

## **Liminality and its stages**

(adapted from the text by Xavier Seubert)

Liminality comes from the Latin word *limen*, or *limes*, and means threshold. To be liminal is to move over the threshold from one dimension or depth of life to another. Liminality is a human process of human mobility from one experience to another, from one level of existing to another of new intensity.

**1. Call to Experience:** The process of liminality is initiated by what the person experiences as a call either from greater life forces or from a desperate lack in a person's life, which forces the person to move into another sphere, if she or he is to continue to grow as a human being. The Structures of liminality are a shaping of a force or energy, which one actually experiences, into a productive relationship in one's life.

**2. Separation:** This is the anti-structural element. The point of departure for a greater or more authentic experience of life is separation from what encumbers that experience. The limitations of the functional normalcy of life are exchanged for dynamics which allow a more expansive experience of the reality in which one stands.

**3. Margin (Experience of *communitas*):** The breaking down of the structures which hinder movement flows into the life dynamics which exceed the potentials of the individual for control and manipulation. Where individuals together exceed this limitation they relate to each other naturally out of the dynamic of greater life, which is called *communitas*. *Communitas* is the uniting power of the original experience. This state is anti-structural in the sense that it is a movement against forms and structures that impede the greater movement into life. But the new life that is released will need new structures to achieve an appropriate incorporation into a society. In this sense, this stage has a pro-structural tendency built into it.

**4. Reaggregation:** Structures are developed where the results of the liminal situation can be incorporated into the societal structures in which an individual has to live and function. In other words, a way of life is developed, but this must include the attempt to continue to live liminally within an everyday world and its ordinary space. In particular, the founding experience of the movement is solidified in scriptures that can later be interpreted by the tradition.

**5. Routinization and Dissolution:** The structures or way of life, which are the results of the experience, replace the experience. The sacralization of the structures takes place and distracts from the underlying experience. Maintenance of the structures replaces connection to the experience. This is the stage at which a tradition becomes mired in inauthenticity. Scriptures are interpreted by the process called "theology" to make the tradition more practical and convenient, to comply with existing social norms, or to put the tradition at the service of other social, political, and intellectual forces.