Like Songs That Never End:

Affects Produce Effects

(“and they go on and on, my friend”)

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Abstract

Over a lifetime of artistry and over a decade as a Christian liturgist I have seen firsthand the generative power of affective force. This power, continuously at play in dynamic relationships throughout liturgical ecologies, produces effects that generate constitutive communication. This thesis uses a combination of affect theory (particularly the work of Erin Manning), in concert with ritual and liturgical scholarship to gently critique logocentrism and frequent prescriptive approaches to liturgy experienced in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I also highlight some alternative pathways that might guide us toward conceptualization and praxis of less ableist, less racist, less neurotypical communal liturgy.

These pathways place liturgy in a paradigm that asks participants to embrace holistic bodily knowing. In the ecology of liturgy, there is potential for a more nuanced and responsive hospitality among human, non-human, and more-than-human participants. A healthy state of perpetual liturgical growth is possible if we engage from a perspective of transindividual relationship. I call this transindividual awareness and sensitive posture of hospitality the ultimate “werk of the people.”

Dedication

If you and I have ever collaborated, been in a classroom together, or simply shared humanity between one another, you have contributed to this thesis. I could fill pages and pages listing the many many persons and places and things that have influenced and shaped this work. Alas, I am limited in space, and so despite a deep desire to call out each and every element of the ecologies that coalesced into this thesis' existence, I will restrict myself to naming just a few people in particular.

Dr. Hannan and Dr. Esterson: You have both had an enormous influence on my time at PLTS and the GTU. I could not have had better support or loving challenge throughout this process. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to me and this project. Your affirming words will have ripple effects well into my future.

Adam: On a frustrating afternoon under unnerving fluorescent lighting, you mentioned the term affect theory and gave me Brian Massumi's name. Those little ripples of information led me to sources that, until then, I wasn't sure existed and likely would not have found without your influence. Thank you.

John: Fellow artist, and poet. Thank you for your continuous love and support, for reflecting back and telling me what you see in my work and in my being. Your prophetic words and energy gave me some kernel of the divine permission I needed to trust that small, still voice, continuously calling me to be exactly who I am.

Mom and Dad: As a young girl, I was utterly convinced no one could top the music and art you each create in this world. I still believe that right to the core of my being. So much of who I am is a direct result of both of you. I love you so much.

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Liturgy Is for the Artists and Poets

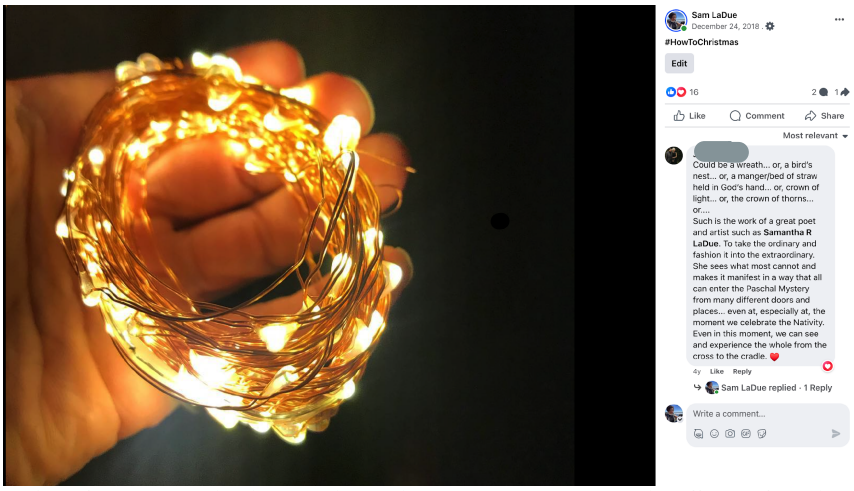

Figure 1. *Screenshot of a 2018 Facebook post, where a liturgy mentor expresses the affective force he experiences from my art, and poetry as well as the effects of that work as he experiences them in the world. (author's own image)*

One of the very first things I was told as a brand-new pastoral liturgy student at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles was that "liturgy is for the artists and the poets." My teacher followed his statement up with an illustrative story about what he described as the power of artists and artistry. Today, I would call this a story about the effects of affective force, or affective power.

My teacher and their colleague had commissioned new communion ware for a large Mass that would take place in an arena. They told the artist exactly what they wanted, every detail. In his telling, the artist listened, nodded as they spoke, and did not say much. Time went on and the event date came closer and closer. They started reaching out to the commissioned artist, asking when they could expect the communion ware. They did not hear back and were getting nervous. In what seemed like the eleventh hour, the artist got in touch to tell my teacher that the communion ware was ready. When he

picked up the much-anticipated communion ware, he was presented with pieces nothing like what he and his colleague had described to the artist. Traditional chalices and cups with stems on them were, instead, made like small bowls that a Eucharistic Minister would have to hold, cupped in both hands. As we students listened to the story, we were told that with nothing to be done our professor accepted what the artist gave them and went on to the event. It was not until communion, that my teacher realized what the artist had done for them.[1] Because the cups were so delicate and required two hands cupped together to hold them, the exchange between every Eucharistic Minister and communion participant became one where people held their hands out in an open-hand gesture of giving and receiving. No clenching of fist or grabbing movements involved. Imagine this action spread across an arena with hundreds of participants. Powerful affective force and its ripple effects spread throughout the gathered mystical body of Christ as these delicate cups were transferred person to person. A cavernous arena shifted into an intimate ecology involving both the human and more-than-human at the apex of a Roman Catholic Mass by an artist who had the courage to listen to their artistic intuition.[2] Participation was magnified into what Erin Manning would call "artful" participation.[3] Liminal space had been opened and people now needed (and utilized) extra eye contact and simple care

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[1] The Roman Catholic tradition most often uses common cup, not intinction, during communion processions.

[2] Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, Thought in Act (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 56. More-than-human in this thesis refers to that which is not human within the ecology of existence wherein humans also are present and engaged, and their experiences stretch beyond perceptions of what individual and collective are capable of. Think of this term as a reminder to maintain awareness for ecological interconnectedness. Here, ecological goes beyond what many of us would call "nature" and includes energetic forces detected and undetected. My introduction to the term comes from Erin Manning's work.

[3] Manning, *Minor Gesture,* 58.

in the in-betweens of exchanging these delicate vessels between diverse human bodies. The resulting interactions from these small exchanges led to people talking about that specific Mass' transcendent impact for weeks to come. In fact, it was perhaps more magnified than even the artist had hoped— this was years later, and my teacher was passing the story on to another body of students. Further still— those affects are producing effects, because here I am relaying the tale even further into the world, by telling you about it.

"Liturgy is for the artists and poets" this professor told us. I take this slightly differently than what he may have meant initially. I know from my own experience that artists and poets are professionals at understanding that affects are productive and have substantial effects on people, on entire ecologies. We the artists and poets all have one form or another of a *way* for creating. Artists and poets are accustomed to engaging in continuous processes, always noticing the affective and its effects. Noticing affective force and its effects is central to how we, the artists and poets, go about life. My intuitive body, however, says that this ability to notice the affective and the effects that affective force produces goes beyond artists and poets. All people are capable and belong in the artist and poet vein of affective noticing.

The image in Fig. 1 is my hand, holding lights I was about to unravel in a sanctuary just before a Christmas Eve service. You can see the effect of the affective power of that image in John's comment (next to the image), underscoring his assessment of my skill and applying the labels of "great artist and poet" to me. At times, I wonder and worry about labels like artist and poet. These words categorize me, both opening me up to pre-existing narratives and presumptions about who I am and what I do, and

simultaneously limiting me based on those same narratives and presumptions. Personally, I understand purpose to be to further communal engagement, highlighting relationships and opening pathways for people to find communion among one another across all places and times my work touches. My role is to make and magnify beautiful things. Neither of these requires the words artist and poet. Does being labeled a "great artist and poet" further this, or obfuscate that which is fundamental to my work? Alternatively, is there a third way that doesn't engage so much siloing or categorizing? There is, I think. And that third way lies outside of logocentric living, choosing instead to notice our bodies and what they're telling us and then using those experiences to develop words for them—rather than allowing words to pre-define our experiences and understandings. This is why I turn to affect theory throughout this thesis. Because affect has force, it is productive and produces effects which we often do not put words to, or take time to notice. In many cases, we're even trained to ignore affects and their effects. But, if we did pay more attention, we might realize where words and labels alone hold us back from being and experiencing fuller versions of ourselves in relation to our entire world.

Liturgies are communicators and cultivators of perception. Every element (both non-human, and human) of any liturgy interacts in a dynamic and ever-shifting field of transindividual relationships (meaning that individual existence and identity are deeply intertwined with and shaped by fellow earth dwellers) whose affects are constantly generating effects that communicate at lightning speed—often before conscious rational intellectualization occurs.[4] Recalling the story about my teacher and the communion ware

[4] Two excellent resources for more about this lightning-fast knowledge are: James S. Taylor, *Poetic Knowledge: The Recovery of Education* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).; Jacques Maritain, *L'Intuition créatrice dans l'art et dans la poésie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966).

(above), remember that perspective of what communion is (and could be) was transformed, transcending the immediate moment as a result of the affective choices one artist made as well as the ripple effects of the additional affective choices that had to be made on the spot between wine, water, human hands, paths of travel, and more.

My heart soars each time I hear, see, or write "Liturgy is for the artists and poets." These words possess life; their affective power does not die out for me. I consistently recall the joy, love, and energy of the classroom they were spoken in, as well as the person who gave them three-dimensional shape. I am among the first to remind people that we are all inherently creative beings, regardless of whether our cultural norm would qualify what we've created as art or poetry. "Liturgy is for the artists and poets!" I *want* this beautiful phrase to remind us of who we are (imago Dei, of course!). I want it to energize us to dust ourselves off (or keep the dust, if that's preferred) and enter liturgies with open bodies, ready to receive and participate in the fast and ever-surprising work of the Holy Spirit. "Liturgy is for the artists and poets." I *fear* this phrase might be another series of categories and boundaries that stop, rather than enable, everyone's invitation to join the transindividual liturgical fray.[5]

Erin Manning, dancer, artist, philosopher and affect theorist, defines art by drawing from a facet of its medieval definition: art as *the way*.[6] To make art, to be artful, is to engage in a way, or a process. A process that opens us up to participation— artful

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[5] Transindividual and collectivity are not synonyms here, though they do relate. Transindividual in this thesis is referring to co-constituted individual and collective identities, communication, and understanding of the ecology of liturgy. This is more than the individuals collectively gathered, its parts do not add up to its sum. Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 53.

[6] Erin Manning, *Minor Gesture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 13.

participation, which is participating in *a way*. Thus, the wisdom of my liturgy mentor and professor remains present in the phrase "liturgy is for the artists and the poets." Regardless of whether we identify as artists or poets, everyone can be artful and artfully engage in liturgy because everybody can (and arguably is already) engaged in a way or a process, just like artists and poets. In this light, perhaps a communicative adjustment on the phrase "liturgy is for the artists and poets" is needed: Liturgy is for the artful and poetic. Why? because liturgy is about a way (or process), not a product. We are all already engaged in art and artfulness, and we are all already always engaged in liturgy.

Art and Artfulness as Process

Artfulness requires careful attention to the in-betweens found in a way. The way may consist of the making, the practice, the simplicity of being present and always sensing and feeling a dynamic field of transindividual process. Artfulness "is the operative expression of worlds in the making, the aesthetic yield that opens experience to the participatory quality of the more-than."[7] The more-than, in this instance, is amid the liminalities of being and not-being, among the human and not-human. To engage in art and artfulness, we need to sensitize ourselves to every sort of sensing and feeling body, starting with our own and radiating outward, learning to detect always-presenting immanent directionality within any given field of transindividual relationship. Artfulness does not decide what a form will be before it has manifested; rather, artfulness is sensing and feeling, participating *without* categorizing and analyzing. We feel artfulness best when the liturgy, or any process/way, transcends all our individuality and subject-object-making tendencies, and instead, we are simply one among many players within the transindividual milieu.[8] Artfulness is when we sense that things are somehow running themselves. We are in the process, too, but we are not controlling the process as it unfolds— we are simply collaborating and noticing. We are in and among "the flow."

Artfulness is not the cups that the artist made in the introductory story, though the cups were artful participants in a transindividual field of artfulness. Artfulness is the in-between becoming, the participatory process between everyone and everything that

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[7] Erin Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 58–59.

[8] Paradoxically, the transindividual milieu does not require leaving individuality behind.

coalesced at a Mass when all these elements encountered one another. There was a shift in attentiveness and noticing that occurred there. The cups were an affective actor among many, where their unexpected shape was met with artful participation. People received the affective force of those cups, and one (of many) effects was different engagement. A liminal time was created in this complex field of relationships, and newly noticed transindividuality burst into consciousness, transcending the particulars of the individuals within the ecology of that liturgy. Artfulness is the glue between the human and well beyond the human. Artfulness is perceived by anyone.[9] An important facet of artfulness is that this perceptual engagement avoids automatic categorization, or foregrounding certain elements and backgrounding others as we sense, feel, and perceive. Rather, in artfulness, we intentionally keep ourselves attentive to and associating with the many elements comprising the transindividual field around us, all of which emit affective force, and experience the effects of that affective force within a liturgy. To engage in this artful way, we must sensitize our bodies.

Re-Membering Our Sensitive Bodies

To re-member our sensitive bodies (they've always been sensitive, we've been taught to ignore much of the sensitivity) is to open ourselves to the hard work of sensing and feeling past traumas (ancestral, communal, personal, old, and new) as well as the adventurous, joyful, cathartic, challenging, emotion-full, erotic work of encountering

[9] It is interesting, and notable to me, that according to Manning artfulness perception may come most naturally to the neurodiverse, as well as people who experience extreme states induced by love, fear, or those who utilize various consciousness-altering substances. Manning, *Minor Gesture,* 192.

difference that surrounds us.[10] Another word we could use in the place of difference is relationship. To re-sensitize our bodies is to open ourselves to the hard work of transindividual relational awareness. This is work that asks us to move away from paradigms that presume that we are sovereign individuals, subjects surrounded by objects, whose volition is primarily comprised of thoughts that become language and then actions. In a liturgical ecology, re-membering our sensitive bodies is to no longer operate within siloed logocentric analyses that tell us who we are, what we believe, and who God is or is not.[11] In this paradigm, these important reflections remain present, but we treat them as allies to our interdependent sensing, feeling bodies. This paradigm effectively brings valuation of our human bodies into parallel value with rational intellectual thought, recognizing that the thoughts that developed and support logocentrism are in actuality made in the acts of thinking-with, moving-in-feeling, or in other words, transindividual artful participation.

Re-membering our sensitive bodies is a protest and reclamation all at once, pushing back on social order that encourages non-sensing (or ignoring feeling and experiential knowledge), and instead choosing to engage in artful living that understands ourselves as one of many interdependent elements thinking-in-action in an ecology of affective influencers, all of whom also come with effects played out upon and through the human. To sensitize ourselves is to open ourselves to the point of noticing our learned

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[10] It is worth noting that this is also the work of dismantling white supremacy. Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017), xvii–xviii.

[11] Logocentrism refers to the prioritization of words and speech, suggesting that words are central to thought and culture, at the expense of other forms of meaning and expression.

assumptions and the places where we maintain a culture of non-hospitality through our practiced ignorance of the diversity of our own and fellow bodies in our environments. Re-membering our sensitive bodies is the ultimate, fundamental work of the people.[12] To re-member our sensitive bodies, to sensitize them, is work that recognizes that thought and practice go together and happen simultaneously. This work is not linear. It is fractal, multi-layered, cascading in myriad directions. Choosing to sensitize ourselves through practicing artful being means doing the work that Christ left for us to do: to heal the sick, to cast out the demons that drive us toward categorizing, and away from maintaining sensitivity to the interdependent ecologies we are in. Sensitizing is taking *communal* participation seriously in such a way that we begin to *communally* unbind that which must be unbound and *communally* bind that which must be bound.[13]

Sensitizing our bodies opens us up to ecologies of relationality, of differences that allow us to enter the immanent directionality already present in our world. To do this, we need to shift our conceptualization of liturgy and praxis away from what Donna Lynne Seamone called "doctrines of worship" (siloed knowledge and analysis of textual, theological, and gestural elements of worship) and instead lean into a broader interrelational field of artful participation that centers consideration of affects, as well as their effects.[14] A shift of this kind places liturgy in a perpetual state of renewal, where we

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[12] Notably, "the work of the people" is a definition of the word liturgy used across many Christianities.

[13] Intentional use of communal three times in this sentence. We are accustomed to individuality. Individuality remains a component in this ecology. But this is not individual work and cannot be passed off as such. Also, I do not discount the work of the Holy Spirit in that this sentence somehow came tumbling out of my fingers with communal showing up in a trinity.

[14] Donna Lynne Seamone, "Re-Membering the Body in Liturgical Action: Entry Points for Inquiry into Living Liturgical Practice," *Consensus* 24, no. 2 (1993): 32.

no longer reactively ask and plan our liturgies based on what they are supposed to *do* or *mean* (as we tend to do in our written liturgical literature and academic study). Instead, we enter and remain in a posture of experiencing and sensing-hospitality, continuously present in artful participation, feeling and sensing what liturgy *needs to do,* and engaging with care for the liturgy as an ecological entity in and of itself. Because liturgy is communicative and communication cultivates perception, the results of artful participation and sensing-hospitality have the potential to develop counter-cultural, qualitatively different ways of being—for the ecology of liturgical participants, and eventually for the entire world.

Now that several key terms and ideas have been established (the power of affective force, terms such as artful participation being a process, transindividuality, and the importance of re-sensitizing our already sensitive bodies), the following chapters will look more closely at how each of these plays a role in a liturgical ecology that could play a powerful role in binding diverse Christian communities to their faith, and one another.

Chapter one discusses constitutive communication, illustrating two different examples of transindividuality in action and the ensuing bone-deep communicative effects of the affective forces at play in each example. Chapter two is about the challenges of a logocentric world that enforces concepts of binaries between brains and bodies, as well as the importance of sensory experience and the need to reclaim and place value on the knowledge contained in our sensitive bodies. Chapter three expresses the importance of considering the affective force and ensuing effects of the words we're using in a logocentric culture. It is not that words should be done away with, it is that we must realize they are an ally to helping us orient ourselves to the wisdom of the tradition

we've inherited. Chapter four discusses what needs to change, so that we might also change enough to pass the core fundamentals of our vast faith traditions on to future generations in meaningful ways that lend themselves to countercultural, subversive hospitality in our present day. My own context is that of a Christian woman (and future pastor, God willing!), so I reference and speak about Christian values and liturgy. However, these concepts and ideas are easily applied to a variety of traditions, whether theist or atheist. Let us begin with a moving seat story.

Chapter 1

Constitutively Communicating Church: Transindividuality in Action

A Moving Seat Story

A wave of relief and pleasure washed over me as I smiled and said thank you. I had just finished speaking about developing liturgical art and environment at an annual clergy gathering. With a sense of contentment, hopeful I had planted seeds of growth and change for congregations in the coming liturgical year, I gathered my props and samples. Amid the flurry of exiting participants, a pathway opened itself and someone approached me in their wheelchair. They asked me a question: what's the correct way to receive communion?

Initially, I thought they were asking me about the position of their hands for the reception of consecrated bread. As I gazed back at their trepidatious expression, I sensed that hand position was not their concern. Before I could ask a clarifying question, they continued. I pulled up a banquet chair to listen. This person spoke about wanting to "do" communion "right." They told me that every Sunday they enter the church through a side door, using a pathway no one else uses. They told me how the church had removed sections of a couple of pews to accommodate their chair. They told me how the place for their chair is off to the side, in the back row. They told me about sitting alone, in the back, in the spot for their wheelchair. They spoke about how some ushers instruct them to use a side aisle, instead of the middle aisle with everyone else. They told me how, sometimes, a pastor would tell them not to "worry" about the communion procession,

instead bringing communion to them. After a long exhale, they told me they were tired of always feeling wrong in their church. Once again, the question was posed to me: What is the proper way to receive communion in a wheelchair?

While this person never specifically stated their dissatisfaction, their words painted a clear picture. The combination of their postures, breathing, facial expressions, movement of their hands, and general energetic presence illustrated that the question behind the question had very little to do with the correct way to receive communion and more to do with seeking someone to tell them that it is ok to want and seek self-determination in communion participation.

A range of effects, borne in the interstices of the affective forces of physical plant space as well as the myriad foregrounded and backgrounded assumptions among the fellow humans in the room (such as how or whether a disabled body participates with everyone else in self-determining ways, versus ways determined solely by others), were at play in this church. These elements coalesced into a series of instinctive actions and behaviors whose effects on this person's sensing human body generated emotions of anger, humiliation, frustration, resentfulness, hurt, isolation, grief, vulnerability, loneliness, and likely many more. As they spoke I felt my own body shift to a stomach-turning sense of frustration on this person's behalf. I felt anger, and underneath that I felt sadness, presuming that no one wanted to harm this person and their communal experience. How did we get to a place where the human before us was going so utterly unseen and unheard?

How We Got Here

A range of elements contributed to what eventually became the message that this person had received ("doing communion wrong"). A key player among these elements was the literal physical setup of the church, which had been designed for bodies to move through it in a certain way within a certain order. The design's affective force exerted upon human bodies produced effects that contributed to reifying a culture of ableism.

Erin Manning writes, "It is not the body (alone) that is disabled; the culture is disabled in its incapacity to create accommodations that allow for difference—different kinds of bodying—to exist."[15] The culture of disability begins, in part, with how we set up and use our physical plant spaces. Without attentive noticing of affect and its effects, ingress and egress can serve as an inadvertent physical underscore of a social ailment that, in a backgrounded way, supports (through bodily action) cultural insistence on practicing ignorance about the diversity of bodies, and the differing needs of those diverse bodies. When the elements for a person using a wheelchair or walking aid are separate from the broader community's travel pathway, the affective force of the separation (picked up via sensing feeling bodies, often subconsciously or pre-consciously) generates communicative messaging (an effect) that the person who needs the ramp and the appropriately sized door is separate from the broader community. Depending on how well the path of travel is maintained, another set of affective forces and messaging effects is set into motion. A well-maintained path of travel indicates

[15] Erin Manning, *For a Pragmatics of the Useless* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 193.

thought, care, and awareness. Seemingly abandoned or simply not maintained pathways become an underscore for lack of care for the diversity of bodies in our world.

Once in the sanctuary, the community is greeted with two sections of pews consuming the majority of the floorspace of the church. The affective force of the pews both pre-determines the direction people face when seated, and controls what kinds of bodies can move through the space as well as how they can move through the space. With so few people in the sanctuary on Sundays, the pastor encourages people to sit closer to the altar by blocking off the entrance to the back pews with ropes. The affective force of these choices discourages the broader community from seating themselves near the one area where a wheelchair can easily sit. The person in the wheelchair, limited to "the wheelchair spot," does not receive the modicum of seating self-determination that the rest of the community receives. This person is then doubly harmed, in that the affective force of the ropes on the back pews effectively pushes people away, leaving our person using a wheelchair alienated in the back of the room.[16]

These are average design and set-up choices in sanctuaries. They likely feel appropriate, economical, and logical on their surface. Still, the affective force of these design choices come with effects that ripple out into cultivating and undergirding unhealthy, culturally practiced ignorance whose effects undermine artful participation within the liturgical ecology in favor of subject-object relationality where bodies are

[16] Providing one space for a wheelchair is good in the sense that It is better than no space. And yet, providing only one space for a wheelchair also exerts substantial control over how a person whose mobility depends on wheels experiences hospitality, community, and their church sanctuary. There's a clear, though backgrounded preference for people who move with two legs or other walking aids over those who need to move using wheels on a chair when physical setup choices like the use of pews are made.

desensitized and affectively pushed to conform to the ideals initially informing the design choices of the setup of the church.

It is understandable that we landed here. We have a substantial history of cultural narratives about able bodies and disabled bodies in the U.S. We also have a long cultural history of practicing ignorance and reifying that practiced ignorance via the design and setup choices we make in physical spaces, such as ingress and egress, or the use of pews examples I shared above. While I agree with Manning's assessment that our culture is disabled in its current failures to create accommodations that allow for difference, I am not in agreement that we are incapacitated in our ability to do so. An echoing refrain I've heard from professor and colleague alike is "architecture always wins." While there are limitations associated with the architectural realities of the buildings we operate in, there are also many ways to work with, adjust, or change our understanding of those limitations. More importantly, in my experience there is always the option to allow the limitations of our historic design choices to press upon all of us in such a way that we communally notice them and, with time, the thorn in our side that they become also begins to help us adjust our valuations in a way that we are inclined to generate physical plant space that better "allows for difference to exist"— or at least distributes the burden of the non-allowance for difference among the whole body of the community, rather than only burdening the person using the wheelchair.[17] For example, perhaps we choose to remove sections of pews throughout the sanctuary, so that any person with any kind of movement aid has a series of seating options to choose from. Yet again, an even better

[17] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 193. The idealism here is substantial, yet as Christians, is not bearing one another's burdens with these issues an essential aspect of our faith basis? It may be ideal, yet it is also very doable in many instances.

choice might be simply using a variety of seating tools (pillows, chairs, rugs, stools, etc.), which are easily configured and re-configured for any body and its posture needs. Yes, it might look a bit bizarre to eyes trained to see and understand church seating to look and feel a certain categorized way, but it might also spark the kind of liminality needed for necessary and healthy conversations about why we have biases toward particular kinds and styles of seating to begin with, and what might be lurking in the background of those biases.

Aesthetic Affective Force Is More Than Skin Deep

Before entering seminary, I briefly worked in the software development sector. My main role was to install and train people to use newly-developed software. In this field, the more flexible and intuitive the software, the more likely it will accommodate differences in how a user may approach the software over time; therefore, the more likely a business will retain clients.

My colleagues placed high value on foundational issues pertaining to coding and, in so doing, devalued the "skin" of the software, inadvertently making it extra difficult and unpleasant for clients to use. I approached my peers with the challenges preventing people from engaging and learning the software successfully. A brief interruption from code development to handle some of the aesthetic issues would have been beneficial to all aspects of the business. The team re-stated their value for coding and devalued the "skin" as "just aesthetic."

Meanwhile, clients grew increasingly frustrated, generating affective force whose effects became more and more stressful in the shared environments between clients, the development team, and myself. These effects rippled outward, manifesting in negative

interactions in the client's work environment and decreased quality of hospitality for the client's own clients. As anger and frustration continued to rise, my colleagues agreed in conversation that the aesthetic issues were the source of our biggest woes, bemoaning that our clients did not "see" the importance of what is under the "hood" of the software. The false narrative here was that the aesthetic does not "actually" matter, or that the aesthetic is a superficial issue. Yet, in reality, feeling and sensing human bodies (the very focal point for which the software was being developed) were struggling with aesthetic affective force that went far deeper than the skin. This team did not value the communication of those frustrated sensing-feeling bodies. In the end, choosing to lean into dogmas and doctrines of code development over enabling the artful participation of both developer and client resulted in clients choosing to interrupt the entire business ecosystem by no longer being our client. They went elsewhere, choosing software that was more attentive to its transindividual affective force. In other words, they went to software that was more pleasant to use, because it made them happy, and therefore also made it easier to keep their clients happy.

The same pattern of behavior occurs in our churches. We can focus on what we might categorize as foundational, such as theological reflection and textual analysis, refusing the interruptions that culture and human bodies bring to us. But, in the end, those same human bodies will eventually interrupt our foundation focus (what Seamone would refer to as "doctrine[s] of worship") by choosing to move on, communicating their experiences and understandings about Church and God accordingly.[18]

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[18] Donna Lynne Seamone, "Body as Ritual Actor and Instrument of Praise," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 12, no. 1 (1998): 32.

Overlooking the affective and its effects does not remove the presence and productive nature of the affective; ignoring the effects of affective force puts us in a place where we continuously practice ignorance about our immediate world and the needs of its inhabitants. Having a firm foundation is important in software, and it is important in our churches. Yet, we must remember that foundations such as code or doctrinal aspects of worship are intertwined with aesthetic experiences in both software development and churches. All coalese into consituative communication.

Undesired Effects from Aesthetic Affective Force

A parish that likely cared very deeply for a person whose mobility depended on a wheelchair inadvertently cultivated painful effects via a combination of their historic and present-day affective forces of their physical plant space, likely informed by the doctrines of worship inherited throughout the parish's history. These affective forces and their effects become a feedback loop that reified destructive and oppressive social and cultural systems (in this specific case, systems that support ableism).[19] It is very possible that this community had no idea they could engage in more artful participation that would pave the way for noticing the in-betweens of our norms and the needs of this person in a wheelchair. Our normative culture in the U.S. does not support this kind of relational noticing, sensing, and feeling. Generally speaking, U.S. culture values quick assumptions

[19] Claims about serving "dominant" needs in the broader design versus "specialized" needs of a person in a wheelchair are bogus. Any skilled designer can tell you that there is no need to maintain separateness; there is need to utilize the many inclusive design options available to us. All people can enter and exit through a main entrance that includes a cutout and ramp between the parking lot and the curb, and doors that can be operated in ways that do not require pushing or pulling them.

by teaching us to foreground certain information and background other information for purposes of being faster and producing more.[20] Artful participation within a transindividual field of relationality does not allow for quick foregrounding and backgrounding. This is a way that requires attentive energy. It is a process of counter-cultural behavior through relational thinking and noticing which, if practiced well, might have allowed members of this community to notice the transindividual relationships, along with their affective forces and felt effects playing out in the field of relationality within their sanctuary before someone was hurt, mad, or deeply saddened by their own community.[21]

As it stands, though liturgical praxis *could* cultivate this kind of artful participation and opportunity for people to open themselves to difference, it generally does not and the lone person in the wheelchair who was asking about the correct way to receive communion was left to be the only one noticing the harmful effects of the affective force of their church's aesthetics. In other words, the affective is productive; producing wide-ranging effects. The effects of aesthetic and design considerations run bone-deep, getting into foundational understandings of who and what we are, contributing to a church's overall communication. Another way to label this transindividual form of communication is constitutive communication.

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[20] For more information on this, read: Manning, *The Minor Gesture*.; Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013).

[21] A reminder that transindividual, the notion that individuality and collectivity are not separate, goes beyond the human in my use, and includes the non-human within the context of this thesis.

The Constitutively Communicating Church

The word communication often conjures images and thoughts of telephones, social media, television, radio, newspapers, signage, and webpages. Not everyone considers that the literal way people organize their spaces contains affective power that communicates. Identity, values, expectations, appropriate use, and still more about who an organization is, what their expectations are, and how to use space comes through affective force (oftentimes far more loudly and clearly than any words being used).

In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan famously stated, "The medium is the message."[22] In those brief words, he highlighted that the medium often communicates more profoundly than the linguistic content transmitted through the medium. McLuhan gestured to a similar concept to my refrain for this thesis: affects produce effects. Those affects and effects are powerful communicators and cultivators of perception and behavior. Powerful enough to override the spoken or written word—even if we rarely linguistically acknowledge that power. In McLuhan's case, he was referring to rapid globalization and the effects of media. In my case, we are talking about liturgy and church sanctuaries. Both are powerful contributors to culture and everyday life.

McLuhan (and later social scientists such as George Gerbner and Jerry Gross) noticed that people were garnering powerful messages (and changing their behavior in response to those messages) that were not included in the written or spoken words used in media channels. In addition, Gerbner and Gross showed that the effects of our

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[22] Michael Simmons, "Marshall McLuhan's The Medium Is The Message (Best Explanation) – 1977", 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dawLQe1ZUA.

consumption of various affects cultivates people's perception of their immediate community, regardless of whether or not that perception is aligned with what is happening among the communities that they live in. Gerbner and Gross came to refer to this finding as "Cultivation Theory."[23] In their own time and place, they said that the affective produces very strong effects, cultivating people's perception of their world, and most importantly, causing people to value what they've garnered from media over their own experiences.

The awareness that the totality of a physical plant location along with the mediums an organization might use, as well as all the harder-to-quantify in-betweens of an organization, is referred to as organizational communication. Organizational communication is a way to say that we know that affects produce effects that are perceived as communication. Organizational communications are built constitutively. The constituents are transindividual, consisting of everything associated with, or experienced in relation to, an organization. From a pastor's interactions with church council to parishioners' engagement with one another, from the message on the voicemail to the colors chosen for the buildings, from accessibility throughout campus to the hues and shades used in the cushions on the seats—these and so much more are all coalescing affective powers, whose effects become bodily sensed communication held in tension with the linguistic elements of an organization. The experience of all these elements' affective force and the effects of that force eventually become the words used to describe one's understanding of an organization.

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[23] Thomas C. O'Guinn and L. J. Shrum, "The Role of Television in the Construction of Consumer Reality," *Journal of Consumer Research* 23, no. 4 (1997): 278–94, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489565.

More Than Words: Affective Force and Its Effects

At the end of our brief conversation about how to receive communion, I watched my new-found friend in their wheelchair move away from me toward their next encounter with communion with a little more hope in their posture. As they crossed the threshold of the doorway into the blazing light of the crisp day, I thought about how affects and their effects will often communicate more loudly than anything we believe we are saying in our logocentric culture. We can say "all are welcome" in print across every space possible in the church. But, when a person whose mobility requires a wheelchair enters our campus it does not matter how many times we said "all are welcome" if at every turn the effects of our physical plant space felt controlling, separating, or like this body's needs were an afterthought at best.

Churches communicate constitutively. No one person, no singular spoken or written word gave the person in the wheelchair a message indicating they did not know how to receive communion properly. Yet, the message received was "you're doing communion wrong." People are unlikely to report back and tell us that our affective forces generate uncomfortable effects in their bodies. Instead, people will move on to a place where the affective force, and the effects of that force feel congruous and supportive. My point is not that comfort is the only feeling/experience we need in our liturgy or sanctuary. We need a wide spectrum of human feelings and sensations in our church liturgies. To only be comfortable does not help us grow. My point is that we need to mind the constitutive communications developing through and among us. One way we could help ourselves considerably is to cultivate practices and techniques that support and

encourage us to notice discomfort and then collaboratively inspect or engage with the discomfort. The way to begin to overcome these kinds of blockages relates to how we conceptualize liturgy, and the kinds of hospitality we understand we are called to engage in liturgy.[24]

If we choose to prioritize artful participation, noticing the transindividual affects and effects shifting and swirling between ourselves and each facet of our liturgical lives, we stand to cultivate the kind of fertile ground that, instead of reifying ableism and neurotypicality, supports binding diverse communities together in solidarity.[25] Next, a chaotic example of artful participation, where I chose to value sensing and feeling in concert with rational intellectual decision-making.

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[24] These topics will be covered in more depth in chapter 4.

[25] Interestingly, Kertzer, in referencing Durkheim's work, says, "Rituals build solidarity without requiring the sharing of beliefs. Solidarity is produced by people acting together, not by people thinking together." To my reading, this is further support that if we would like to better support one another in community, if we would like to move away from the cultural values that are at odds with Christian values, we do not need to over-focus on foundation issues (such as what is our theology), but balance these with issues of the affective and its effects in our physical ritual spaces. David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 76.

Figure 2. *The art installation for the communal nativity. The assigned scene was "Roman centurion announces the census." Pictured here is the scene as set up outdoors, with me sitting amid the installment just before we dismantled and moved it indoors. (author's own photograph)*

Each year, a group of local Christian churches in my community organized vignette nativity scenes for the Advent season. This tradition had been around for ages. Along with the tradition came mannequins that had seen better days, stereotypical "biblical" clothing, and a shell equipped with lighting so that the scenes could be seen at night. In 2016, shortly after the election of President Trump, I was asked to handle the scene for a parish I worked with. Besides me, there were two other people helping with the scene. After much discussion and evaluation, we determined we needed to handle things differently than past years. We painted the Roman Centurion Cheeto orange with a golden sheen and adjusted his sign to say: Tax! Register![26] We then took our four other

[26] This color was playing with frequent social media commentary about former President Trump's skin-color, which was often compared to Cheetos, as well as a gold sheen via gold glitter sprayed atop the orange, as a gesture to the frequently ornate gold décor and flourishes associated with the Trump brand. Part of the point of the installation was that everyone in that scene was a color. I had the tiniest hope that some people might notice and begin to reflect on the issue of which colors landed in positions of power and how this is, by far and large, an issue of luck and chance played out over millennia with vastly damaging material consequences for those who do not land in powerful positions.

mannequins and painted three blue and one rose-pink, complete with pink glitter. Blue fabric was draped between the blue and pink mannequins for extra visual indication of their connection among one another. Additional battery-operated tea lights lay on the ground, among our mannequins, as though these mannequins inherently stood among the light. Our centurion was a gesture to soon-to-take-office President Trump and some of his immigration rhetoric. The remaining mannequins were a visual connection to the liturgical practice of using an Advent wreath to count down Sundays to Christmas. The hoped-for result, at least among fellow traditions who also use an Advent wreath in their liturgical celebrations, was to induce deeper thought about racism and the coming U.S. Presidency as it might relate to our scriptural tradition, as well as a nod to where hope and increasing light might best be found in time to come. The day we installed the scene was filled with laughter and conversation among passers-by who were giggling about the centurion and asking questions about the mannequins we lovingly called "the blue boy group."[27]

The affective force of our mannequins immediately showed its effects. There was a steady stream of traffic driving by to look at the scenes, slowing down to a pause when they got to ours. Over and over, the lights that should have been illuminating the mannequins were somehow being unscrewed so that the scene was not lit after sundown. One morning, as I passed by, I discovered gold lamé had been wrapped around one of the larger blue mannequins to hide its mannequin breasts, effectively obscuring the "advent wreath" portion of the scene. My team and I removed lamé and screwed the lights back in for about a week. The affects of the physical art installment continued bringing on

[27] Yes, we called them the blue boy group even though one of them was pink.

effects. The field of relationality between this church campus and the people living in the immediate area had crossed a new threshold. One of many effects borne out of the affectivity of the installment was engagement and encounter among new people in the local area. The church saw visitors to the campus asking about the scene and engaging with the ideas we were presenting. Several curious people came to a Sunday liturgy wondering if and how this strange nativity scene related to worship, or how busy the campus could be during the week. Another effect was not quite as positive as we would have liked: we were confronted by a homophobic organizer of the nativity scenes. He was concerned that the scene was "gay" and told us we had to dismantle the scene or return it to "what it had always been and should be."[28]

When consulted, I intuitively asked if we might place the scene inside the sanctuary of our church. I was operating with trust for my bodily sense of knowing through feeling and sensory input. This parish had ample open space in the back half of its sanctuary. Pew chairs were configured in groupings of three to five, spread throughout the area. We added the mannequins to this portion of the sanctuary among the pew chairs.

Visually, things looked chaotic and strange in the back of the sanctuary, and equally strange outside with the empty shell.[29] Affects produce effects, and in this instance, the strange affectivity of the mannequins inside the sanctuary shifted the "norm" enough that people were nudged away from automatic patterns of foregrounding

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[28] What he meant by "what it had always been" was that we needed to make the mannequins white-presenting and cover them in the same "biblical" clothing that they had been wrapped in for the last several decades.

[29] To this day, I regret not taking a photo of this. It was a busy time, and we moved very quickly.

and backgrounding. I observed people entering the sanctuary and engaging more attentively than usual. They were, seemingly, more alert to their interactions with one another and the sanctuary as a whole- a result not entirely out of the blue. Affects produce effects, and I had added four brightly colored affective forces in the form of mannequins to our sanctuary halfway through Advent, with minimal explanation.

After the service, as was the custom of this parish, carts of coffee, tea, and snacks were rolled into the back portion of the sanctuary. Children were running wildly, playing among the mannequins, their shouts, squeals, and laughter just a little louder than usual. One group of adults gathered anxiously near the Cheeto-orange Centurion. Debate sparked regarding whether President Trump would be welcomed at this church if he showed up. Other adults pulled together pew chairs in a semicircle, sitting and speaking with an elder whose mobility depended on a walking aid and whose body required a seated posture for conversation. I heard the elder reminiscing on days as a child of missionary parents, relaying what they'd learned in their years about care for one another across the globe. Yet more adults crowded around the coffee and cake carts, laughing as they attempted to wrangle frosting-covered fingers of children before they tore off into a lively, sugar-induced game of tag that seemed to be perpetually circling the perimeter of the sanctuary. People approached and told me they were glad we "took in" our mannequins from the nativity scene, that they were disappointed about the reception of the scene but proud that had been willing to do it. The room had an electric energy that was new to me, sparking with potentiality in its liminality. It felt like people were leaning into this energy, acknowledging one another more attentively than usual. The preacher

for the day stepped out of the fray and approached me, eyes wide and sparkling as children dodged around their feet saying, "What is this *holy chaos*?"

Affects Producing Liminality

I made two substantial (and risky) aesthetic choices whose affectivity produced strong effects. First, the decision to attempt making a pointed political statement using mannequins painted in unexpected colors and placed in unexpected configurations. Second, choosing to bring the mannequins into the church's sanctuary.

Those aesthetic choices and their pointed affective force were transindividual, noticeably felt among those encountering them, with the affective effects rippling throughout the community. First, in the outdoor space, from the moments when we were setting up the installment with giggles and engagement from passers-by all the way to when we received an ultimatum made by a fellow local church that we dismantle the scene. Then, when I followed my sensing and feeling body by suggesting we move the mannequins inside. What I did not anticipate, but learned, was that the addition of the mannequins contributed to a state of liminality outside of any of the usual ritual liminalities we typically encounter in the liturgy on a Sunday. Sherry Turkle, in an article titled "Living the In-Between with Victor Turner's The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure" eloquently states,

> [liminality is a] . . . 'moment of meantime' during which people [are] capable of different, stronger bonds. In this space, people [can] see each other not in their

> traditional social roles but as human beings. Turner [calls] this *communitas* . . . and said new ideas are born in the crucible of this constructive disorder.[30]

This Sunday felt like it was electric, chaotically sparking and waiting to jump to whatever might be next. I saw stronger bonds developing during and after the liturgy. I am convinced that the liminality of the moment, the sparking energy, borne somewhere in the transindividual mix of the newly chaotic ecology of the sanctuary in those moments pushed people out of their typical patterns of foregrounding and backgrounding sanctuary motion and engagement toward experiencing one another in what Turkle referred to above as constructive disorder. These bizarre mannequins, placed in our midst and left uncategorized and undefined, moved people into chaos ripe with potential for new social order.

Skin Deep Is Bone Deep

Aesthetics play a substantial communicative role in human understanding and interaction (or lack thereof). The affective force of aesthetic choices culminates among sensing and feeling bodies that eventually translate these experiences into language. Too often, the aesthetics of our surroundings are overlooked or labeled as "skin-deep." However, the aesthetics and design of our surroundings are fundamentally intertwined with communication, exerting a substantial force on human behavior that often goes under-credited or, entirely ignored in favor of logocentric daily living. Aesthetics produce affective force that is bone-deep, with wide-ranging effects. Within the case studies

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[30] Sherry Turkle, "Living the In-Between with Victor Turner's The Ritual Process: The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, Victor Turner," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (2022): 485, https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/859086.

shared in this chapter, those effects played out in and among the human bodies who entered and exited two different churches (the wheelchair story, the holy chaos mannequin story). This is not a unidirectional communication model; it is a constitutively communicating system, a transindividual communicating ecology where affective force plays out on every aspect of the church in cascades of affects and effects that coalesce into communication about who and what church and the divine are. There is a fractal nature to this phenomenon. Affects generate effects and the cycle continues on. Affects and effects are like a song that does not end— they simply go on and on, my friend.[31]

You may have noticed that I have not said much about the linguistic elements also present in church sanctuaries, mostly emphasizing that the affective force of aesthetics often speak much more clearly and loudly than words. Linguistics also have affective force, and plenty of effects related to them (that is for Chapter 3). Right now, it is important to remember that effects generated from affective force via aesthetic elements often go unnamed and unacknowledged by the human bodies who experience them. Regardless of whether we notice and name these effects, they remain present and actively influence us at every level of our world.

Catherine Keller, in her book *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process*, writes that a third way of understanding the creation process is to resist assumptions that creation is preprocessed (whether foregrounded and stated or backgrounded and silently assumed).[32] Here, she is asking the reader to consider that primal creativity is persistent

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[31] Shari Lewis: The Song That Doesn't End, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BgBfUNGOzw.

[32] Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Proces*s (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008),48.

and that we might re-orient ourselves to active, interactive participation in creation.[33] We can apply the same concept to differences in what happened in a sanctuary where I brought in strange multi-colored mannequins that disrupted the space and caused a person to joyfully ask me, "what is this holy chaos?" versus a person in a wheelchair who, in frustration and desperation asked me "how do I receive communion?"

Both the wheelchair and the nativity-scene mannequins brought different affects and effects that disrupted the usualness of their respective sanctuaries. In the case of the mannequins, the community engaged in artful participation (a process, or a way, that resulted in constitutive communication for a visiting pastor, for one another, for me as an observer). In the case of the wheelchair, the community pushed back and closed out possibilities for co-creation, attempting not only to remain rigid in existing structures but also attempting to "make" the person and their wheelchair fit those structures.

Interestingly, both communities used the words "all are welcome" in welcome statements at the beginning of their liturgies, and on banners outside their church property. Yet, the transindividually interacting non-linguistic elements of both sanctuaries generated powerful affects whose effects cultivated perception and communication that materially changed people's experiences and ensuing understanding. In one case, the affective force of a moderately disordered space served to open a community to additional relationality, binding that community to one another in new and deeper ways. In another case, the affective force of the physical space served to close a community and divide itself from one of its members (the person in the wheelchair).

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[33] Keller, 48.

Considering these complicated and seemingly tenuous issues of transindividual affect and their effects seems complicated and messy. It is accurate to say that these considerations do not easily categorize themselves in language or in easily quantifiable silos of knowledge. However, despite the tenuousness, human bodies sense and feel *before* language comes into the picture. Sensing and feeling is powerful, and provides the foundation for informing constitutive communication and, eventually, the language we develop for (and about) liturgy.

Chapter 2

Transindividual Affects and Effects Among the Transindividual

Placing the Sensory Back at the Center

Liturgy is a constitutive communication of the church. Our constituents in this paradigm are *all* entities in a transindividual field of relationality that is continuously in process. "All entities" refers to human bodies (which are fundamental to the constitutive nature of this communication) as well as non-human, and more-than-human elements. One of the key players in the human aspects of this field is our fully engaged, sensing, feeling, and knowledgeable bodies. This kind of knowing differs from what most modern contexts acknowledge and tend to value highly. This kind of knowing is not logocentric. It is sensory, feeling, and nearly instantaneous at times.[34] The more-than-human is important here because the more-than-human includes sensing-feeling bodily knowing, and then stretches beyond our perceived and assumed limits of humanness into our entire ecology. Think of the moments in your life that, like a flash, you've known something that (should have been) impossible to know. Instantaneous knowing is entirely complete and within us, and simultaneously entirely received from outside of us—and none of it is purely logocentric.[35] Words may have played a role in the knowing, but they likely are

[34] To read more about this kind of knowing, I recommend Jacques Maritain and James Taylor's writing on what Maritain called "poetic knowledge." Jacques Maritain, *L'Intuition créatrice dans l'art et dans la poésie*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966).; Taylor, *Poetic Knowledge*.

[35] The overvaluation of rational thought would lead us to believe that this kind of knowing is impossible, or that we should doubt it when we experience it. Yet, there are thousands of years' worth of

not the sole source. Augusto Boal describes the synergy found between words and sensing, feeling bodies: "Words are the work and the instruments of reason: we have to transcend them and look for forms of communication which are not just rational, but also sensory."[36] Notably, Boal does not divide the linguistic (words) from sensing human bodies. Rather, he reminds us that there is knowing that transcends words and is found in the sensory.

Meanwhile, Lutheran tradition emphasizes word. In a Lutheran liturgical setting, the emphasis is word *and* sacrament. Luther had good reason in his time and context to underscore the importance of accessible scripture and accessible sacraments for all Roman Catholics of his day. He was also an academic, and those academic roots remain valued in Lutheran culture even today. Unfortunately, somewhere in the mix of time, we've also landed at what I believe is an unintended (and impossible to anticipate) consequence: Lutheran culture inadvertently orients us primarily to written and spoken word in the rational intellectual sense. The impacts of transindividual sensory communication (art, environment, bodily knowing) fall to the wayside in favor of written and spoken word. Rather than allowing and acknowledging that spoken and written word are among many affective forces that we recognize as important in the liturgical ecology of affects and effects, word has become an assumed primary source with all else deriving from word. The word-centered focus shows up in standard ELCA liturgical literature,

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thinkers who have not only experienced this knowing, but have spent considerable time and effort exploring it.

[36] Augusto Boal and Adrian Jackson, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (London: Routledge, 2006), 15.

especially *The Sunday Assembly,* which consistently repeats the centrality of word and sacrament, while emphasizing that all else serves to support "the word."[37] It is possible that the sensory aspects of human bodies are meant to be implied. I do not, however, get the sense this is the case in Lutheran liturgical literature. Ultimately, the literature does not clearly include any additional indicators to orient us toward the noetic aspects of bodies in process, experiencing knowing at multiple levels amid a complex field full of affective forces and their effects. Aesthetics are bone-deep, communicating via multi-sensory experiences. Emphasizing a pattern of logocentric communication, while accurate in its doctrinal claims (Lutherans state that they gather around word and sacrament), also serves to obfuscate the most fundamental aspect of liturgy: our porous sensing-feeling human bodies and the incredible amount of more-than-human interaction we already have, and could build richer, more full lives on—both in and outside of liturgy.[38]

Words are a great ally to help us bridge contextual gaps between wisdom texts from ancient peoples to today's people in bodily sensing and feeling ways, but they should not be leaned upon as the primary source for the important collaborative work that is liturgy stretched outside of chronos and into kairos time. If we do not maintain the sensory at the center of liturgy, instead insisting on logocentrism, we cut ourselves off from one of our most powerful sources of knowing and wisdom: our sensing and feeling

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[37] Lorraine S. Brugh and Gordon W. Lathrop, *The Sunday Assembly* (Minneapolis:Fortress Press, 2013), 8.

[38] I struggle with specifying in and outside of liturgy. I am not certain that there's a binary between liturgy and life, life is lived in liturgy, and liturgy is lived through life.

bodies. We also inadvertently reify decentralized systems of power and oppression, such as white supremacy, Western cultural domination, and binary narratives about "able" brains and bodies by limiting knowing and valuation of that knowing to people who primarily operate logocentrically. Allowing perpetuation of the overvaluation of logocentrism also perpetuates the maintenance of these primarily oppressive systems despite frequent spoken, written, and liturgical proclamations in Lutheran liturgies that we work to dismantle them.[39] By cultivating the overvaluation of written and spoken language to the point where even bodily knowing must be described via written or spoken language, we *also* cultivate strong constitutive communication that trains human brains to overlook the non-stop sensory knowing of our bodies. For example, think of the wheelchair story in chapter one. Had that community's constitutive communication placed equal or more value on sensing and feeling to already established logocentrism, people would have noticed their community member's discomfort, the dissonance between the "all are welcome" statements and what was happening "on the ground," and

[39] This is a key factor in what allows white supremacy, ableism, and other ailments to remain intact despite our attempts at dismantling them. Our words themselves are easily manipulated in ways where we think they mean one thing, but end up meaning something else. Augusto Boal makes incredibly astute observations of this behavior and its ramifications in *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*: "undue appropriation of signifieds and signifiers, purposeful emptying of all the contents of the Word - which being able to mean anything, ends up meaning nothing - has as its objective the destruction of the capacity of the citizen to make and use metaphor, the destruction of the capacity for any kind of reasoning through words or images. The poisoning of words seeks to disorganize language and impede the formulation of coherent thought. We no longer know what we are saying when we speak. Language, spoken and written, becomes mysterious and inaccessible – it becomes an obstacle to communication, exactly the opposite of the purpose for which it was created. . . . we are mired in the Great World War of Dis-communication . . . . The clear objective of this new modality of war is mastery, not of geographic territories, but of our brains. It is in this field of battle that Popular Art must situate itself. All the Arts. We have to be *Allies* in this war against the fascism of the uni-vocal discourse." Popular art, in the case of this thesis, is liturgy. Liturgy must be an ally against fascism of uni-vocal discourse, and one way to do that is to recognize the power of the human to assess and understand without language. Boal and Jackson, *Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, 2006, 24.

responded in ways that could contribute to dismantling their (presumably) inadvertent culture of ableism.

Rational, intellectual engagement is valuable. We cannot and should not throw it away. Gathering around word and sacrament is foundational to Lutheran heritage, and should not be thrown away. Theological reflection and textual analysis are also valuable and foundational, containing multitudes of wisdom that are treasured among many Christians. In the midst of these valuable assets, we must begin to treat the knowing of our sensing, feeling bodies with the same degree of value that we place upon spoken and written word. The intuitive, sensory knowing of human bodies is fundamental not only to liturgy, but also belongs among fundamental informants for the eventual rational engagement that produces theological reflection, textual analysis, and concepts such as gathering around word and sacrament. The complete body must come first, not last. Luther himself said that it is not God who needs our good works, but our neighbors. If we are to get to the good works our neighbors need (for example, appropriate access and deeper relationality for our friend in a wheelchair), we first will need to center our sensing, feeling bodies so that they learn to respond to the knowing and needs we sense and feel both individually and transindividually, rather than continuing to ignore them in favor of what we've been taught "should" be via logocentric tradition we've inherited over the centuries.

I have heard people claim that in their lived experience God no longer speaks to us the way many have read of God speaking with people in our scriptural texts. Considering a communally proclaimed preferential option for the poor, in parallel to the long history of Christian colonization wherein we have forced Western culture and values

upon persons who do not hold the same values, I have often wondered whether the real issue is not that God no longer speaks with us but that God has chosen to remain silent among those silenced by habitual logocentrism over diverse human, bodily experiences and knowing.[40]

For me, the issue with leaving out, or backgrounding, the importance of the sensing, feeling human body is that it generates and reinscribes feedback loops that, intentionally or not, blot out and silence swaths of fellow earth dwellers' knowing and wisdom that stretches deeply into the more-than-human. If, as Christians, we are called to be both a part of the world and set apart from it, an important area for reconsidering our liturgical approach is re-centering bodily sensing, feeling, and experience as a first source for knowing and hearing the divine in the liturgy. I suspect that if we re-center bodily sensing, feeling, and experience as the first sources for knowing, we will also intuitively shift how we write and speak about the liturgy to reflect the importance of bodily feeling and sensation, allowing ourselves to maintain the kind of intensity in liturgy that produces positive affective force in the world.

For Memorable Christian Hospitality, Prioritize Affective Intensity

Affect and cultural theorist Brian Massumi opens his book *Parables of the Virtual* by utilizing a study looking at responses to a very short German film shown between

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[40] "Preferential option for the poor" or "preference for the poor" are phrases initially introduced in Roman Catholic social teaching. These terms continue to have homes throughout Catholic social teaching, as well as liberation theologies, ecological and social justice movements. Paul II, John, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," 1987. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

shows in children's TV Broadcasting that illustrates the importance of sensing and feeling bodies.[41] In the short film a man builds a snowman on his rooftop. As the weather warms and the snowman begins to melt, the man drives the snowman to a mountain where he will not melt, waving as he leaves the snowman behind. Narration was not attached to the short film; after a range of feedback and responses from viewers, a group of scientists heard about the interesting response and performed a study. They monitored autonomic response and intensity via children's skin as they viewed the short, in addition to providing two opportunities for the children to engage intellectually via rating the film for pleasantness and memorability. Three versions of the study were performed: One with just the short film, no language at all. Another with emotional, evocative words interspersed throughout the short film. And a final third version with a factual narrative voiced over and throughout the short film.

In terms of autonomic response, over both time and repetition, the wordless version (just imagery) and the version of the short film with emotional words interspersed throughout (imagery with feelings/emotions words) each rated consistently high in autonomic intensity (far higher than the version with the factual narrative). The intensity remained high on both the wordless, as well as emotion and evocative word versions regardless of the number of repetitions. Further, when it came to the children's opportunity to engage speculatively and intellectually, the wordless and emotional

[41] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Twentieth anniversary (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 25–35.

language versions of the short were rated among the most pleasant and most memorable, with minimal difference in ratings between the two.[42]

While the engagement of speculative and intellectual thought via plain language comes with information that can serve to inform and form a person (the dry, factual narrative version of this short film), this is also the modality provided the *least intensity* and proved *least pleasant* and *least memorable*. In other words, a liturgy rooted primarily in language without evocative emotional, feelings, and experiential-oriented components—even with imagery accompanying that language—falls flat. This kind of liturgy will both have the least effect on humans, and a diminishing effect on human bodies as it is repeated.[43]

Though told that our skin acts as a boundary between ourselves and the world, Julietta Singh writes, "physicist Karen Barad emphasizes how in fact bodies extend into space well beyond the skin . . . our bodies are porous, as Nancy Tuana reminds us."[44] In other words, our entire body is open to the world's affective forces, which mix with us, and we mix with them. We measurably take in our surrounding environment, and that environment stays with us, especially in instances where we are utilizing only imagery and physical space or imagery and physical space with language oriented toward feelings, emotions, and experiences interspersed. These experiences come with high levels of

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[42] Massumi, *Parables of the,* 25–28.

[43] This is, from my perspective, what our collects and gospel acclamations are doing (further analysis and examples coming in the next chapter). These key components of liturgy use language that we have insisted over time should, in theory, work for us. But they mostly fall flat due to being rooted in language without much imagery or emotional component to help carry them into the experiential among the humans in the room. Bridging that gap is challenging, but necessary work.

[44] Julietta Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You* (Santa Barbara: Punctum Books, 2018), 30.

intensity each and *every* time the environment is encountered. There is staying power in terms of repetition if we intentionally engage our autonomic bodies via evocative feelings, emotions, and imagery.

The event of image reception and sensory activation in combination with feelings and experiences is multi-level and complex. Within this complexity, the overall research and thought available underscores the importance of physical plant space, the artistic, the poetic, the artful— all of which carry powerful affect, with equally powerful and long-lasting effects. The affective, the sensory, carries the strongest effects among people.[45] It is time we stop prioritizing dry written, and spoken word over what we know bodies need, and remember best: image, feeling, experience. To continue to lean nearly exclusively into traditional Lutheran theological reflection and deep textual analysis as main sources for liturgical learning and literature is to both ignore the diversity of bodily wisdom we have in this world and encourage us to practice ignorance and indifference toward our own, and other feeling, sensing bodies (as well as the ecologies our diverse bodies are mixing with). Prioritizing written and spoken word is non-hospitable to our sensing-feeling bodies and serves to reify a culture that assumes all thought and experience can (or even must) be contained by language, effectively maintaining cultural incapacity to allow for different kinds of bodies to exist.[46] For radical, truly Christian hospitality, we must lean away from logocentric ideation, and center bodily sensing, feeling, and knowledge as our starting point.

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[45] We reify a bodily disconnect by continuing to enact a feelings-less world, or an overly-simplified, logocentric feeling, emotion, and experiential world in our liturgies and rituals.

[46] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 193.

Ineffective Affects and Their Effects

Myths embedded into culture that predominantly support (and thus encourage) binary understanding between brains and bodies, or souls and bodies, need to be dismantled. The affective force of these myths are so prevalent it is seemingly impossible to escape them. Effects from these myths are rampant and encourage us to ignore the effects of these affective forces playing out throughout our world, especially among humans. These myths end up replacing what we experience with what we've read and been told.[47] As a result, we also lose sight of our inherent relational existence, allowing these concepts to dominate our thinking and imaginations in such a way that we further cultivate the belief that humans are purely separate individual entities— despite clear lived experiences, and scientific research—that indicate otherwise. In reality, we cannot have thoughts without our bodies. Our bodies are the first informants of thought. Western history (a dominant affective force with powerful effects in both U.S. and global culture) has maintained views of the person that are, according to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,

> at odds *on every point* with the fundamental results from neuroscience and cognitive science . . . [an] actual human being has neither separation of mind and body, nor universal reason, nor an exclusively literal conceptual system, nor a monolithic, consistent worldview, nor radical free will.[48]

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[47] This is an example of "Cultivation Theory" in action. Here, the repeat encounters with various media and people who repeat the binary brain/body myth become accepted as a fact despite plenty of life experience showing that we are not bodily separate from our brains. Consider experiences of intense pain, joy, or sadness. These come with physical sensations as much as they do with what has been traditionally labeled as emotional or brain-based distress. George Gerbner, "Cultivation Analysis: An Overview" in *Mass Communication and Society* ed. James Bryant and Dolf Zillman (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 17–19.

[48] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 554.

With clear indicators from multiple silos of knowing (rational intellectual engagement, as well as our own bodily experiential knowing) that the brain-body binary is not accurate, It is time to let the brain-body binary and the narratives about pure individualism take a more responsible position in our cultural valuations. Individuation plays an important role in what is often recognized as healthy relational living in U.S. culture. But individuation is not the sole truth of how or whether humans live well. Research on mirror neurons indicates that our brains imagine performing a physical task before drawing any distinctions between our own self and others.[49] The brain activity we can see when mirror neurons are firing in the imagination process involves some of the same brain systems as actually doing the action ourselves. Our brains, it turns out, are particularly designed to empathize and survive "through profound capacities for deep empathic connections with other human beings, and specifically need other human brains."[50] Simply hearing the sounds of actions or evocative descriptions of experiences and actions stimulates the motor neurons that would be responsible for those actions.[51] David Hogue, reflecting on neuroscientific research, writes:

> We do not need language or explicit narratives to speculate about what someone may be feeling. Our brains are built to understand feelings, intentions, and actions . . . with this, we discover the power of wordless actions and images to transform. Performance without explanation often draws us more deeply into the centers of meaning and truth.[52]

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[49] David A. Hogue, "Sensing the Other in Worship: Mirror Neurons and the Empathizing Brain," *Liturgy* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 34

[50] Hogue, "Sensing the Other," 32.

[51] Hogue, "Sensing the Other," 36.

[52] Hogue, "Sensing the Other," 37.

Our bodies (even the brain portion of our bodies) are pre-disposed to know and understand without text or linguistic explanation. We are built in totality for knowledge through body and bodily engagement. Logocentrism is not only not enough for us, It is the wrong direction for our world. Spoken and written word are allies to our bodily knowing, not the main source of knowing.

Sensing Truth: We Shall Do, We Shall Hear

Michelle Voss Roberts, in her book *Body Parts: A Theological Anthropology* speaks about the importance of "attending to the multiplicity of ways of being human in the image of God."[53] She aptly describes the breakdown that continues to be a struggle theologically and liturgically among many Christians:

> . . . emotional and intuitive religious responses do not match up with intellectual beliefs *because theology has not penetrated to an experiential level*. . .. "Embodiment" . . . refers to the imprints and manifestations of power, ideology, and socialization on our very bodies. . .. If we are to . . . reimagine the *imago Dei* in humanity, we will do well to . . . attend not only to ideas about God and humanity but also to the *practices* that create and reinforce them at the embodied and intuitive level.[54]

What I appreciate about Voss Roberts' assessment is that she is clear on the relationality between thinking and doing, without de-valuing either. The important point Voss Roberts makes is that both ideas and practices create (and reinforce) the ideas and behaviors that

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[53] Michelle Voss Roberts, *Body Parts: A Theological Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), xix. (Emphasis added).

[54] Voss Roberts, *Body Parts,* xliii–xliv. (Emphasis added).

prevent us from centering bodily feeling, sensing, and knowledge. Statements proclaiming the importance of the body, without consistent praxis where the body is a starting point, serve to reify logocentrism. Without the consistent praxis, we send subtextual constitutive messaging that devalues human bodies and effectively develops an unspoken Lutheran suspicion of those who place high value on their bodies and feeling, rather than recognizing bodies and the bodily as the "very site of human significance."[55] Daniel Boyarin draws significant attention to this point. He says, "A self and a collective that conceive of their actuality as spiritual will behave very differently from a self and a collective that see the body as the privileged site of human essence."[56] Among those differences, as they play out over time, is a Lutheran over-focus on word, to the point where we wipe out enormous gifts of bodily knowledge inherited directly from Godself via our imago Dei bodies.

Figure 3. *About one third of the way up Mt. Sinai, two camels and some hikers rest as the sun blazes in the sky. Ancient Israelites are said to have waited on these very paths for Moses to return from the peak of Sinai, collectively responding "We shall do, we shall hear" when presented with God's commandments. A reminder that bodies are a central resource for knowing and understanding. (author's own photograph)*

Jewish siblings have a phrase to remind themselves that knowing comes through sensing and feeling bodies. The phrase is "we will do, and we will hear." According to the Hebrew Bible, these words were spoken by Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai

[55] Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 6.

[56] Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture,* 6.

in response to the commandments issued to them by God, via Moses. In the Talmud, the phrase is considered revolutionary because the Israelites were agreeing to abide by God's rules without "hearing" or understanding them first. In effect, the spoken wisdom of ancient Israelites is that they intuitively knew they would come to hear through the bodily knowing found in the doing of the commandments.[57]

In a 1929 essay titled "Religion and Philosophie," Martin Buber emphasized that knowing requires bodily experience and action, saying:

> The fact that [religious] meaning is disclosed and attainable in lived concreteness does not imply that this can be extracted out of it through analytic or synthetic research . . . rather, the meaning is experienced precisely in lived concreteness and, thus, in the living action and enduring of the event itself, in the unmitigated momentariness of the moment - if only one does not retreat from the experience and thereby violate the spontaneity of the mystery . . . All religious expression is only indication, pointing toward this mode of experience. The reply of the people at Sinai, "We will do, we will hear," voices it with pain and unparalleled concision . . . meaning is not found but in verifying action. One finds it where one's very personhood is so involved and engaged that it happens.[58]

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[57] When I picture this scene of people at Mt. Sinai my intuitive body senses that this community started with a whisper— perhaps from just a few people with the eyesight or the legs to have climbed Sinai a bit to see Moses coming down the mountain. Did the phrase repeat itself, echoing throughout the gathered community until all were saying it? No single person entirely responsible for having thought up this spoken response, nor any single person responsible for speaking it first. Was this a truly more-than-human moment of transindividual connection reaching far beyond the human and non-human realms, deeply into that which is more-than-human – still echoing among Jews today? A parallel might be the experience of outbursts of song or chants at spontaneous protests or rallies. In the aftermath no one can pinpoint how things began— they simply happened. I wonder about this kind of happening when it comes to liturgical speaking that is done through reading versus communal engagement in such a deep, bodily way that the linguistic components happen spontaneously, without reading from a communal script.

[58] Sam S. B. Shonkoff, ″We Shall Do And We Shall Understand′ Embodied Theology in Modern Judaism″, *Routledge Handbook of Religion and the Body,* ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg and George Pati (Abingdon Routledge, 2023), 92.

Buber is clear, knowing is found in our being so engaged that meaning simply *happens*.[59] Crucially, he says a person must be very attentive to the moment, not retreating from the experience but instead, enduring it.[60] This is a nod to the intensity of bodily sensing and knowing—endurance in keeping ourselves sensitive to the magnitude of affective forces at play around us, realized only in "verifying action."[61]

From ancient Israelites to modern-day thinkers, there is a long tradition of observation and thought acknowledging that human bodies know and understand well before (and even without) the involvement of language. Our Jewish siblings intuitively knew that they would hear and understand God through their bodies by doing. Through sensing and feeling, our bodies come to know. Knowledge rooted in our bodily sensation, is a pathway toward opening ourselves in ways that naturally expand beyond the individual to the transindividual. This powerful pathway allows us to sense and feel liturgy's fundamental relevancy to life, cultivating fertile soil for transcending false binaries and harmful narratives, ever drawing us into imminent directionality which produces new ways of being. Inevitable and continuous transformation and transcendence comes to faith and liturgy if we value bodily knowledge as first and fundamental to liturgy.

Some might be concerned that continuous transformation also comes with inevitable loss of tradition. However, Claudio Carvalhaes says, "tradition is not to be

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[59] This is the same as the references I made to instantaneous knowing in the first paragraphs of this chapter.

[60] According to Shonkoff, Buber held that to open ourselves to the wholeness of a moment involved risk and what he (Buber) would call "holy insecurity." Shonkoff, ″We Shall Do And," 92.

[61] Shonkoff, "We Shall Do," 92.

kept, but to be re-worked so we *can* pass it on to other people."[62] If we want to keep the treasure trove of wisdom found in our Judeo-Christian roots spritely, playful, alive, and vigorous, and in the hands of the people who come after us—the best we can do is allow the tradition to re-work itself over time and choose to also allow ourselves to be re-worked right along with it.

Spitting out Spectacle and Reclaiming the Erotic for Sense-Filled Attention

Father Clarence Rivers, an American Black Catholic priest renowned for his transformative liturgies, was also constantly underscoring the need for the Roman church to allow "Black sociality," and Black experiences to exist within Roman Catholic liturgies. [63] He wrote

> we must learn more thoroughly and more concretely the implications of the Incarnation—that we do not have to be less [human] to become more Godly, no more than Christ had to become less Godly to be more [human].[64]

Rivers went on to say,

> Congregations must be freed from unnecessary restraints of . . . Puritanism. Fear of the emotional and of the sensual (especially the sexual), is not so much biblical theology as it is our interpretation of Greek philosophy. If the Greek philosophers were living in our times they would likely rebel against our excessive rationalism. We need not fear the subcerebral any more than we need fear the cerebral. Man

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[62] Cláudio Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (Eugene, Pickwick Publications, 2013), 22. (Emphasis added)

[63] Black sociality is a term coined by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, referring to the sociality of black people, which exceeds the existing categorizations and order of being set by white supremacy and, in Erin Manning's assessment, neurotypicality. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 137.; Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 4.

[64] Clarence Joseph Rivers, *Celebration* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 34.

[sic] does not live by cerebration alone.[65]

Fr. Rivers knew that liturgy was losing its foundations and impact in part due to our working so hard to maintain rational intellectual engagement as the guiding force and factor of worship in lieu of the sensing intelligence of our soft, sensitive human bodies. Building on Rivers' assessments we can add Audre Lorde to the conversation. Her assessment of the difference between the erotic and pornographic might help us navigate what we need to seek and support in a liturgy that is built to center sensing-feeling-knowledge of bodies in such a way that we might live more fully into our faith:

> The erotic . . . has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, and plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing it with the pornographic. But, pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasizes sensation without feeling.[66]

In both Lorde and Rivers' assessments, it is the full range of human emotion and experience that is needed as a source of information and strength (Lorde) and to engage in transformative liturgies (Rivers). Afterall, humans "do not live by cerebration alone."[67]

Months ago, a colleague and I were discussing this thesis. While speaking of the importance of sensing and feeling, my colleague focused heavily on the word feeling and, with concern on their face, described the experiences of a young person with a campus ministry program whose worship approach centered on feelings. Over time, this person

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[65] Rivers, *Celebration,* 34.

[66] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, The Crossing Press Feminist Series (Trumansburg: Crossing Press, 1984), 54.

[67] Rivers, *Celebration*, 34.

grew weary of being harangued about "feeling it" in liturgy and found themselves exhausted by all the emotions and emphasis on emotions. I would liken this kind of liturgical approach, where we are pushed to "feel it" to what Lorde refers to as pornographic. In this setting, feelings are centered and being used as a spectacle for social control. The way they are centered becomes solipsistic, emphasizing individuality over relationality (unless the relationality is one's *individual* relationship with God, or with Jesus). It is not that individual relationships with the divine are a problem. Nor is it that actively engaging "the feels" is a problem. The problem I am zeroing in on here is that feelings in this setting are being used to manipulate and control people in liturgy.

The scene operates as a spectacle where feelings and individuality act as hypnotic power. At the core of this spectacle there are power dynamics at play. These dynamics are controlled by the persons with primary power and authority within the community.[68] Boal might liken this kind of spectacle (or aesthetic) to what he called "Hollywood." In his assessment, the work being done by Hollywood, TV, Radio, and other News Media forms keeps participants so emotionally amped up that they cannot fully sense and feel; instead, they are overwhelmed by sensations of insecurity and dread combining into a kind of "Hollywood filmography" that is "of a terrorist nature."[69] Boal says, "Through fear and horror, the worst, most evil ideas can be implanted into the inert audience. Empathy falsified transforms itself into docile mimicry."[70] On the surface, the feelings-

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[68] Boal and Jackson, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, 2006, 33.

[69] Boal and Jackson, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, 25.

[70] Boal and Jackson, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*, 25.

oriented liturgy encourages noticing and feeling your feelings. However, a deeper dive on the power dynamics and the processes for these feelings reveals spectacle that Boal says leads to mimicry, and Lorde would refer to as pornographic. The emphasis is on plasticized feelings- effectively making them pornographic (or a spectacle). In the end, true feeling and exploration are suppressed, keeping community members inert and vulnerable to all kinds of "evil," as Boal might say.[71]

Embracing the erotic (in Lorde's understanding of the term) in liturgy is a powerful method to encounter the transcendent. As Rivers' states, "the emotional and the sensual (especially the sexual) . . . is central in liturgy as it is in life."[72] Effective liturgy is erotic liturgy, sensory liturgy. Words certainly play a role in this scene, but they do not override sensing and feeling human bodies and the knowledge embedded in them. Edward Braxton declared that effective worship speaks so deeply to human experience, senses, and feelings that it penetrates beyond them into the experience of God.[73]

Contemplating erotic/sensory/full-range of feelings liturgies might seem overly human-centered; however, this concept is a remnant of puritanical thinking and Greek philosophy. It is not reflective of highly valuing current lived experience or bodily intuition and wisdom. Carvalhaes speaks to this concern, emphasizing our role as Christians in loving one another, as well as our inherent imago Dei:

> to worship is to ascribe worthiness or honor to somebody or something. Thus, if I am to follow what Jesus himself affirmed as the greatest commandment, I can

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[71] Lorde, *Sister Outsider*. 54; Boal and Jackson. 25

[72] Rivers, *Celebration*, 32.

[73] Mary E. McGann, Eva Marie Lumas, and Ronald D. Harbor, *Let It Shine! The Emergence of African American Catholic Worship*, 1st ed (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 106.

> only worship God if I, at the same time, love my neighbor. This means that my love of God is equally measured by my love of others. In this regard there is no distinction between giving honor/praise to God and ascribing honor to other human beings . . .. Our honoring of God is different, but not higher, than the ways we love another person because God can only be known in and through others.[74]

Loving one another is the pathway to loving and worshipping God, which brings a paradoxical truth to the surface: if we are to love God and worship God well in liturgy, it must be done through radical embrace of the erotic. We must care not only for fellow humans, but for the ecology of the liturgy as a whole. We must embrace our unceasing contradictions and dichotomies, working to remain in the "unmitigated momentariness of the moment" so that we might encounter the "spontaneous mystery."[75] To do so means spitting out the temptation to turn toward spectacle, and instead choosing to do the work of engaging deeply with our bodies in relation to the affective forces surrounding us.

Transindividual Affects and Effects of Artful Participation

During Advent of 2022, I covered a communal seminary worship space in black paper. Ceiling and walls. The inspiration was initially rooted in generating a darkened ceiling for a somewhat cosmic sense of anticipation. However, the room and the paper had different plans. Once I began covering the ceiling, it became clear I would likely need to cover the walls too. The becoming-clear that the walls (in addition to the ceiling) needed to be covered in black paper happened in the interstices of sensing and feeling the

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[74] Cláudio Carvalhaes, Paul Galbreath, and Janet Roland Walton, *What's Worship Got to Do with It? Interpreting Life Liturgically* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 22.

[75] Sam S. B. Shonkoff, "'We Shall Do and We Shall Understand' Embodied Theology in Modern Judaism," in *Routledge Handbooks in Religion*, ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg and George Pati (Abingdon New York (N.Y.): Routledge, 2023), 92.

room, sensing and feeling with the people in the room assisting me, and the overwhelming more-than-human sense of energetic direction indicating that what was *needed* for this liturgical time was something that might re-tune senses and bring all of us into the immediate ecology of gathering. I might liken this experience to Buber's description of unreserve. This was a continuous dialogue, much of it silent, going on between my body, the room, and colleagues within the room.

Figure 4. *The Black Box Advent art and environment Fall 2022. The environment was dark, and intentionally made it difficult to see. I did not provide an artist's statement, initially. Eventually, one was requested and can be seen in Appendix A (pg. 106). Notice, in the statement I did not tell people what the space does or means. Rather, I encouraged people to sense and feel on their own and together. (author's own photographs)*

In the development process for this environment, I prioritized human sensing and feeling. Playing with both deprivation of some senses (sight, for example) and amping up opportunities for noting other sensing and feeling (exactly what, and for whom, is up to the people engaging within the space). The effects of these affective choices were myriad. Initially, a sense of discomfort and disorientation was prevalent among all, starting with me as the creator.[76] No one anticipated the room being so dark (myself

[76] It strikes me that the Buber quote used earlier in this paper specifies, "meaning is experienced precisely in *lived concreteness* and, thus, *in the living action and enduring of the event itself,* in the unmitigated momentariness of the moment- *if only one does not retreat from the experience* and thereby violate the spontaneity of the mystery." Shonkoff, 93. (Emphasis added) Certainly, it was an exercise in concrete realities, living through and enduring the event itself in its creation. Retreat was definitely on the table, and I felt unsure at a few points. I also physically paid for what it took to accomplish this installation for weeks afterward in muscular pain. It still strikes me as valuable and immediately meaningful that in the creation work, despite the physical discomfort, something was generated that became a touchstone, an oft-re-told story and series of experiences that drew people to one another and their world, and continues to

included). Initially, there was clear dis-ease each time faculty navigated to their offices. Upon entry to the school, many students stood at the doorway without moving, peering into the black amorphous abyss that had appeared in our communal space seemingly overnight.[77] However, it did not take long before students and faculty alike began to gravitate toward the dark portion of the room for conversation, often simply sitting silently together. I saw quiet, engaging conversations and deep sighs. One student told me that they found the space calming and womb-like.[78] During liturgies, I noticed stronger than usual participation in singing and extended energetic presence from and between participants throughout. A handful of colleagues told me that this was among their favorite environments I had set up because it felt other-worldly. When people exited the "abyss" some told me they felt a sense of renewal, as though they'd been away for just a little while. To me these are the ultimate goals for a Christian Advent season: a bone-

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work as a recollection that draws people together. I cannot be sure I was living the "enduring" that Buber called attention to, but my sense is that this may be it, and that this kind of enduring and not retreating comes with incredible and lasting affective force.

[77] It was not actually overnight. It took approximately thirty hours over two days for this installation.

[78] Feedback in the aftermath insisted that the lack of sight for distributed learners was a problem. My colleagues' frustrations are valid. I wonder why lacking sight was presented as a *problem* that must be *solved*. Less seeing was part of the of the environment experienced by everyone (Older eyes see less than younger eyes in low-light spaces. Zoom access saw less than in-person access). What drove seeing as the locus of the frustrations experienced with no acknowledgment that not everybody sees or that seeing for this might not be a necessity (though we often background the assumption that it is)? Why were we so keen to insist on this specific sense in lieu of allowing for other senses, bodily responses, and feelings that could be engaged and explored when faced with a primarily black screen? Are we so trained to a combination of the communications coming out of television and movies (what Boal would call "Hollywood") in combination with being taught to behave in particular ways in relation to church and worship (sit facing forward, keep quiet, etc.) that other elements present for web-based participants simply would not be engaged out of long-ingrained and uninspected habits? Imagery was not entirely removed from the equation for distance students, yet the specific need stated was to *see* the room and the activities in the room. While holding the real and valid feelings and experiences of my colleagues, I also hold questions about why seeing became a focal point with minimal to no inspection of what might have been informing that focal point.

deep, bodily sense of renewal, the potential for hope complete with effects of those sensations rippling out into the community— in this case, in how people were relating to one another both inside and outside the school facility. I saw relationships grow in intimacy and care; I saw people identify connections between themselves and the world in ways previously unnoticed. Motivation and a series of small gathering actions grew from bodies finding one another in this tiny abyss on an office building floor in the middle of downtown Berkeley.

I did not do the artistic work of building an "abyss" thinking that I could control every affect and their ensuing effects. Rather, I let my sensing-feeling bodily knowledge lean into intuitive bodily flesh's sensory and incarnational abilities, allowing space and opportunity for our more-than-human, transindividual ability to adapt. In the holy chaos and liminality that would inevitably ensue, I trusted that we would collectively generate new interactions, formulations, and realizations, discovering new ways of being together—or what Erin Manning might call entering into "artful participation."[79]

Artful, as mentioned in the introduction, is not directly about artistry and poetry, but instead is about "the way."[80] It is about attentiveness in process. Artful participation comes most easily, perhaps, to those who have cultivated and honed an artistic or poetic skill, sometimes referred to as the artists and poets among us. Artful participation may involve an end-creation object (art), but that is not what is important or necessary. Artistry, poetry, and artful participation are about entering fully and joining the processual nature of noticing, especially opening ourselves to difference as means to

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[79] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 13.

[80] Manning, *Minor Gesture,* 13.

deeper participation. Liturgy, a constitutive communication of the church, can sustain an ecology that sustains our individual and collective development of artful participation within liturgical and extra-liturgical ecologies in nourishing ways, if we allow more equitable value to be placed with sensing, feeling knowledge found in human bodies in the liturgical milieu.

As I stated earlier in this chapter, rational, intellectual engagement remains valuable. Gathering around word and sacrament is foundational for Christians throughout the world (and Lutherans especially). Theological reflection and textual analysis are also foundational and are among the prized and valuable assets of Christianity. Amid these (sometimes competing) values, we must treat our sensing, feeling bodies and their knowing with the same degree of import that we treat written and spoken language—if for no other reason than it is the feeling, sensing, knowledgeable human body that is the locus for artful participation in liturgy, and in life. The wisdom of what has been passed on to us through tradition is lost if our knowledgeable bodies are pushed aside.

Benefits in shifting praxis of liturgy toward ecologies that invite artful participation (centering the sensory, allowing for disorganization and chaos that give way to liminality that allows us to meet one another more fully, while including the attentive use of written and spoken word) are key to future growth (both individual, and communal) and truly hospitable hospitality for all of the diverse bodies in the world in which we live. Complex forms of knowledge outside of the standard logocentric Lutheran pathways in liturgy are already present, and our bodies already notice them. Integration and valuation of our full bodies and their knowledge is the proverbial workout for re-membering our individual and collective sensitive bodies, noticing our sensitive

world, far deeper engagement (in and out of liturgy), and a pathway to more integrated, ecologically aware ways of being. Language is not absent from this ecology. Language itself (written or spoken) is rife with affects and effects and plays a role in any transindividual field of relationality. Decentering logocentrism is an important means by which we can come to seeing one another as fully human, and begin to bridge contextual gaps between present-day and our historic scriptures. A major component of the bridge is constructed via re-membering our sensing and feeling bodies, and allowing ourselves to strengthen, honor, and value the knowledge within them. In the next chapter, we look more closely at the affective power of written and spoken language, attentive to that which can hinder or help a liturgical ecology that honors and engages a fuller spectrum of our artfully participating, constitutively communicating church.

Chapter 3

Text Gets in Your Eyes

"The problem is the English Language!" Or, Text Gets Lodged in Your Eye

I worked in communications within the hospitality sector for over a decade. In my time there, I repeatedly experienced viscerally frustrating examples of the ways that language alone, with no illustration and minimal attentiveness to the words' affective force, can serve to generate kinds of communicative noise that interrupts the flow of bodily knowing that is rarely directly discussed. On one occasion, a colleague and I were exchanging emails about the particulars of an article for a newsletter. It was an instructional piece and we disagreed on a few aspects of phrasing within the article. In a moment of exasperation, they called me. I picked up the phone and before I could say hello, they said, "The English language is the problem, here!" I responded, "Would you prefer French?"

The problem at hand was, of course, not the literal language being used (English, or otherwise). The issue was that the text was lodged in their proverbial eye. The desired communication would, in most probability, be easily received once the additional elements of color and image were added. Yet, this person was so logocentrically focused that the affective contributions of formatting, color, pattern, texture, and image did not play a role in the communication's efficacy. Logocentrism's affective force pushed them to ignore the full field of affective force in a transindividual field of relationships (and ensuing communication) that comes with a designed and printed newsletter spread. Their

frustrated conclusion was that the English language was not going to get us the affective force (and therefore the effects) they were seeking.

In printed liturgical literature a similar mistake is made. The printed word is focused on communicating logocentric aspects of liturgy: the text gets lodged in our imaginative eye, despite repeated references (in Lutheran literature in particular) regarding proclamation. Logocentrism of written texts prevents us from developing greater awareness of the affective and effects of affective forces found in the three-dimensionality of the transindividual field of relationality where liturgy takes place.

I have been a trained and certified liturgist for the Roman Catholic church, and a liturgist in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America for more than a decade now. Over the course of these years, priests, pastors, interns, deacons, and plenty of lay parishioners have too often told me that liturgy is irrelevant to lived human experience, and irrelevant to their lives. I repeatedly hear that these irrelevant liturgies "feel stifled," "have no flow," or "are low energy." In the US, research indicates that of the people who do attend Christian religious worship services, 81% are attending to "grow closer to God."[81] If we want to continue to engage and open pathways for growing closer to God, liturgies that feel "stifled" are probably not the way to support those in attendance, or even encourage the participation of those who engage in their own faith practices in lieu of communal practice.[82] Keeping my present focus with the ELCA (where I've also heard

[81] Pew Research Center, "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services," *Pew Research Center* (blog), August 1, 2018, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-services/.

[82] Pew Research Center.

the majority of these specific critiques as stated here), it is my estimation that the roots of these "stifled," "no flow," "low energy" liturgies are easily identified in standard printed ELCA liturgical literature.[83] In other words, these experiences are the produced effects of the affective force found within standard Lutheran liturgical literature, transferring from the printed page into three-dimensional lived liturgical life.

Everything, including words, has affective force. Affective force produces effects; this is a never-ending cycle. If the text of the literature we use to construct liturgies gets "stuck in our eye" then that text is, like my colleague above, misleading us into using more words where we need to instead allow complex sensing and feeling bodies to engage more fully. If the very literature we use as the source for liturgy, is stifled, dry, and lacking indicators for where one might discover or develop the "juice" that brings liturgy to buzzing vitality of the Holy Spirit among its participants, then the literature's affective force mixes with our porous bodies, focused on the text, producing "stifled" liturgies that "have no flow" and "no energy."

Seeking Provocative Affectivity in Standard ELCA Liturgical Literature

As we learned from the Massumi example in the prior chapter, intensity and staying power register best and most memorably in humans via imagery alone (or imagery and language) that evokes feelings, emotion, and experience. We also read, via Hogue's work cited in the prior chapter, that performance without verbal explanation is very powerful for helping humans engage deeply. Thus, I read the standard ELCA

[83] For the purposes of this chapter, I am referencing: Lutheran Book of Worship, Manual on the Liturgy, The Sunday Assembly, Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leader's Desktop Edition, and Sundays and Seasons.

liturgical literature seeking mention of the importance of evoking emotions, feelings, bodily sensation, emphasis on connecting to human experience, or language that illustrated and/or moved me in some way. More specifically, I read through standard ELCA liturgical literature seeking general indicators propelling readers toward minding or utilizing the affective and its effects in the following: *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leader's Desktop Edition, Sundays and Seasons*, *The Sunday Assembly*, and *Worship Manual on the Liturgy*. Because art, poetry, and music have a tendency to most rapidly include discussion of the affective and its effects, I first sought out discussions of art and poetry in this literature.

The main and most substantial location for discussion of poetry, music, art, and environment is found in chapter four of *The Sunday Assembly.* The first page of the chapter mentions the importance of arts with some strong and supportive language: "The arts activate the human senses and connect us to one another and the larger communion of God's people."[84] There is mention of human senses, which are deeply associated with feeling-sensing bodies. We read further:

> A Lutheran understanding of the arts in worship sees them assisting in proclaiming the word in the assembly. This is more than pleasant background. The various arts are among the human languages used to convey the means of grace as they proclaim the word and support the sacraments. Art forms that are more than verbal provide a balance to the spoken word, so that worship is not overwhelmed with words, but rather includes other forms of expression that are also gifts of God to engage the whole person.[85]

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[84] Lorraine S. Brugh and Gordon W. Lathrop, *The Sunday Assembly* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2013), 55.

[85] Brugh and Lathrop, *The Sunday Assembly*, 55. (Emphasis added)

This quote supports the importance of artistry and poetry in liturgical settings. Yet, I notice how "art" is described as *another* (as an alternative) human language that *proclaims* (a linguistic focus) and *supports* sacraments. Again recalling Hogue's quote in the prior chapter, performance without explanation, without words, is powerful. Arts and the environment are always exerting affective force and producing effects. Arts are not "also" gifts from God; they are simply among God's gifts and engage the whole person just as much, not only in addition to or as a balance to, linguistic expression. Yet here, arts are described as an "other" and an "also," rather than a fundamental aspect of the engaged body in liturgy and life. Here again, I bring us back to the importance of sensing and feeling bodies as a major source of knowledge. With this in mind, it is clear that art does not "assist," "support," or "provide a balance" to word in liturgy and ritual;[86] It is not that art and environment "can" do for liturgy; It is that these elements simply *do*, and are always *doing*. Whether via presence, or cavernous absence, the artistic and poetic drive significant aspects experienced in our liturgies and rituals in a much more forward way than word (written or spoken), regardless of whether we humans acknowledge this phenomenon or not.[87]

Literature itself has affective force, and that affective force at this point in the analysis seems to cultivate communicative force whose effects indicate that physical plant space, art, and environment—elements that substantially support and encourage bodily connection to human experience, emotion, and feelings—are understood to be

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[86] Brugh and Lathrop, *Sunday Assembly,* 55.

[87] More accurately, everything surrounding us is driving our experiences affectively, including fellow humans. Affects have effects. They go on and on.

secondary. Using "can" in a logocentric environment distracts us from the lived reality: all elements of our liturgy *do.* Affects produce effects. Affective force is always present. Regardless of what we say or attempt to enforce through logocentrism, affect does not take on a subordinate role to printed or spoken language. Rather, these forces work in parallel and cross-section among printed and spoken language; these are allies. Like the inherent intertwining of the foundational and aesthetic as mentioned in the first chapter's wheelchair and mannequin studies, the literature we ingest about liturgy, along with our physical plant space, are intertwined. Yet, as we have also learned, it is the autonomic intensity *felt* or *sensed* via our bodies that provides memorable and consistent responses.

Chapter 4 of *The Sunday Assembly* does contain affirming statements that imply that the sensual and the bodily are of importance in liturgy. These affirmations are covered in about a page and a half of a nineteen-page chapter.[88] The remainder of the chapter discusses music in liturgy. The layout of the chapter itself, with its bulk of content dedicated specifically to music alone, sends a powerful affective message that music is the art that matters (or the important among the arts mentioned). Further, within the discussion of music, logocentrism shows up once again: "Music's importance to the Christian assembly centers on its ability to carry and enliven the *words* of worship."[89] There is nothing wrong with what is written here. There are glimmers of the importance of affective force written into the interstices of some of the sentences in this chapter, yet the chapter in its totality (layout, headings, use of space for music versus use of space to

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[88] For those who appreciate statistics, this is approximately 7% of the chapter. That is low, considering the pervasive force of these elements.

[89] Brugh and Lathrop, *Sunday Assembly*, 56.

discuss experiential considerations in relation to color, texture, bodily posture, smell, seating) generates affective force whose effect is serving to maintain logocentrism of words intertwined with music.

While Chapter 4 of *The Sunday Assembly* clarifies that music is a rich part of the Lutheran tradition (an explanation for why so very much space is spent on all aspects of music in worship), we must also contend with additional messages sent when we spend most of a chapter listed as being about the arts, speaking primarily about music. Singing here is treated as standard and normative, yet not all bodies sing. Many bodies do not hear; others do not phonate. This does not mean we must lose music or singing due to limitations in participation. It does raise the question, however: Why not spend time talking about rhythm, and the use of space in such a way that bodies could both feel and hear sound, or even see it, too? There are so very many opportunities and ways we might engage bodies fully, before utilizing words (sung or otherwise). Here is a ripe opportunity for beginning the work of addressing what I quoted Manning speaking about in my first chapter: our own (seeming) incapacity to be hospitable to diverse bodies.

It appears that Martin Luther himself was aware of the importance of the affective force and its effects. We learn in Chapter 4 that for Martin Luther, chant settings translated from Latin into German were unsatisfactory. Thus, he used German chorales and popular tunes that suited German text in a natural way in liturgy.[90] Interestingly, nothing in this description mentions Luther's care for the affective aspects of the tunes and the effects of both the sound and singing of the tunes on the people within the

[90] Brugh and Lathrop, *Sunday Assembly,* 59.

ekklesia. Robin A. Leaver compares Luther's description of historic and justifying faith to Luther's understanding of music, saying:

> . . . similarly an intellectual appreciation of music, its forms and structures as expressed in written notation on the page, is insufficient, for it cannot be experienced as music until its vibrations have exited the air and entered the outer ear. But even that is not enough, for the outward sound needs to be perceived within and move the inner *heart*.[91]

Based on Leaver's assessment, Luther himself had a mind toward artful participation. Somehow, this awareness does not present itself as boldly or clearly in *The Sunday Assembly* and the end results are a reification of a kind of logocentrism that it is quite possible Luther himself would not endorse.

Continuing the Search: Affective Force in Collects and Gospel Acclamations

After reading more generic liturgical literature provided by the ELCA, I turned to analysis of standard collects and gospel acclamations (two integral word-oriented aspects of liturgy) prescribed for the Easter Triduum. In this reading, I counted words or phrases in these prayers and acclamations that might contribute to poignantly evoking emotion, feeling, or recollection of the human experience.[92] If the written words themselves come across as evocative, that is one means by which (albeit implicitly) the liturgical literature

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[91] Robin A. Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2007), 87. (Emphasis added)

[92] Many liturgy and ritual scholars, as well as clergy and lay ministers, would indicate that scripture is rooted in human experience. Yet, we continue to hear that people experience liturgy as irrelevant to their lives. Both Fr. Rivers and Fr. Braxton, quoted in Chapter 2, were responding to similar assessments. I suspect that part of the reason we hear this critique relates to relying on quoting scripture as being enough to trigger recollection and engagement among the gathered. However, this practice is unlikely to do much for people not steeped in liturgical, or church environments.

we receive might assist in cultivating the importance of bodily human experience and emotion in worship in tandem with our inherited logocentric tendencies, effectively helping to bridge the gap in context between scripture and present-day context.

I referenced three feelings wheels to compare words and phrases contemporary people are using to identify feelings and experiences in relation to the words and phrases used in the prescribed words for these liturgical celebrations. The count of different emotions or experience words listed in the sample feelings wheels was anywhere from 55 to 130 different words or phrases.[93] Language found in these wheels included words such as eager, awed, alone, excluded, isolated, humiliated, guilty, overwhelmed, betrayed, loving, valued, courageous, contempt, shame, flooding, intimate, abandoned, disillusioned, repelled, horrified, indignant, bitter, proud, startled, pressured, worthless, fear, relief.

My sample analysis and comparison highlighted that the textual use of feelings words at the apex of the gathering rite (the collect) is limited to scriptural reference.[94] The words and phrases reflected within the prayers as printed were limited, with approximately 16 to 18 words or phrases, repeated frequently without vivid illustration. Words we see appear in the standard collects and acclamations include: love, joy, refresh,

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[93] "Feelings Wheel Adults and Kids - Etsy," accessed April 23, 2024, https://www.etsy.com/listing/1487082704/feelings-wheel-adults-and-kids?utm_source=OpenGraph&utm_medium=PageTools&utm_campaign=Share;"Atlas of the Heart List of Emotions," Brené Brown, accessed April 23, 2024, https://brenebrown.com/resources/atlas-of-the-heart-list-of-emotions/; "Feelings Wheel," accessed April 23, 2024, https://feelingswheel.com/.

[94] What I mean by scriptural reference is that these prayers and acclamations predominantly do not use words outside of those already found within scriptural texts they are referencing. For example, some might describe a human's experience of betrayal as feeling abandoned, worthless, fearful, disillusioned, etc. However, though these are common modern-day words that might help us connect to Jesus' experience of betrayal, they are not present in the scripture being referenced, and therefore seem to be left out of the sample collects and acclamations.

betray, mercy, shame, liberate, fear, suffer. Many of these words are repeated multiple times, without additional measures to give them depth or nuance. The average feelings and experience-oriented words used between eight collects and gospel acclamations for Triduum is anywhere from one to two words or phrases per prayer or acclamation.[95] For example, the first Maundy Thursday Collect option presented uses the words betrayal, and love:

> Holy God, source of all love, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment, to love one another as he loves us. Write this commandment in our hearts, and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all . . .

There are no technical problems with this Holy Thursday collect, as printed in *Evangelical Worship: Leader's Desk Edition*. If we read through these words with an academic lens that focuses on theological reflection or linguistic analysis seeking reflections and use of scripture, this collect is exceptionally strong. Yet the words as they are printed (no matter how technically correct they may be) do not appear to consider the affective power of these words. The point of the collect is to connect people (in a bodily felt way, as much as an intellectual one) to the day's fundamental wisdom.

It is understandable that we landed with technically correct collects that are not doing much more for engaging sensing-feeling human bodies. Much of the liturgical literature of the ELCA is built on early initiatives in the U.S. to universalize and develop

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[95] The material within the ELCA texts is deeply subjective regarding whether or how a human might respond. A substantial systematic approach and study would be beneficial. However, the scope required to do so is outside of what this thesis is capable of covering. In the face of cries of irrelevancy of liturgy, a careful study among active worshipping people and the use of language within liturgy might reveal interesting and important insight into the relationship between the use of affective language and people's sense of relevancy in their daily lives. An interesting parallel study completed by Lakoff and Johnson regarding what people consider meaningful is a useful resource and helped me in my own brief exploration here; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

a uniquely United States American Lutheran liturgy.[96] So, the blandness of the language used here is likely (in part) an effect of the affective forces pushing people to universalize in lieu of insisting on retaining their individual particularities between various cultural traditions. Despite empathy for how our standardized prayers landed at this dry point, we must acknowledge that these words, as printed and spoken in standard liturgical literature and resources, still come with affects and effects. The effects of this prayer are not especially engaging, and contribute to those critiques lodged by colleagues (liturgy is "dry," "has no flow," "no energy"). Just like in Chapter 1, where I discussed the affective force of physical plant space having transindividual effects on all beings of the liturgical environment, printed and spoken language also has affective force whose effects are transindividual. Whether or not we acknowledge the affective and effects of these words, they are still present and contribute to constitutive communication about our church, God, and the world we are operating in.

For a tradition that proclaims faith in a God who became flesh in the fully complex and nuanced human and divine body of Jesus, the low use of evocative, experiential, feelings-oriented language to help people bodily orient themselves toward the day's scripture at the peak point of the gathering rite of a liturgy feels incongruous.[97]

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[96] Today, we would also recognize this universalizing trend as the roots of white supremacy taking hold. While much effort was put into careful review and revision of the many variations of Lutheran liturgies across multiple cultural traditions, we now know that the boiling-down and simplifying also contributes to monolithic, overly-simplified perceptions of ELCA Lutherans and their many, varied cultural backgrounds. Philip H. Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), 4,6.

[97] Paul Galbreath, in his book *Re-forming the Liturgy: Past Present and Future,* provides history and commentary on reformed tradition's use of the collect. He writes that Luther seemed to keep things very simple, noting only that the collect need be appropriately pious and that there only be one collect (at the time, it was not uncommon for there to be more than one). Galbreath goes on to discuss some of Calvin's perspectives on the collect, notably that Calvin's adding a "collect for illumination" served to shift

Failing to help people bodily orient themselves develops a constitutive communication that is not supportive of the broader welcoming messages we often send, instead supporting alienation from lived experience and bodily sensing-feeling and knowing. We could continue over-emphasizing logocentrism and rational, intellectual thought processes that alienate human bodies and their lived experiences, failing to bridge the gap in context between ancient wisdom found in our scripture and the lives of the people gathered today. Ultimately, these prayers are in use and we seem to be getting by with them. However, I think we could do much more for ourselves, our faith, and our communities if we choose to artfully engage with how we are using printed and spoken word. I would choose a process of collaborative participation with our standardized texts. In this process, word is understood as an ally to the experiences of sensing, feeling bodies—not the sole driver and communicator. So we respect the pre-written collect, but we are not to allow it to pour its affective force into our liturgy without artful participation with it in the planning process.

Beyond Logocentrism:
An Affective Detour That Takes Us Where We Want To Go

It is early spring of 2024, and Beyoncé has just released her new album, *Cowboy Carter*. One of the songs on this album is titled "Daughter." In this song, Beyoncé uses

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the purpose of the collect from a summation format to an orienting of people toward what was to come, particularly scripturally and homiletically. While Lutherans do not use the Presbyterian tradition of the "collect for illumination," it is notable that in both traditions, the collect occurs at the apex of the gathering rite and serves as an orienting tool for the assembled mystical body. Puzzling to me is why we would not lean in to assist our fellow participants in the mystical body by orienting them to scripture using contemporary feelings and experience language to help people bridge the centuries-old gap between the contexts of our wisdom texts and our contemporary lived experiences; Paul Galbreath, *Re-Forming The Liturgy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 3–11.

an Italian aria from the 1700s, entitled "Caro Mio Ben." While it might seem out of place to put a 1700s Italian aria in a contemporary piece on a Beyoncé album, it works brilliantly. In this single song, with only words and notes and rhythms, a three-hundred-year gap in context between the emotions and experiences of a 1700s aria and present-day context within the song "Daughter" is bridged, in provocative and poignant ways, without explanation. The following analysis might feel like a detour from our previous assessment of a Triduum collects and gospel acclamations; however this drawing from unusual resources will culminate in an alternative approach for a Holy Thursday collect.

Affective Efficacy: Analysis of Beyonce's "Daughter" and Use of "Caro Mio Ben"

Let us first look at the 1700s lyrics and music of "Caro Mio Ben," focusing on the elements that combine in this piece to send a message and generate an opening for connection in human emotion and experience between the music. As is the case with any translation, the translations for the poetry of this piece range from literal to dynamic to idiomatic. For purposes here, I use a translation that is fairly literal, taken primarily from the Alfred Publishing edition:

Caro mio ben dear, my beloved	Il tuo fedel [The] your faithful-one
credimi almen, believe-me at-least	sospira ognor. sighs always
senza di te without [of] you	Cessa, crudel, cease, cruel one
languisce il cor. languishes [the] (my) heart	Tanto rigor! so-much (severity)

Figure 5. *Adapted from 26 Italian Arias. Click here to listen to the full song.*

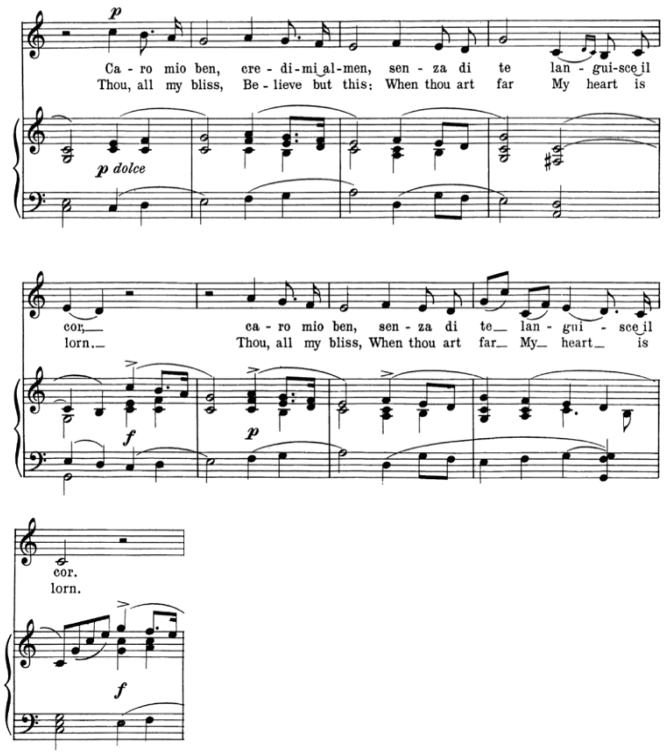

Figure 6. *These are the first two phrases of "Caro Mio Ben." The simplicity of the vocal line and its keyboard accompaniment can be seen here, as well as the tone painting with the word "languisce." Image from G. Schirmer, 24 Italian Songs and Arias, ed. Richard Walters (Schirmer, 1991), 38-39. Click here to listen to the complete piece.*

Note the evocative, affective language found in the translation. Words like languishes, sighs, cruel, severity are significant contributors to the total makeup of the poetry. The core of the sentiment in the text appears to be that of a lover who is expressing that their beloved brings sighs and pain to their heart when their beloved is cruel toward them. The lyrics close with a cry from lover to beloved to cease their severe cruelty. When using the text alone, one cannot help but take these words at face value. There is not much here to indicate that we should do otherwise. However, when we take another step into this song in its complete musical context, we consider both the literal vocal line (the notes that comprise what the singer sings) and the accompaniment with the vocal line. Hints and indicators of the emotional and experiential within this artwork are revealed in this combination of elements—none of which are rooted in language but are instead built to evoke sensation, response, and connection in the bodies of 1700s listeners. The vocal line begins simply as a five-bar phrase in two parts. The first portion of the phrase "*Caro mio ben credimi almen*" consists of a falling line (notes moving downward) as though a vocal sigh, but the sigh

does not end. Instead, tension is developed by continuing the phrase without a breath taken nor rest indicated with the words "*senza di te languisce il cor*" being sung through to the end of the five-bar phrase. The singer themselves likely is stretching by the end of the line, that affectivity pours forth into the sound and energy emanating from the singer into the listener. The word "*languisce*" receives special tone painting, by hovering on some of the lowest notes of the first phrase, and upon repeat in the second phrase it languishes even more at the lowest note in the entire piece of music. The accompaniment for the singer here is simple, just plainly following the melody with simple chords. Nothing here indicates anything other than what the language itself seems to be saying.

As the music progresses, the literal highest note of the entire piece, as well as the high point in terms of the dramatic flow of the composition, occurs on the word "cessa" (cease) in the midst of a significant shift in the accompaniment. The accompaniment in this section has moved into a pressing eighth-note pattern. One could understand this shift as a mimic of an intensified heartbeat, potentially connecting to feelings and experiences of anxiety, anger, fear, aggression, bitterness, and even potential contempt. While there is no performative indicator in the music to tell a singer to speed up at this section, it is common for performers to place more intensity and a broader sense of forward motion here. Performative indicators placed in the composition by editors, such as markings for when a singer should be loud, soft, crescendo, or decrescendo, breathe (or not breathe) all combine in this section to underscore an intensity that is out of character with the start and the end of the piece. Emphatic marks on the words cessa (cease) and tanto (so-much) are out of disjointed from the beginning and ending sections of the composition. At the end of this section, as quickly as we entered this frenzied intensity, the singer receives an

indicator to hold the last note of the phrase and slide into an eerily calm repetition of the beginning of the tune, once again singing *"caro mio ben . . ."* as though the prior confrontation had not happened at all.

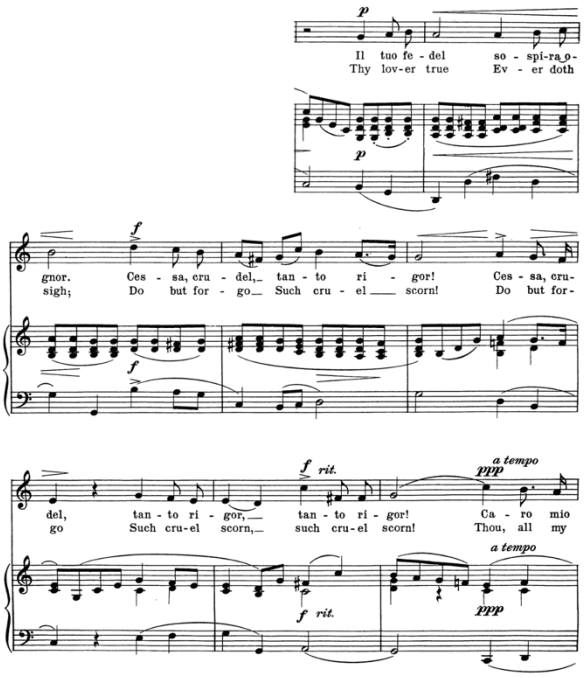

Figure 7. *Notice the use of forte, aligning with "cessa" and "tanto." In the last line we move from a decrescendo into a quick forte on "tanto," very rapid emotional movement in seven bars of music, and yet another rapid move from a forte "tanto rigor" to a ppp/pianississimo (extraordinarily soft). These are strong musical indicators for rapid emotional shifts happening in very short periods of time. Image from G. Schirmer, 24 Italian Songs and Arias, ed. Richard Walters (Schirmer, 1991), 39. Click here to listen to the complete piece.*

Looking at the interplay between text, vocal line, accompaniment, and performance indicators easily reveals that this singing lover has moved from docile to quite animated and angry in a matter of musical seconds— all without explanatory words. While a singer is not required to sing it this way, based on the indicators, it is likely that this lover has an anger problem, and their claims of a beloved's cruelty and fear of being without that beloved are rooted in a desire for control of another person who is potentially attempting to escape them. One might liken the emotional and experiential dynamic attempting to be expressed here to that of domestic abuse, with the abuser doing the singing in the face of the abused attempting to leave.

Interestingly, if you perform a Google search to consult sources on what the meaning of this piece is (and many of its uses across a range of media), results typically reveal a focus *purely on the text* and will simply say that it is a song about a lover who is

heartbroken by the cruelty of being without their beloved.[98] Only the deeper dive of musical analysis held together with the text gives an artist, poet, singer, and eventually an educated listener the pointers and hints about the emotional experience and feelings that may be at play within this brief piece of poetry.

Being a trained Bel-Canto singer, "Caro Mio Ben" was among the first ariettas I learned as a new voice student. The book that this piece comes from is its own version of vocal scripture within the Bel-Canto learning community. While I approach this music and the above analysis with a particular intellectual and intuitive depth of knowledge and analytical skill that is not necessarily unique among musicians, it is unique among a broader constituency of humanity. The skills needed for this type of analysis of a classical piece came with intensive training over years of experience honing the ability to approach text and music within their original context to extract the emotions and experiences a composer may have been attempting to portray. It is likely, however, that listeners of the 18th century for whom "Caro Mio Ben" was intended would have picked up on the same information and drawn similar conclusions to my analysis through their bodily sensing and feeling—without the training I had to undergo as an opera singer.

For some people, this kind of music and poetry is considered inaccessible, elitist, and entirely dated. Interestingly, one could easily say the same of the scriptural excerpts we use from the Bible in Christian liturgies. These critiques are fair assessments,

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[98] "Meaning of CARO MIO BEN (Giuseppe Giordani)," LyricsLayers.com, accessed August 10, 2024, https://www.lyricslayers.com/giuseppe-giordani/1435326/.; "' Caro Mio Ben' What Is It?," Maestronet Forums, March 6, 2009, https://maestronet.com/forum/index.php?/topic/319509-caro-mio-ben-what-is-it/.; "Mary Candler (@joyfulsingingdc)," TikTok, accessed August 10, 2024, https://www.tiktok.com/@joyfulsingingdc.; These are just a few samples of easily accessed discussions on "Caro Mio Ben" and its meaning, all produced by knowledgeable and trained musicians.

especially if we do nothing to bridge the gap (whether It is between the 18th-century context of an aria composition, or a 200-year-old wisdom text and modern-day listeners). Like learning to preach a sermon and identifying the context of the text you are preaching on, the contextual information that might give way to emotional and experiential content to be drawn from this musical art piece is understandable to many with some jargon translating and explanation. However, we remember that explanation (Houge, and Massumi) does not help people engage deeply. We need a different approach if we want people to connect to, and hopefully remember what is being communicated here.

Another way to communicate the multiple pages of analysis I have briefly covered above, is to utilize evocative, poignant words and phrases to help sensing and feeling bodies orient to the scene the words are attempting to depict. Let us look at how an artist expresses the above with one single song, using modern language, in a modern context. The following are the lyrics for Beyoncé's song, "Daughter:"

Your body laid out on these filthy floors
Your bloodstains on my custom coutures
Bathroom attendant let me right in
She was a big fan
I really tried to stay cool
But your arrogance disturbed my solitude
Now I ripped your dress
and you're all black and blue
Look what you made me do

They keep sayin' that I ain't nothin' like my father
But I'm the furthest thing from choir boys and altars
If you cross me, I'm just like my father
I am colder than Titanic water

Help me, Lord, from these fantasies in my head
They ain't ever been safe ones
I don't fellowship with these fake ones
So let's travel to white chapels and sing hymns
Hold rosaries, and sing in stained glass symphonies
Cleanse me, Holy Trinity
From this marijuana smoke smell in my hair

I sashayed my dress
Did my best impression of a damsel in distress
This alcohol and smell of regret
Allured my catch
Outfit too small to hide my scars
Feelin' bottled up like bottle service broads
How long can he hold his breath before his death?

Caro mio ben
Credimi almen
Senza di te
Languisce il cor
Il tuo fedel
Sospira ognor
Cessa, crudel
Tanto rigor

Help me, Lord, from these fantasies in my head
They ain't ever been safe ones
I don't fellowship with these fake ones
So let's travel to white chapels and sing hymns
Hold rosaries, sing in stained glass symphonies
Cleanse me, Holy Trinity
From this marijuana smoke smell in my hair

Say I'm nothin' like my father
But I'm the furthest thing from choir boys and altars
Double cross me, I'm just like my father
I am colder than Titanic water

Figure 8. *Lyrics from Beyoncé Knowles, Daughter, Spotify streaming audio, vol. Cowboy Carter (Parkwood Columbia, 2024). Click here to hear the full song.*

The affective force of these lyrics is powerful. A person can intuitively gather what may be happening here emotionally and experientially. Whether the singer is abusive or challenged by complex, violent thoughts and inherited ancestral traumas, the picture is painted clearly by the time we get to the lyric, "*Look what you made me do."* Language like this, in our current era—especially in relation to its preceding line, "*Now I ripped your dress, and you're all black and blue"* paints a scene of abuse. Taking the lyrics as they are here, without speaking Italian or knowing anything derived from a full musical analysis of the aria "Caro Mio Ben," one can quickly draw conclusions about the tune and the Italian lyrics' experiential knowledge via this modern context. This is artful participation on the part of Beyoncé and her collaborators. The artful participation in their collective work produces help for sensing feeling bodies to quickly "get" the scene, if not in specific word-oriented description, certainly in emotional, autonomic sensation. In a

matter of minutes, Beyoncé establishes a visceral, piercing connection for listeners between the emotional experience found in an 18th-century art song and a modern-day lived experience within the broader context of the song, "Daughter." Through a mix of contemporary and classical music, whose effects are visceral, emotional, experiential, and communicative, there is the kind of intensity that has staying power with listeners over repetitions, and no literal explanation has been provided.

Looking back, the artist who produced communion ware in the example I used in the introduction to this thesis made the same intensity-bearing leap using small bowl-like forms as cups, pushing people to approach and experience communion differently, via the sensing and feeling of their bodies. Language is capable of the very same kind of effective artistry that opens us up to artful participation through sensing feeling bodies in our liturgies. How might we do that? Let us return to the standardized Holy Thursday collect found in *Evangelical Worship: Leader's Desk Edition.*

Applying the Experience: Affective Collaboration for Holy Thursday

Let us imagine that we are planning a Holy Thursday service. We look at *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leader's Desk Edition* and note the propers for the day, as well as the flow of the suggested service. The climax of the gathering portion of our ritual is the collect. This is the final moment of the introductory rites, and it is the moment that the gathered community is collectively silent specifically to pray together. *The Sunday Assembly* says the collect is "one of the important services the presider does for the assembly, standing with us before the triune God, and in prayer, *turning us toward some of the scriptural themes of the day*."[99] This prayer is among one of the vital services a presider performs for the assembly; it is among the only prayers preceded by silence, and its position in the *ordo* is such that it draws the introductory/gathering rites to a close. Under these circumstances, we note the relationality between this liturgical moment and all its preceding moments, as well as the moments to come afterward. From this posture (considering the whole field of relationships within the liturgy's imminent directionality) we consider the affective force of the words and their effects at the approaching height of our gathering rite. The listed collect for Holy Thursday, once again, is as follows:

> Holy God, the source of all love, on the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave us a new commandment: to love one another as he loves us. Write this commandment in our hearts, and give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.[100]

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[99] In the ELCA rubrics and order of service within the *ELW*, the *only* prayer that receives a clear direction about keeping silence specifically before praying is found just after "Let us pray" and before the presider prays the collect. Brugh and Lathrop, *The Sunday Assembly*, 133 (emphasis added).

[100] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 81.

The prayer addresses God, expresses gratitude, a petition is made, and then the prayer is concluded in a typical trinitarian closing.[101] Yet, in the midst of this prayer's correctness, as noted before, sensing and feeling bodies we are left wanting.

Taking into consideration (1) the progressive solemnity of the liturgical year, (2) the drama of Holy Thursday/Maundy Thusday liturgy, and (3) the collect being the peak of the gathering right, these prescribed words are sparse and do not give the assembled community much to connect their own lived experiences to. There is a gap to be bridged between the words of the Gospel in its context, and sensing, feeling contemporary bodies of today. This prayer, as written, is not likely to bridge that gap no matter how proficient its proclaimer. We know that for many, an emotionally-rooted experience that utilizes the affect and effects of language as an ally to bring us to attention in the present moment will also flourish into a sense of connection and deeper engagement. If we can achieve engagement, we are beginning to bridge the gap between the wisdom written down by people living thousands of years ago, and our present day. Recalling how brilliantly Beyoncé bridged a contextual gap with "Daughter," we have a chat with our pastor, who it so happens is (conveniently!) also a Beyoncé fan. Pastor is planning to use "Daughter" in their sermon for this Holy Thursday liturgy, to speak about Judas and Jesus' complex human relationship and eventual betrayal. The pastor hopes to highlight the humanity of the relationship between Jesus and Judas, as well as note that even under these awful violent circumstances, Jesus follows his own commandment (with God's help, no doubt) and loves the betrayer as much as the beloved. So, we decide to take an artful approach, collaborating with the existing collect. We are seeking to generate something that is

[101] Brugh and Lathrop, *Sunday Assembly,* 132–33.

visceral enough in its effects that the gathered community feels relief when reminded of the breadth and depth of God's merciful love despite all our intense struggles. In engaging an artful approach, we discover means that affectively bridge the contextual gaps between scriptural references for the day and our modern-day context. The discoveries occur by taking a closer look at the lyrics in "Daughter" and the prescribed collect, sensing and feeling our way through how we might connect the themes of the Gospel with the highly effective affective language experienced in "Daughter:"

> God of ones who have been betrayed, God of ones who betray, God of those who cry 'look what *you* made me do' and God of those who cry 'look at what *you* have done,' Jesus gave us clear instruction: love one another as he loves—even when we're the furthest thing from perfect visions of white chapels, symphonies of stained glass, and well-tuned choirs.
>
> Help us notice where our hearts are colder than Titanic waters, remind us that we have the courage we need to break away from the fantasies of control that we maintain, to choose to be present in fellowship with the fake as much as we are with the authentic so that we might begin to love and serve just as Christ loved and served. We ask these things through Jesus, your son, who, with you and the Holy Spirit, showed us the value of all life.[102]

More than likely, regardless of whether or not a listener knows the song being referenced, the language above is likely to grab hearts and imaginations of sensing, feeling bodies because it uses experiential ("God of ones who have been betrayed, God of ones who betray," "God of those who cry 'look what *you* made me do' and God of those who cry look at what *you* have done") and feeling-oriented words (perfect visions of…, hearts colder than Titanic waters, fantasies of control, fake, authentic, value) that will also likely

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[102] Adaptation using the Holy Thursday Prayer of the Day as listed in Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leader's Desk Edition and Beyoncé Knowles song "Daughter." Beyoncé Knowles, "Daughter," *Cowboy Carter,* Parkwood Columbia, 2024.; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 81.

develop some strong imagery (such as connecting to personal moments of feeling betrayal, personal and even collective visions of perfection, for some of a certain age probably even images from the movie "Titanic"). This language combination acts as an ally to sensing and feeling bodies, rather than a strictly rational-intellectual recall of scripture. Using an approach like this allows us to open pathways to experience relevance and relationality between the gathered body, Judas, and Jesus' centuries-old call to love. These oft-cited biblical characters become relatable humans. *Chronos* time begins to break away toward *kairos* time in shimmers of recognition and connection among the gathered community re-membering its individual and communal bodies, opening to simultaneous difference and transindividual ecologies of being.

Text Gets in Your Eyes

The song "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," written by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach refers to smoke getting in the eyes of a heartbroken person. The smoke, to many, represents the tears and clouding that can come with heartbreak. I chose to title this chapter "Text Gets in Your Eyes" because we are living in a logocentric world that clouds out certain kinds of bodily knowledge— which is certainly heartbreak for humanity's diverse bodies and experiences. Various layers of historic relationships and concepts of objectivity have seeped into our lives, affectively pushing us to overvaluation and treatment of language in the liturgical sphere. The challenge here is that we are letting the text cloud out individual and collective knowing to the point that It is crowding out the important role that the affective and its effects play among all elements of liturgy. Theodore Jennings provides an apt warning in his 1982 article "On Ritual Knowledge," highlighting that we have treated liturgy as an ". . . illustration of that which

is known or manifested through myth."[103] As though the writing about liturgy, after the fact, is the driver and our bodily knowing and doing is only reactive to such things. Jennings goes on to say,

> [This treatment is] . . . analogous to the Reformation insistence on the priority of Word to Sacrament—a priority which may or may not be dogmatically appropriate but which ought not to be made the a priori basis of an understanding of [liturgy] generally.[104]

We cannot allow the affective force of centuries of insistence on the priority of words to override the multi-faceted and immediate breadth and depth of knowledge within and among feeling and sensing human bodies. The text that clouds out this knowing does not *have* to be tuned to primarily engage processes of rational intellectual thought and inquiry, as many (especially standard Lutheran liturgical literature) do, yet that is what is currently happening in most liturgical environments.

While the logocentric logic of Reformation's insistence on word and sacrament is (as Jennings points out above) dogmatically accurate, liturgical knowledge is found and experienced transindividually amidst diverse and multi-faceted relationality of every element involved in liturgy from the non-human to the human to the more-than-human. Of course, the liturgical literature alone is not the sole challenge and is ultimately a product of larger patterns. We need words. They are valuable allies, and their affective force produces effects as we have seen in the adjusted collect example within this chapter. The roots of critiques regarding stifled, boxy, low-energy worship and dry

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[103] Theodore W. Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," *The Journal of Religion* 62, no. 2 (1982): 111, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1203176.

[104] Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," 111.

liturgical literature stem from having leaned into logocentrism. We've over-valued the words in written and spoken format (as Jennings warns against) to the point that many liturgies have eradicated the strength and unique offering of liturgy: the integration of language as an ally to fully knowledgeable sensing-feeling bodies in ecologies that are transindividual, liminal and uniquely positioned to support perpetual transition, transcendence, and radically Christian hospitality (more on this ecology, and hospitality coming in the final chapter).

Another critique of how we often approach thinking about, understanding, and even planning worship, which might help us understand more deeply where the problem lies within the relationship between language and the transindividual ecology of liturgy comes from Donna Lynne Seamone, who wrote:

> Liturgical studies are pre-occupied with textual study and theological reflection, that is, the doctrine of worship. Liturgical text prescribes the performance of a rite. Yet . . . the text of the rite and the doing of the rite are not the same thing . . . the actors occupy a space that is moved in and that moves them.[105]

Seamone and Jennings both (a little over a decade apart from one another) call attention to preoccupation with the word-focused aspects of liturgy, warning that these will not get us closer to an understanding of the unique bodily knowledge that is the crux of liturgy and ritual. Neither of them specifically speaks about considering the affective and its effects, yet, in both cases, they are hinting that logocentrism, while of value, cannot and should not be made the central force and focus of liturgy, whether in its planning or doing.

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[105] Donna Lynne Seamone, "Re-Membering the Body in Liturgical Action: Entry Points for Inquiry into Living Liturgical Practice," *Consensus* 24, no. 2 (1993), 32.

Affects of Logocentrism: Effective Contributor to Oppression

The affective has effects that reverberate throughout liturgical literature and liturgy as performed by bodies in worship spaces. Failing to consider the affective and its effects does not erase their presence and force in our lives; it just means we are poorly attuning ourselves and reifying circuits of knowing that leverage our placing of the affective force and its effects to the side for purposes of furthering systems of oppression and destruction. Obscured within rational thinking and the setting aside of the affective and its effects is a facet of colorism that allows many humans (especially those who identify and are perceived as white) to avoid the experiences of generations of trauma within our scriptural texts as well as here in our U.S. context. Resmaa Menakem says,

> for America to outgrow the bondage of white-body supremacy, white Americans need to imagine themselves in Black, red, and brown bodies and *experience* what those bodies had to endure. They also need to do the same with the bodies of their own white ancestors.[106]

Menakem brilliantly highlights that re-membering that sensitive, porous human bodies (our own, and those of ancestors) are and were full of knowing that is passed on to us through sensing and feeling is a pathway to moving away from practices that teach bodies to be docile and accept narratives of powerlessness, and into practices that are engaging and remind us to notice, through our sensitive bodies, the affective forces at play upon us, as well as the effects of those forces individually and transindividually.

To center the affective and its effects means that we center what Audre Lorde called the erotic, what Clarence Rivers referred to as the sensual, what Edward Braxton

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[106] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 65. (Emphasis added)

called the human experience, and what both Brian Massumi and Erin Manning call artful participation. This does not mean that written and spoken word is lost to feelings; it means that we allow our sensing feeling bodies to notice our current logocentric habits and, and allow those habits to change via sensing and feeling. To engage liturgy and life in artful participation means moving away from allowing language to cloud or mute collective being and experience and instead move toward praxis that places feeling and sensing bodies within an ecology of interrelational participation where we understand that sensory and bodily knowing come first and are allies to language. We actively encourage ourselves, collectively, to re-member and sensitize ourselves to felt knowing, re-membering language as an ally, rather than the driver and required focal point of all knowing. In other words, we stop concerning ourselves with what liturgy is doing, or what it might mean (Seamone's doctrines of worship), and instead we adopt a posture where we are continuously attentive to artful participation. Here, we are concerned only with what liturgy needs, as an ecology.

Chapter 4

Ecologies of Liturgy that Werk / The Werk of The People

On "What's It *Do*, What's It *Mean*, and What's It *Need*?"

What liturgy *does* and *means* is rooted in prior action and reactive analysis, with meaning applied through rational intellectual inquiry after the doing of the liturgy. When coming from academic disciplines, this analysis and meaning are policed by a particular ordering of knowledge within disciplines, as well as long-standing systematic policing through de-centered institutional and peer review. This thesis is built on the work of people who have and continue to operate in these systems. I am operating in the very same system via the writing and submission of this thesis. It is understandable that reactive analysis is a major system used for academic inquiry. Spoken and written words are easier to document and interpret.

Yet, the challenge I see is that in the overvaluation and foregrounding of logocentrism as the main means to knowledge and communication, we inadvertently background myriad equally (if not more important) aspects of liturgy's power: namely affective force and its effects. This, too, is understandable; the effects of affective experiences are so diverse, so particular, and so resistant to categorization that efficient and easy description in double-spaced pages of 12-point Times New Roman font has been a challenge for me, and is a known challenge among affect theorists. Even when we place implied written indicators of their importance using words such as "gesture" or "sensory" or "art/environment," not specifying the importance of the many layers of

transindividual affect and effects occurring outside of the writeable and speakable, also serves to reify rigid disabled cultures that refuse diverse hospitality for the diversity of bodies this world contains.[107]

Shifting ourselves toward continuously asking what liturgy *needs* to do requires a different engagement and a much broader perspective on liturgy.[108] Using the word "need" indicates levels of not-yet-determined agency and meaning, opening us up to an expansive and active field of possibilities. This does not mean we leave behind questions of what a liturgy *did* or what a liturgy *meant*. It means we actively recognize that those questions of *do/did* and *means/meant* are only answerable after-the-acts. They are the logocentric aftermath, a reflection of false individuality within transindividual encounter. When we ask what it is a liturgy *needs*, we enter a posture that requires attentiveness to a full ecology, to fields of interrelationality where we are one among many activated forces.[109] Asking what is needed opens a conceptual doorway to adopt an open position of attention to the full ecology of the liturgy itself, with the potentiality that needs will change mid-liturgy and even more potentiality that participants, artfully active in their presence and care for this liturgy knowing their collaboration is essential, respond and open ever new pathways to ways of being and doing liturgy in the moment. The who and

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[107] Manning says, "Disability is about a culture that does not accommodate diversity. So it is not the body (alone) that is disabled, the culture is disabled in its capacity to create accommodations that allow for difference." Manning, *Minor Gesture,* 193.

[108] Manning, *Minor Gesture,* 197. The concept of what the liturgy needs to do is pulled directly from Manning and Massumi's work with SenseLab, and 3ecologies. They're focused on what they call "event." I have transferred that concept to liturgy.

[109] I've long approached my own liturgical planning this way. In reading Erin Manning and Brian Massumi's works I have discovered that they, too, through a series of projects, have come to a similar conclusion. See the following for more thought and resources, here: Manning, *Minor Gesture*.; Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, "About 3e (The 3ecologies Project) | 3e," accessed August 17, 2024, https://3ecologies.org/about/.

how of this way of being will be entirely particular to any given community and their context.

If we look at the words used to tell us about Jesus' calls for who to be and what we should do within the canonical Gospels, we would be looking at (and potentially overly caught up in) the particulars of what Jesus meant and what Jesus did. If we approached those Jesus stories with a lens that asks what Jesus potentially understood was *needed* in each of these accounts (which also asks us to look at the in-betweens of the written words we've received), I suspect we would land at core fundamentals of Christian tradition and perhaps even the very elements that Jesus was regularly frustrated with his disciples for not understanding. Asking what Jesus potentially saw as *needed* within the various Gospel stories means that you have to move toward feelings and sensations that go beyond (or, more accurately, are present before) cognitive engagement.

Sensing and feeling for what is or may have been *needed* also means engaging layers of transindividual ecologies that reach beyond individualism, but never erase important human individuation. The feelings and sensations we "feel out" via our sensitive bodies become an ally to cognitive engagement. By continuously asking what is needed, we are more likely to artfully sense our way through and, in so doing, eventually arrive at the fundamentals dwelling in the interstices of the words and particulars we've inherited over the ages, moving us out of chronos time and into kairos time.[110]

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[110] When we ask "what is this liturgy *supposed* to *mean?*" or "what is this liturgy *supposed* to *do?*" we're back into logocentric patterns of thinking, we are no longer feeling the immediate immanent directionality of the moment with our sensitive bodies but instead trying to categorize and engage in inherited logocentric foregrounding and backgrounding patterns.

Another way to say this would be that rather than using a deductive logocentric process for liturgy, asking what liturgy *needs* moves us toward artful participation or an inductive, continuously creating posture rooted in constellations of relationships working at the level of constitutively communicating power of affective force. Needs are discovered, sensed, felt, and tested at the affective level within a given transindividual field of relationships. The difference here may seem minor in concept. Still, it has the potential for major change in how we live liturgy, life, and what we understand to be fundamental inheritance within a faith tradition.

Fields of Relationship: Cultivating Subversive Countercultural Hospitality

Continuously engaging in sensing and feeling while asking ourselves what it is that a liturgy needs is a foundation for a radically different kind of hospitality in church communities. By keeping ourselves immediate to transindividual relationships and their ever-shifting movement, as well as the immanent directionality of the moment, our focus shifts from subjects and objects and linguistic roots of knowledge to an affect-centered processual ontology where we attune our bodies to perceiving continuous directionality.[111] We still use words, but logocentrism falls away in favor of recognizing words as allies to sensing and feeling. In the end, done well, curious sensing/feeling and need-focus could open us to a radical, countercultural hospitality of care where we notice needs and are not so prone to allowing ourselves to be pushed around by affective force

[111] When I say movement here, literal movement is included, but also felt and sensed shifts in relationships which are not always visible or tangible, but still feelable, present, and real.

to such a degree that our neighbor in a wheelchair in. Chapter 1 is left feeling "wrong" in their church.

Feeling and sensing as we move and relate demands a continuous "dance of attention."[112] The dance is rooted in a combination of feeling, sensing, and relationality. Some of this dance is pre-choreographed, but much is entirely improvisational and dependent on other forms and relationships within a field. For example, some years ago I stood on the side of a busy street in Jaipur, India. In the middle of the street, there was a small shrine. As I watched, a person began to move from the side of the street through the heavy and speedy traffic to the shrine. Motorcycles, bicycles, animals, tuk-tuks, and trucks all smoothly flowed around this person and they arrived safely at the shrine. I was invited to also go to the shrine. In moving aross this busy street, I quickly realized that waiting until something *looked* safe, would lead to an accident. The best way to navigate was going to be to trust my sensing and feeling body, and trust the sensing and feeling ecology around me. It worked. I visited the shrine, I crossed the street once again to return to the side I had been on, and I am here relaying the tale today. These are major, easily identified movements and shifts in the dance of attention. There are also many smaller shifts, nearly imperceptible but still present and placing their own affective force in the scene. Airflow, for example. Or simple change of balance on a bike, a puddle in the road, or strangely shaped communion ware (the small bowls in the introduction), or mannequins within the sanctuary (the holy chaos story). Returning to the street in Jaipur, the whole scene was a field of relationality between the literal street, fellow people, vehicles, blockages, airflow, etc. much of it not at all entirely reliant upon eyes that see.

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[112] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 193.

This is a strength and reason to support and prioritize sensing and feeling as our starting point. These two skills do not teach us to rely solely on visual ability, they are inclusive, hospitable to the gifts and sensibilities of an enormous diversity of bodies, regardless of vision ability.[113]

In this kind of hospitable dancing relationality, we embrace that we do not know where a body ends or begins, we embrace that humans are more-than-human and various objects are more-than-object. There are degrees of porosity everywhere, and the porosity of human bodies means we are never exclusively just ourselves but a vast archive of elements enacting force upon us as we also enact force upon them.[114] We are an ever-changing self, ever-relating to a continuum of additional bodies in ever-changing environments.[115] Identity is continuously emergent in the interstices.

This posture of relationality connects us to a more-than-human horizon where we begin to think from the middle.[116] Philosopher Jane Bennett speaks about this field of relationality through the words of grammar. She calls this relationality the middle voice, saying:

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[113] Manning, *Minor Gesture*. We've been trained to keep our eyes on big changes (you could also refer to these as movements). But social change happens not in singular big changes, but in piles upon piles of minuscule relational movements and social shifts. In these ecologies and fields of relationality, while major movements happen (the train moves, the elevator goes up or down, a dancer makes a large leap, the riot at Stonewall happens) there were hundreds, maybe thousands of very small porous movements and gestures and relational exchanges that contributed to the larger movement's tipping point. Movements are thought-in-motion, a thinking-sensing-feeling *with* the field of relationships. Finding porosity in these relationships and movements is, in Manning's thinking, a place where newness of being and change process has the potential to take hold.

[114] Singh, *No Archive.*

[115] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 191.

[116] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 192.

> The more one writes and thinks with process-oriented verbs, the more one might discern the presence of the non-self and even nonhuman efforts in the milieu. Middle-voiced verbs do not subscribe to the usual distinction between an unwilled "operativity" of a structure and the bona fide "action" of an intentional author. Middle-voiced verbs do not presumptively bestow agentic priority upon the human beings in the mix, even as they acknowledge the weight of human efforts in tilting the trajectory of the assemblage. The voice-amidst positions us as involved in creative flows before we feel ourselves deciding to "take action." Involvement in apersonal process precedes and informs any personal endeavoring: we are middle-voiced 'partakers' more than either actors or recipients.[117]

Bennett's points resound beautifully with the concept of sensing and feeling within transindividual fields of relationships. We are seeking a shift toward thinking in multiplicities, continuously acknowledging that the affective forces we feel result from many influences that are always present. If we want to move away from colonizing, subject/object behaviors, and engage a deeper and broader hospitality, we do so in this paradigm through sensing, feeling, noticing, and changing right along with the constant shifts and changes occurring within the ever-shifting fields of relationality and ecologies we find ourselves in. This kind of thinking and the ensuing hospitality opens us to possibilities of difference and change through the continuous "dance of attention."[118] In Manning's words:

> Not human attention, but field attention—the event's attention to its own development, its own concrescence. When this is strong, that's when we leave a dance performance, for instance, and say: 'Wow, that really worked!' . . . *There is little in our everyday lives that facilitates this kind of dance of attention, but it does take place . . . it is latently there,* [though] it can be overcoded by the habitual tendencies of subject-centered intentionality that work continuously to

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[117] Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing up with Walt Whitman* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 114.

[118] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 193.

> take us out of the field of relation and into the individual, as though the individual could be cordoned out from the event [119]

As Manning points out, this seemingly complex concept is already (albeit latently) part of our everyday lived lives. There is the movement across the street in Jaipur example, from above. Or, consider a liturgy where the musician, playing piano and singing as a community takes a collection, resolves the music precisely as the presider begins the prayer of thanksgiving for the offering, doing this so seamlessly that it feels like these elements were always growing from one another. This is an example of a "dance of attention," occurring in a field of shifting more-than-human relationships where artful participants are allowing affective force to effect themselves (the musician, the assembly, the presider, in this case) as much as the musician is effecting the experience of all participants.

This kind of feeling sensing dance of attention applied to liturgy becomes a unique hospitality which is rooted to a collective field of transindividual relationships. As Bennett points out above, we are middle-voiced participants, neither solo recipient nor solo actor. If we commit ourselves to artful participation in dances of attention, continouously feeling and sensing our middle-voiced being, in a world that, as Manning wrote above, "works to take us out of the field of relation and into the individual," we are engaging in a subversive and countercultural hospitality for our full ecology of fellow earth dwellers.

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[119] Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 193. (Emphasis added)

The combination of maintaining a posture oriented toward the needs of the liturgy (acknowledging that liturgy is a full ecology worthy of care and support) shifts our focus from individual actors and the acted upon to an affect-centered processual ontology that requires sensitive bodies to feel in order to perceive and attune to the vibrant, more-than-human relationships surrounding us. To achieve this, we have to learn to move away from acting out as grammatical subjects and objects, to awareness for the myriad processes and contributions that support or enable transcendent experiences.

A Liturgy That Werks

A shift from reactively asking what liturgies do or mean, instead adopting a posture of radical hospitality where liturgical participants continuously engage by asking what a liturgy *needs* is the ultimate werk of the people. Werk, as defined by the Urban Dictionary, is the combination of the words work and twerk. It means, to do something to an exceedingly excellent capacity. Most notably used in reference to dancing, modeling, sexual prowess, and/or other physical performances that require a large amount of fiery attitude, vitality, and vigor; a congratulatory exclamation of approval.[120]

I am using this term with both definitions in mind. The werk of the people is werk that we are pre-disposed to doing well (think of how our brains are pre-disposed to action and imagining action in Chapter 2). Werking may be different than how we've been socialized to go about being. Werk may slow us down in relation to a capitalistic model that pushes us to produce objects for consumption, but I also believe that this werk is the

[120] "Urban Dictionary: Werk," Urban Dictionary, accessed May 12, 2024, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Werk.

werk that reciprocates the energy put into it. This is the kind of effort that leans into a continuous dance of attention within fields of relationality where all parts matter, opening us to difference (relation) that leads to the revelation of God in our midst.[121] Claudio Carvalhaes might liken this werk to his call for a "borderless borders liturgy."[122] Borderless borders liturgy consists of "Endless preparation with those who are there and those who are yet to come" which, "is made of connections with what we know, what we have, and what we find around us."[123]

Werk like this might sound exhausting in this two-dimensional thesis format. However, my own lived experience is that this formation of hospitality and relationality feeds energy, drive, and moral-spiritual power in the face of a world that otherwise asks us to maintain ever-decreasing full-bodied knowledge of self and fellow earth dweller. Subversive, countercultural hospitality of this kind will likely draw us to a slower, radically relational pace of living. These changes are likely to move us, ever so slightly, into enabling qualitatively different ways of being— not only for humans, but for every aspect of liturgical ecologies.

To begin the transformation, we must shift our conceptualization of liturgy and praxis away from what our liturgical literature most often reifies: logocentric siloed

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[121] In Boal's configuration for the theoretical foundations of the Aesthetics of the Oppressed, it is the careful attention to sensing, feeling, and the collaborative process of discovery that brings fuller knowledge that allows participants to discover themselves and their world, rather than allow media to define these things for people. Boal's aesthetics and theoretical foundations are rooted in fields of relationality between the participants and their world. Strengthening a continuous "dance of attention" in fields of relationality builds fuller bodily knowledge for Theater of the Oppressed participants. Boal says that the ongoing quest in this work is the revelation of God, perceptible through the senses, and the eventual. Augusto Boal and Adrian Jackson, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (London: Routledge, 2006), 38.; Manning, *Minor Gesture*, 193.

[122] Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization*, 30.

[123] Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization*, 31.

analysis of theological, textual, and gestural doctrines of worship. Constitutively communicated messages generated in the wake of affective forces' effects are bone-deep. These effects can no longer be backgrounded or ignored in favor of enlightenment era rational thinking.

Liturgy— and abundant, sensitive, relational life—is for the full ecology of all earth dwellers (not just the artists and poets). There is no binary where we are or are not capable artful participants as a result of logocentric labels we've applied for purposes of categorizing. The "third way" is the way that has always been present: via our sensitive bodies, which are called to their rightful fullness of werk. That werk, the ongoing werk of the people, is artful participation (a way, or a process always in discovery) within continuous dances of attention in the liminality of complex fields of relationality.

The unique combination of sensitivity to affective force, mixed with a posture of hospitality that continuously asks "What is needed" provides ample power to sustain and support the (arguably necessary) continuous changes required of those of us who want to see diverse Christian communities bound together in difference, thriving and passing on the wisdom we have inherited well beyond our own finite days. Each element of liturgy interacts transindividually, meaning that our being is never just singular, nor individual, but relational collectives of being in intersecting ecologies stretching far into the more-than-human. We must move toward broader, interrelational fields of artful participation, rooted in a posture that unceasingly "feels out" what our liturgy— and life— needs.

For me, the need here is not only transformation (where we might become outwardly different), it is complete transfiguration (where we are changed internally and externally in ways that are revelatory, and fundamental to our very being). The seed of

hope for this needed and continuous change is found somewhere in the interstices from which relation and difference grows in this relational, middle-voice, dancing ecology. Feeling our way to countercultural and subversive werk of the people has the power to bind diverse communities, eventually growing into a qualitatively different way of being and caring for the entire world.

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Appendix A

The following is the artist statement eventually composed for people visiting the school, and encountering the "abyss"/ black box advent environment:

In our 7-week advent celebration, the first three weeks of texts lead us to witnessing the brutal death of an innocent man at the hands of people whose government systems claim to bring peace. We then carry on with witnessing through stories of tension and fear, surprise, prophecy, and eventually birth. Themes of violence, difficulty, and trauma are rampant and we, as listeners and re-tellers of the stories, continuously witness the uncontainable found within them.

Advent is the fresh start of our liturgical year, and we begin with stories of (im)possibilities that find themselves becoming. What is and was a violent, messy, painfully heart-wrenching ending is also a beginning for new ways of being and becoming. What looked (and looks) like a massive failure is also an impossible-to-understand, perfect communication: Emmanuel. God with us.

This tense, difficult, knowing-unknowing of impossible-possibility, witnessed by people who hold its vulnerable wisdom in tender intimacy in myriad forms (most especially the form of a human child who grows to an adult that we today call God incarnate) was the basis for how I conceptualized the design for this cosmic Advent space.

While painting and installing the art for this season, several of my fellow students and I began to lovingly refer to this newly darkened portion of Ubuntu as "The Abyss." It is dark. And, darkness is a place (figurative or literal) where many go to encounter God. Even Moses himself, according to Gregory of Nyssa:

"When, therefore, Moses grew in knowledge, he declared that he had seen God in the darkness, that is, that he had then come to know that what is divine is beyond all knowledge and comprehension, for the text says, Moses approached the dark cloud where God was"

Like so much of our shared faith basis, nothing is entirely clear in this Advent space. It is hard to see clearly. It's not clear exactly what it all means. And, I will not tell you how to interpret what I conceptualized or what you "should" see in this space. I believe doing so would only remove the opportunity for you to fully enter, experience, and engage with the Holy that worked through me, and my colleagues, and is here now waiting for your witnessing presence. So I invite you to enter this cosmic darkness with us, using the call to prayer from our Advent Liturgy:

Come!
Come as you are
Come to sing
Come to cry
Come to silence
Come to experience
Come to delight
Come to prepare
Come to be made ready
You are here, and God is here

with joy: Sam R. LaDue