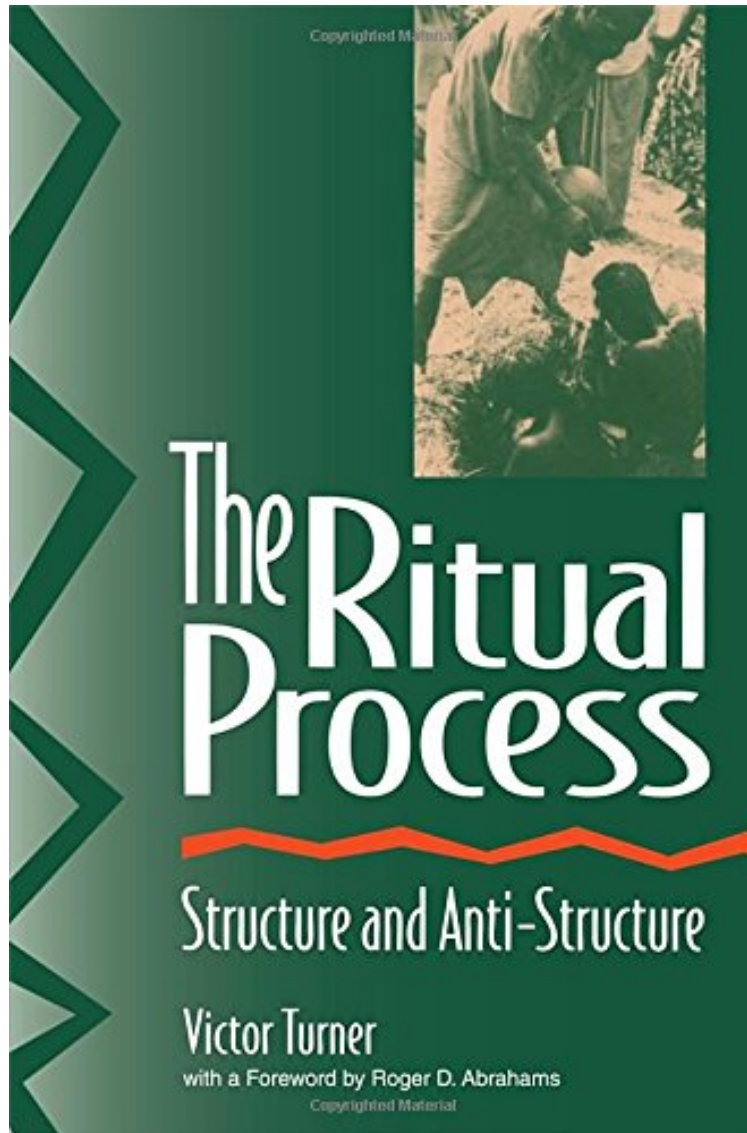


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## The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Foundations of Human Behavior)

*Victor Turner, Roger D Abrahams, Alfred Harris*  
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**Victor Turner, Roger D Abrahams, Alfred Harris : The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Foundations of Human Behavior)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Foundations of Human Behavior):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Dry and dragging at times, but fascinating commentary on human

natureBy Abner RosenweigIn the introduction, Roger Abrahams makes a point to express what a warm, jovial, theatrical personality Victor Turner had. I suspect he does this because these traits--in fact, any detectable hint of personality--are largely absent from Turner's writing. This is a dry, academic work, and as a non-anthropologist, much of it didn't pertain to me. I'm simply not concerned with the finer points of Ndembu ritual. Nevertheless, I found much value in parts of the book (namely, chapters 3 through 5).I got the book to investigate Turner's distinction between structure and anti-structure (or *communitas* or liminality, as he variously calls it). Building on Van Gennep's *Rites of Passage*, Turner identifies a universal psychosocial dynamic running through the human personality and human society: a rational, hierarchical, analytical structure, and a holistic, communal, sacred totality. Turner argues that a dialectic between structure and anti-structure is present in all of our lives and all societies, and that an alternating fluctuation through both elements are integral parts of human life. Neither can rise to ascendancy without creating a distortion, and the wisest approach is a careful balance between the two principles.This is a fascinating discussion with profound implications in anthropology, psychology, politics, economics, and beyond. As a writer, I originally purchased the work to relate its ideas to story structure, and the book doesn't disappoint here, either.For whatever reason you're reading the book, if you can sort through the dry spells and the irrelevant material, there's much here for any student of the humanities to ponder.18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Astounding, insightful look at Ndembu ritualBy Christopher R. TraversVictor Turner is one of the main anthropological thinkers, along with the likes of Claude Levy-Strauss and Mircea Eliade. Unlike other such figures though he speaks deeply on a single culture, the Ndembu in Africa. From this vantage point he discusses ritual patterns both those specific to the Ndembu and those of more universal scope. His thoughts are deep and rich.There are two important contributions Turner makes to the field.The first is in the sense of undifferentiated community he sees in the "*comunitas*" which naturally lies in tension to social structure. This concept is helpful in understanding ideas of liminality and how it is induced and directed in rites of passage according to the van Gennep model.The second is the notion of antistructure, which is the active challenging of social structures which provides room for creative interplay between society and members of it. This also allows us to interpret ritual as a creative endeavor rather than just a repetition of past patterns.In these ways Turner moves from the more purely structuralist works of Levy-Strauss and Eliade to a slightly more fluid work, building on structuralism but treating cultures as dynamic, homeostatic systems as opposed to rigid, inflexible ones. In this regard it is not always quite clear whether to treat him as a structuralist or a post-structuralist as he seems comfortable moving between both worlds as it suits him.This is an important book. I'd highly recommend it.1 of 11 people found the following review helpful. INTS 3900By Monte JohnstonI CLEARLY DO NOT REMEMBER WHAT WE READ IN THIS BOOK. I AM SURE SOMETHING, BUT IT HAS BEEN A YEAR AND A HALF AGO.

In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Victor Turner examines rituals of the Ndembu in Zambia and develops his now-famous concept of "*Communitas*." He characterizes it as an absolute inter-human relation beyond any form of structure. *The Ritual Process* has acquired the status of a small classic since these lectures were first published in 1969. Turner demonstrates how the analysis of ritual behavior and symbolism may be used as a key to understanding social structure and processes. He extends Van Gennep's notion of the "*liminal phase*" of rites of passage to a more general level, and applies it to gain understanding of a wide range of social phenomena. Once thought to be the "*vestigial*" organs of social conservatism, rituals are now seen as arenas in which social change may emerge and be absorbed into social practice. As Roger Abrahams writes in his foreword to the revised edition: "Turner argued from specific field data. His special eloquence resided in his ability to lay open a sub-Saharan African system of belief and practice in terms that took the reader beyond the exotic features of the group among whom he carried out his fieldwork, translating his experience into the terms of contemporary Western perceptions. Reflecting Turner's range of intellectual interests, the book emerged as exceptional and eccentric in many ways: yet it achieved its place within the intellectual world because it so successfully synthesized continental theory with the practices of ethnographic reports."

Turner's book is ingenious and erudite, rich in highly stimulating ideas beyond the ability of this review to exhibit. The reader will find this audacious attempt to explain so much well worth his witness. Theodore Schwartz, American Anthropologist Professor Turner has written another important book. The general theoretical stimulus of its second half will probably be its greatest attraction. Certainly here is a significant contribution not merely to the ritual process in the narrower sense, but to the understanding of a great deal of the total social process of interaction and interdependence. P. H. Gulliver, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* This genial elaboration of his Henry Morgan Lectures delivered at Rochester University in 1966 suggests that Victor Turner is as much at home in the richly symbolic world of the contemporary American scene as he is in that of the Ndembu on which he has written so extensively. I. M. Lewis, *Social Anthropology* I see in the study of rituals the key to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies. Professor Turner is a leading exponent of this view of Monica Wilson [W]ell-illustrated book. F. B. Welbourn, *Journal of Religion in Africa* The ability to create highly

complex and flexible symbolic systems distinguishes human behavior from that of other species. Considering Turner's convincing analysis of the source of religious rites in universal human circumstance, the wonder is not that people continue to create symbolic ritual systems, but that these systems go stale or become perverted, and that people lose belief, often with anxiety, but also with a sense of liberation. Charles Leslie, *Science* The Ritual Process begins with an examination of women's rituals among the Ndembu [Turner's] theories are enlivened. Anthony Graham-White, *Educational Theatre Journal* These two books of essays by one of the leading students of ritual and symbolism have both a personal and a general interest. Personal in that they illustrate the course and movement of Turner's thought over ten years and reflect on the world seen more and more in terms of what he calls *communitas* and non-structural states of being; general in so far as they illustrate wider problems in an anthropology less certain now perhaps than ever before of its degree of inner cohesion, of the nature of its field of inquiry, of the particularity and identity of its methods and theories. Michael Gilson, *RAIN* (on Turner's books *The Ritual Process* and *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*) [A] significant contribution to the newly renaissance anthropological concern with ritual Turner's examination of the semantics of ritual symbols with the help of the native exegete should be of special interest to folklorists. Peter M. Gardner, *The Journal of American Folklore* About the Author Victor Turner (1920-1983) was a research officer at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Zambia, where he began what was to be a lifelong study of Ndembu village life, ritual, and symbolism. He taught at the University of Manchester from 1955 to 1963, when he moved to the United States. Turner served as professor of anthropology at Cornell University, 1964-1968. From 1968 to 1977, he was professor of anthropology and social thought at the University of Chicago, and then until the time of his death he was William R. Kenan Professor of Anthropology and Religion at the University of Virginia. Roger Abrahams recently retired as director of the Center for Folklore and Ethnography at the University of Pennsylvania. Alfred Harris was a professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Rochester. He served as the chair of the anthropology from 1964-1971 and he was well known for being the editor of the Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures.