects pupils, parents and teachers in a social partnership aimed at building the positive state of mind in pupils that will empower and motivate future learning. This is so important that nurturing motivation needs to have the highest priority across the whole of education. This turns the current output/ results-driven model on its head and demands continuing discussion between parents, pupils and staff to fix issues. This demands a continuing process of reflection and experimentation, not a top-down change strategy. It assumes that all partners have internalised the benefit of motivating strategies. There may be chaos at times, but it should be fruitful, that is, having a beneficial outcome. With some (pupils, parents and teachers) changes will take time. Turner's vision of celebration and performance has a part to play also, celebrating the school community and celebrating success in learning.

Change hard to achieve in education. There is an inertia, a tendency to carry on as it always has. Actually, the change needed couldn't be greater – from a regime of managing by punishment to one of turning on the learning. For Turner, Marxist revolutionary change offers deep down learning, change through experience, mindset change. Revolutionary change has to be bottom up, experience based or experience simulated. In my view this is not a sudden revolution but a gradual one – but a revolution nevertheless. Turner should be remembered in education for his contribution to democratic social change coming from experiential learning. He is remembered for his emphasis on performance and theatre, both formal or informal – carnivals or the simple dramatic circumstances of everyday life, carried out in relationship and dialogue. The two are one. Life is a performance – but we have to chose between dead mimicry to live progression.

5050 words

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