RITUAL, PLAY, AND PSYCHIC TRANSCENDENCE
IN NATIVE NORTH AMERICA

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Although the juxaposition of the terms "play" and "psychic transcendence" in the title of this paper may appear inappropriate and even shocking to some, it should not come as a surprise to those familiar with the work of Edward Norbeck, J. Huizinga or Roger Caillois. Norbeck, for example, defines play as "voluntary, pleasurable behavior that is separated in time from other activities and has a quality of make-belief" (Norbeck 1971:40). Huizinga (1950:13) also had emphasized this separateness of play, speaking of it as "a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary life' life as being 'not serious'." And identifying one basic forms of play, he speaks of it as involving a "representation of something." That is, we have again a reference to "make-belief", the non-serious rendition of something that may well be serious indeed. Roger Caillois similarly speaks of play as separate from ordinary life and of make-belief involving a reality other than that of ordinary life. Rites of reversal, which have long been Norbeck's special interest, constitute an excellent example of make-belief and play in a religious context. They are pleasurable and distinct from both ordinary, secular life and from more typical sacred ritual. They constitute a third area, somehow betwixt and between the secular and the sacred. They involve, as one of their major dimensions, a symbolic affirmation of both the sacred and the secular world by their temporary reversal and denial. Their characteristically stereotyped and non-practical aspect identifies them as rituals, the third term in our triad, to
which we shall return presently.

Although rites of reversal involve both the element of play and of ritual, and demonstrate how human activities may be both separate and closely intertwined, they do not involve, as a rule, psychic transcendence. The actors are fully aware of their conduct. They consciously act out role behavior that would be inappropriate in another context. Nonetheless, the make-belief aspect of these rites puts us on the track of one dimension of psychic transcendence or altered states of consciousness: The individual who enacts a role, who behaves in ways outside his own social scope, is engaged in a change of identity, whether temporary or permanent.

States of psychic transcendence, or ASCs, may be said to share at least two characteristics with certain forms of play: 1) Their discontinuity or separateness from the workaday world and from practical affairs, which we have already mentioned. This is clearly expressed in the concept of a spirit journey (or "a trip"), where the individual's attention is withdrawn from the world about him and is focussed on an "elsewhere". 2) A second aspect of psychic transcendence refers to the discontinuity not only of activity, and attention, but also of personal identity. The individual is no longer himself. He acts the role of another, he has exchanged his identity either for a new one or for that of an other. In states referred to as possession trance this is most clearly evident.
The actor's ego functions are taken over by "another," by a personality believed to exist normally outside him but who, for the time of the altered state, has invaded his body. Separateness is still relevant here, for the individual's behavior and experience while in this state is dissociated from his normal self, as is his identity, in cultural terms. As a rule, too, the two states are walled off from one another by amnesia, when the experience is terminated. Moreover, the very ritual used to induce the state or to terminate it, emphasized its separateness.

Play and altered states of consciousness may be said to constitute two kinds of transcendence. "Play," Norbeck tells us, "transcends ordinary behavior." That is to say, it "goes beyond" the ordinary, and it does so in part by its separation in time from such other kinds of behavior. Altered states involve transcendence of a different sort, a subjective transcendence, which may be superimposed onto the transcendence of behavior. The matter is brought into focus when we ask what the difference is between a "genuine" spirit possession trance, and one that is mimed, where the actor consciously and intentionally plays the role of another personality. In the first case, it often enough appears that the actor does not perform intentionally, but rather that, as it were, the role plays him. That is, the nature of psychological involvement differentiates between play-acting, behavioral transcendence and psychic transcendence. Historically, we know that often enough what was at one time sacred ritual and psychic transcendence
at another becomes a theatrical performance that requires a differ-
ent and lesser kind of psychological involvement on the part of
the actor.

Before turning to some examples, we need to add briefly some
further considerations. As noted, play and altered states of
consciousness both involve a kind of transcendence, and these
kinds may be opposed to each other or complementary. Both involve
some emphasis on what may be called "otherness" -- changes of identity,
of significance, of symbolic involvement.

In his classification of games, Roger Caillois (1961) draws
attention to the significance, among other factors, of the elements
of simulation, called mimicry, and of vertigo, called ilinx.
We might say that where simulation, or mimicry, emphasizes the
assumption of another identity, vertigo involves the temporary loss
of control over one's own identity. Such loss may be experienced
as euphoria or as fear, in either case as thrill. Psychic trans-
cendence may similarly use both of these factors. However, it may
treat them as complementary. That is, to facilitate the assump-
tion of another identity on a level of intensity beyond that of
theatrical or dramatic simulation, vertigo may be induced to re-
duce the individual's ego control, to produce a temporary dis-
orientation and loss of identity as a first step in the process
of transformation. This applies clearly to possession trance, in
which various vertigo producing exercises may precede the enact-
ment of the spirit role. This represent a temporary, dramatically
visible change of identity. It also applies to visionary states, such as those encountered in the guardian spirit quest where the identity change is one involved in the assumption of adult status.

These considerations bring us to the third term of our triad, the concept of ritual. It must be remembered that altered states of consciousness, whether they involve seeing visions, hearing voices or believing oneself to be another, occur within the realm of psychopathology as well as within that of the sacred. They may be the result of organic lesions or of emotional (or biochemical) disturbances in the human organism. For example, we are familiar with the long debate about the precise nature of the so-called vindigo "psychosis" among the Northern Algonkian-speaking Indians (see R. Fogelson 1965 for a review). Morton Teicher (1960) collected a substantial body of descriptions of cases from throughout the area under discussion. Some individuals, at one time or another, either believed themselves to be possessed by a vindigo cannibal spirit, or to be turning into such a being, or else they were believed by others to be undergoing such a transformation. Whatever the psychological, personal, roots of such a delusion may have been, it is clear that we are dealing here, on the one hand, with a transformation of the self, a psychic transcendence in the sense of an experience involving a state out of the ordinary. There were no elements of play involved in this: no mimicry, no pleasure, nor, it should be noted, was there any ritual. The
state was not intentionally induced, nor was it brought under control by means of ritual. It was fearful, pathological, socially inimical, and dealt with, for the most part, by killing the victim. That does not mean that the windigo state was outside the scope of cultural determinants and modifiers. Such disorders could occur only among people who held a belief in windigo cannibal monsters and in the possibility of such transformations. Hallowell (1934) has suggested that the cultural interpretation of certain physiological symptoms as indicating the development of a transformation into a windigo may have played a powerful role in augmenting the victim's anxiety and as well as that of his relatives. Others have suggested the possible importance of ecological factors in the development of such a complex.

The example of the windigo helps us to see the importance of ritual when considering psychic transcedence. It is clearly important for us to distinguish between involuntary, often, --perhaps always-pathological states, and those states that are culturally valued, and are consciously or unconsciously desired by the incumbent. It is in this latter case that we may find the coincidence of identity change and vertigo, of social desirability and, perhaps, elements of play.

Before taking a closer look at some examples of psychic transcedence in North America, we may first set the stage in somewhat more general terms. In an earlier cross-cultural study of altered states of consciousness, we reviewed the ethnographic literature
on a sample of 120 North American societies. We found that in 97% of these societies some ritualized altered states of consciousness had been institutionalized in one way or another, and that this had occurred within a sacred context. We found it useful to distinguish between two polar types of altered states, which we termed Trance and Possession Trance. In North America, Trance clearly was the predominant type of institutionalized psychic transcendence. It usually involved a visionary experience of some type. Trance was the only altered state found in 72% of our North American sample societies. In another 21%, it occurred although possession trance was also found to exist. And in a third group, consisting of only 4% of the sample, Possession Trance, alone was present. Trance is found in numerous forms, such as the guardian spirit complex with its attendant vision quest, the Sun Dance of the Plains, shamanism, the use of drugs such as jimson weed for divination, or peyote within the various forms of the Peyote Cult, and so on. (Bourguignon 1973).

Possession Trance, which incidentally is the dominant form of ASC in Sub-Saharan Africa, has only a limited distribution in North American native societies. We found it in several different contexts, however, among the principal ones of which were certain forms of shamanism, particularly among the Eskimo and on the North-west Coast; initiatory rituals of secret societies; and sometimes it was also found to be connected with illness and curing societies.
An example of the latter type is seen in the "dream-sickness" and its associated curing society among the Carrier, as describe by Diamod Jenness (1933).

We may now turn to some specific examples of psychic transcendence in North America, seek to identify the elements of play and ritual associated with them, and note the role played by identity changes ("otherness") and by vertigo.

**Conjuring among the Northern Ojibwa**

In his 1942 monograph on the practice of conjuring among the Saulteaux of the Lameau Winnipeg area, A.I. Hallowell notes that specialists in this activity belong to the "non-inspired" type of shaman. That is, spirits do not speak through them but to them. The conjurer's primary function is to act as a diviner, for with the assistance of his spirit helpers he engages in clairvoyance, and he uses this ability in a variety of tasks: to help in locating game, to find lost objects, to divine causes of illness, even, in historic times, to announce the movement of enemy forces. The term "conjuring", which has its source in the earliest descriptions by missionaries and explorers, suggests trickery, sleight-of-hand, theatrical performances. In short: the element of play.

The conjurer operates inside a "conjuring lodge" or "shaking tent" which makes his activities invisible to the audience, which surrounds the structure, and for whose benefit the performance is carried out. For what the conjurer does, in fact, constitutes a performance. Such a lodge is built for each particular occasion,
to the specifications of the conjurer. When he enters it, he calls on his spirit helpers to come. When they do, the structure begins to shake and continues to do so for the entire duration of the seance, which may last for several hours. During the performance, the spirits sing their characteristic songs, and converse with the conjurer. One of the spirits which is always present is makinak, the Great Turtle. In describing a specific performance, Hallowell notes that as soon as the Great Turtle arrived

a gentle ripple of laughter swept over the audience...
His popularity with the audience was manifested throughout the evening by the almost constant stream of repartee which took place between members of the audience and this pawagan /spirit/ when he was present. Anyone may speak to makinak and he always has a witty answer ready... He is quick witted and loves a joke... And he strikes a note of levity in performances which, after all, are serious enough in purpose (Hallowell 1942:45).

Makinak's main function in the seance is to serve as a messenger, and when the conjurer seeks information about people and events at distant locations, he is sent off to obtain the answers.

Unless we believe in the actual presence of the spirits in the lodge, as Saulteaux cultural doctrine would have it, we must conclude with Hallowell that it is the conjurer himself who shakes the structure and who produces the voices of the spirits that issue from it. In that case, is all that is involved here merely a matter of play and make-belief, and are the conjurers nothing but charlatans and impostors? Hallowell's comments on this point are most penetrating and revealing. He remarks that the conjurers with whom he spoke showed:
in their personal statements...the thoroughness with which they had identified themselves with their cultural role/ and consequently the depth of their personal conviction. Not only had they dreamed the appropriate dreams that validated their role in their own eyes; we must assume that they unconsciously invested the act of conjuring with an emotional aura which was experienced as if some objective force were involved (Emphasis added, Hallowell 1942:78).

The whole matter is clarified somewhat by the statement Hallowell obtained from one man, who, although he had had the requisite dreams, had conjurer only once. He did so in response to a dream in which he learned that he could cure a sick woman by conjuring, and he held his seance when, several years after that premonitory dream, he recognized the case that had been foretold to him. He described his experience to Hallowell in the following terms:

...as soon as I got inside the lodge and put my hand on one of the posts it seemed as if the lodge were very easy to move...it was almost as if it shook by itself. I knew just what to do, what songs to sing, and everything else...The inside of the lodge was not dark; it was as light as day. I saw wisakedjak plainly before me there. He told me what was the matter with the woman (Hallowell 1942:78).

Although Hallowell notes that Saulteaux conjurers do not exhibit "trances" such as those reported for example by Shirko-goroff for the Tungus shaman who "falls into a state of ecstasy," it is clear that the conjurer who is quoted in the above passage does see an illumination, has a vision of a spirit, hears what the spirit tells him, "knows" what to do, and so on. Hallowell says of experiences such as these: "we know that psychologically
speaking these were in the nature of projections. But from the standpoint of his behavioral world they were as 'real' as anything can be"(Hallowell 1942:78). In our terminology, we must day that the conjurer experiences a form of psychic transcendence, a form of altered state of consciousness. Both his behavior and his experience transcend those of "ordinary" life. That in this case a woman was, in fact, cured, only serves to validate the experience and the performance, perhaps even to heighten the experience retrospectively. Our interpretation is consistent with that of Hallowell, who says of conjuring that "such an institution would afford a very effective instrument for the expression of psychic gifts of individuals or actual dissociative manifestations"(Hallowell 1942:82).

We see here an activity in which ritual aimed at divination and curing occurs within a context that involves a strong element of play: sleight of hand, ventriloquism, jocular repartee, etc. At the same time, we also find evidence of psychic transcendence, for the conjurer apparently at least on some occasions, experiences visions and hears the voices that he renders audible to his audience by his ventriloquism. There seems to be little of the element of vertigo involved here, but we do not know exactly how the conjurers
enters into the appropriate state of psychic transcendence. His person is hidden by the lodge which, in some ways, acts in a fashion analogous to a mask, for the masker, too, is hidden from view and acts as an intermediary for spirit entities.

There are two further points in Hallowell's report on Saulleaux that are relevant to this discussion: For one thing, conjuring is not taught. The skill is acquired, it is believed, as the result of a spirit call. In former times, the call came in the form of a "dream blessing" during the puberty fast. More recently, with the decline of the practice of fasting and seeking a guardian spirit, the call was obtained through a series of four characteristic dreams. In contrast to the earlier practice, which required an active effort on the part of the seeker for power, the dreams appear to have come unbidden, spontaneously. Several of Hallowell's informants spoke of having the first dreams of the series in early infancy.

Another matter of considerable interest is the observation that children were not permitted to play at conjuring. This was considered dangerous. Such a prohibition is consistent with the idea that the ability to conjure is not acquired through learning. It also underlines the serious and sacred ritual nature of this activity which contains such a strong element of play. This play element is reserved for the public performance, for the demonstration of power by the conjurer. The subjective side of the activity, the call and the experience of conjuring itself are sacred. The call, and even more so the seeking of the call, involve a transformation of identity into a conjurer, a transformation that is validated by
the successful performance. The play element is merely an accessory. But it must not be undervalued.

The contrast we have just noted between the private psychic transcendence experienced in connection with a change of identity, on the one hand, and the behavioral transcendence of play exhibited in a public performance, on the other, can be made somewhat clearer by a consideration of the puberty fast. Although the practice of this aspect of the vision quest had waned among the Saulteaux when Hallowell studied them, it remained alive much longer in other areas.

In an account of his own experience, the Sioux medicine man John Lame Deer tells of how he sought his first vision at the age of sixteen. He was left alone, in a "vision pit", on a hill top, naked except for a blanket, to fast, sing, pray, and beg for a vision. He notes that before this he had never been alone in his life and that he was afraid. About his preparation, he says:

I was still lightheaded and dizzy from my first sweatbath in which I had purified myself before going up the hill... The sweatbath had prepared me for the vision-seeking. Even now, an hour later, my skin was still tingled. But it seemed to have made my brain empty (Lame Deer and Erdoes 1972:14).

And he goes on to say:

Blackness was wrapped around me like a velvet cloth. It seemed to cut me off from the outside world, even from my own body. It made me listen to voices within me. I thought of my forefathers, who had crouched on this hill before me... I thought I could sense their presence right through the earth...(ibid.).

And, finally, the climax:

Suddenly, I felt an overwhelming presence. Down there with me in my cramped hole was a big bird...I felt feathers of its wing touching my back and head. This feeling was so overwhelming that it was just too much for me. I trembled and my bones turned to ice (op. cit. p.15).
He then begins to sing, and to pray, to shake his rattle; he hears a voice and sees visions. Among these is his great-grandfather, the medicine man Lame Deer. His old mentor, who comes to fetch him at the end of four days, tells him that he is no longer a boy, but a man. And to announce his transformation, he takes his ancestor's name, Lame Deer.

There is a great deal of ritual here: various bits of paraphernalia, the sweat bath, the singing and pray, and so on. There is psychic transcendence, evidenced in the visionary trance state. This state is induced in part by excercises in vertigo, the sweatbath and the various fear-producing elements being the most obvious. All of this leads up to an experience of radical transformation, to abrupt and dramatic change of identity. The boy is transformed into a man, into a medicine man, one without power has become powerful. And to symbolize this transformation, and the identification with his ancestor, he takes on the dead man's name. There is indeed psychic transcendence here, vertigo and identity change, but there is no element of play. There is no make-belief, no amusement, no performance. Indeed, there are no witnesses to the crucial events, which are private, intra-psychic. Guy Swanson has called the North American guardian spirit quest "a rite of empowerment for the office of adulthood" (Swanson 1973:65), and he distinguishes it from corporate initiation rites that exist in other societies for the same purposes. In the latter case, it is the group that bestows adult status on the individual, that, as the saying goes,
makes men out of boys. In the guardian spirit complex, it is the boy, who, through his own effort, transforms himself and achieves the powers of adulthood through his encounter with the spirit world.

Before we move on to consider certain corporate rites for purposes of comparison, we may stop briefly to look at one example of the practice of the Sioux medicine man, as reported by Lame Deer. He speaks of his uncle Chest, "who used a kind of magic in his doctoring:"

To drag a disease out of a man, old Chest would take his little bag and pick a feather or some little stones out of it to send them into the body. They hit a fellow like a shock, disappeared into him. The feather always returned to the cloth placed on the wall with a little blood or mucus sticking to it...Chest was an honest man. He never misused his power...But there are some conjurers who are fakes and cheats...One of them could throw something sharp at you, a quill, a jagged piece of rock, you'd get sick and only he could cure you...A so-called medicine man may turn witch doctor when he feels that he is failing, slipping, when he can't cure anymore (op. cit. p. 168).

Power, as we have seen, must be demonstrated publicly, in an event that is both ritual and performance. The sleight-of-hand act of throwing objects into a person and drawing them out clearly involves a play element, and nothing is said here about psychic transcendence. The honesty of the medicine man is established by the fact that he cures and does not use his power to cause harm. Fraud is not in faking the events of the performance, in putting on a show, but in causing illness intentionally to make money, or in being unable to deliver the cures expected and promised. As in
the Saulteaux case, the techniques used to make power visible and evident are not relevant to "honesty." What matters is the socially valid use of truly efficacious power. It is in these public acts of validation that elements of play are combined with elements of ritual, which draw their original personal and social significance from private experiences of psychic transcendence.

Secret Societies on the Northwest Coast

For purposes of comparison we may now turn to another part of Native North America and to a type of ritual in which elements of psychic transcendence and of the behavioral transcendence of play are combined in somewhat different ways. As is well known, throughout the Northwest Coast area there existed secret societies whose chief public performance involved masked dancers, who impersonated spirits, as well as individuals who were believed to be possessed by spirits. That is to say, they were in an altered state of consciousness in which they impersonated the spirits. And this impersonation is culturally interpreted as "possession." Drucker (1965) has reviewed the major features of the Dancing Societies of the Kwakiutl and their distribution among neighboring groups. He notes that the several cycles of dance rituals dramatized the supernatural experiences of ancestors, and that these experiences were re-enacted, or relived, by the novices, who were "inspired or possessed" by the spirit whom the ancestor had met. These rituals served to pass on the gifts acquired from the supernaturals in the original encounter; they included various objects, such as masks and
ritual paraphernalia, together with names, songs, and dances. They also included the power to perform a variety of magical acts, which themselves served to demonstrate the acquisition of that power. Possessed individuals were violent and performed grizzly acts, and the ritual consisted in part in ways of calming and exorcising these violent spirits. J. Adrian Jacobsen, an early German ethnologist, gives the following description of part of the Kwakiutl Cannibal Dance:

In the performance...those wearing masks are no longer regarded by the awe-struck crowd as actors and persons representing the gods but as the gods themselves descending from heaven to earth. Each actor must therefore enact exactly what legend relates of the spirit. If the actor wears no mask, as often happens among the Hametz (devourers or biters) or the Pakwalla (medicine man) the spirit whom he represents has entered into his body and the man possessed by the spirit is on that account not responsible for his actions while in that state (J.A. Jacobsen 1891:384, cited in Oesterreich 1966:290).

The theatrical nature of these performances, the use of masks and elaborate costumes, the dramatic and frightening elements of the performance, the trickery used in staging the events, all of these involve an element of play and an elaboration far beyond anything we have mentioned so far. The degree to which the actors actually experienced psychological dissociation, genuine psychic transcendence in the form of temporary madness, has sometimes been questioned. Much of what transpired was staged or at least pre-arranged and individuals who were bitten during the Cannibal performance were compensated. However, Jacobson cites an eyewitness
report of the 1887 Hametz (or Cannibal) dance, which suggests genuine dissociation and he comments:

I have, for example, seen a man with deep scars who had been on his back for six months as a result of the bites received. Another died because an overzealous Hametz had bitten him right through the throat (J.A. Jacobsen 1891:388, cited in Oesterreich 1966:291).

The fact that masks are used in these ritual performances is a matter of considerable interest, for we find here the simultaneous presence of two methods of spirit impersonations.

Mask and possession trance may be said to perform an identical function as means of impersonation of supernatural beings in a ritual context, yet they do so in different ways. One common aspect of impersonation, however, that they share, is license: the freedom of the impersonator from the consequences of his acts, or, more precisely, under the circumstances, the acts ascribed to the being that is impersonated. The actor may behave with impunity, and do shocking things, because his everyday self is not subject to sanctions for the actions of the being he impersonates. This included not only sanctions from his community, but also feelings of guilt, shame or revulsion he himself might have. Indeed, the very shocking things that he does confirm the genuineness of the impersonation: the presence of the spirit in the mask or in the body of the possession trance.

The observation that impersonation through masking and through possession trance are generally alternate methods of impersonation,
that is, that the masker is not at the same time a possession trancer, is not new. It was made almost fifty years ago by the German anthropologist Fritz Krause (1929, 1931), who sought an essentially culture-historical answer to the problem he saw in this observation. He considered "transformation", or impersonation through masks, to be evidence of a non-animistic type of thought, since in his view, it involved a change of substance by means of a change of form or covering, which transforms the organism into what is presented by its appearance: the wearer of the mask, being one with the mask, becomes the spirit. On the other hand, Krause interpreted possession trance to derive from an animistic worldview, for it involves a change of substance without a change of form, that is, the substance is considered to be separate from the form in which it is incarnated. Since the Northwest Coast Dancing Societies include mask impersonation and spirit possession impersonation, Krause concluded that this shows an earlier, non-animistic worldview overlaid with a later animistic view. This approach is, of course, rather speculative, and it is of little significance to us today. The Kwakiutl and their neighbors are not the only people who use both masks and spirit possession trance. The Iroquois, for example, also do so. And we find both types of impersonation in most of West and Central Africa. However, it is true that they tend to occur in complementary distributions. Maskers are generally not believed to be possessed, and their psychic state is not in evidence, as is that of the possession trancer. Moreover, masks are frequently
used in initiation rites, whether in tribal initiation of in
initiation to societies. They are dramatic, theatrical props, they
hide the identity of the actor, they may be impressive and awesome.
It is of interest that the maskers among the Kwakiutl and other
Northwest Coast societies act out prescribed parts, whereas the
possession trancer, the novice, acts "wildly" and somewhat unpre-
dictably. It is important for him to be in a state of psychic
transcendence, to be dissociated from his ordinary self, in order
to act in ways that would otherwise not be acceptable to him.

Lévi-Strauss has long been fascinated by the art of the
Northwest Coast and particularly by the masks. In a well-known
paper, he analyzed the "split-representation" so characteristic of
this art tradition. He concludes, on the basis of comparative
analysis, that this splitting technique is the symbolic expression
of a particular kind of culture. Specifically, it is said to be
associated with a complex hierarchical type of society, in contrast
to such other mask-using societies, as those of the American South-
West, for example, where split representation is not used. On
the Northwest Coast, there is "a chain of privileges, emblems, and
degrees of prestige, which, by means of masks, validate social
hierarchy through the primary of genealogies" (Lévi-Strauss 1963:264).
He goes on to point out that the actor, who impersonates the god,
wearing the split-representation mask, acquires from him:
by a continuous process of creation at each moment of social life, his titles, his rank, his position in the status hierarchy.../thus/ split representation expresses the strict conformity of the actor to his role and of social rank to myth, ritual and pedigrees. The conformity is so rigorous that, in order for the individual to be dissociated from his social role, he must be torn asunder (Levi-Strauss 1963:264).

What is of particular interest to us here is the observation of the separateness of the actor from his role, the dissociation between the individual and the role he plays by wearing the mask. This dissociation is underlined by the very style in which the masks are carved. If we think back to the other examples of psychic transcendence and ritual we discussed earlier, it is clear that the societies of the Eastern Woodlands and the Plains[2], which we had reference, do not exhibit the social complexity demonstrated on the Northwest Coast. There is no social hierarchy of emblems and titles to which the individual is publicly initiated. Instead, as we have seen, he acquires power not through the group but through his own encounters with spirits. The dramatic exhibitions we spoke of concern the demonstration of a power already acquired, not its acquisition or transmission. Both the possession trance of the novice and mask impersonations of the initiators require an audience, involve public display. The psychic transcendence is of quite a different type than that of the visionary trancer who seeks and encounters a spirit guardian, and gains power through that encounter. But in both instances there is transformation, the transformation of one without power into one endowed with it. However, while in both cases a permanent, lifetime transformation takes place, in the
case of the possession trancer, there is also a temporary alteration of identity, which consist in assuming the identity of another. This does not happen to the visionary, whose personality does not give way to that of a possessing spirit.

In the contemporary period, it has often been observed that traditional rituals are transformed into theatrical representations, into spectacles and tourist events (e.g., Cazeneuve 1970). However, another transformation of traditional rituals has taken place in one area of the Northwest Coast, among the Coast Salish. The psychiatrist Wolfgang Jilek (1974) has described the revival of spirit dancing among these people, and its transformation into what he terms a "psychohygienic and therapeutic movement." Here there is a dramatic ritual, in which the novice, (or patient) is forcibly inducted into the dancing society. In this ritual he is seized, so that he may undergo a ritual death and rebirth, through a long ritual cycle. Jilek suggests that the participants in this movement regard disorders of the type Jilek terms "anomic depression", characterized by alcoholism, drug addiction, delinquency, etc., as "spirit illness" and he presents evidence, through follow-up studies, of the therapeutic effectiveness of initiation and continued group participation. Since the anomic depression, in Jilek's view, derives directly from the stresses inherent in the Indians situation in the contemporary world, it is clear that spirit illness of this type must be in many ways quite different from the type of disorder that may have prompted initiation and the desire to acquire spirit power in the old days.
Such contemporary developments as the revival and transformation of spirit dancing among the Coastal Salish underline the fact that the analysis of psychic transcendence and the dramatic elements of play with which it is accompanied in certain settings are of more than antiquarian and speculative importance. Vertigo and transformation of identity furthered by it are potentially closely linked to psychological and social maturation, to the stripping away of the old self and the growth and strengthening of the new.
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