

Worship happens through and with our bodies. Using concepts of *habitus* (a basic mode of bodily relation to the world that guides our perception) we ask how worship may shape us as desiring beings to come to desire the kingdom of God. It looks at the role of bodily presence and the role of imagination and narration in the action of liturgy and concrete ways of countering the cultural-political liturgies of this world.

Notizen zu Workshop II

Liturgy, body and habitus: Becoming what we desire – Body and Habitus

We hopefully all agree: to believe in Christ and be a follower of Christ, to belong to the body of Christ, walking with God: this is not only to hold firm to certain convictions. It is also about a life according to these convictions. Many would also agree on that we need to change our behavior in many ways, both individually and collectively, to be that body of Christ and make his reign visible. To deny that would be to say that the kingdom of God is fully revealed, that the world as it is is not only saved by God, but that this salvation has become the full reality of this world. *But we are not there, yet*, even if I believe that all has been provided by God so that we eventually will get there. That God's will will be shaped out in the forms we live together, we share and seek justice for all. This is not to say that we need to work out by ourselves the salvation that God has provided. It is not about establishing a right kind of relation to God. It is about how to live in all the aspects of life in this world so that it will become visible that Christ is reigning his body, that we actually live according to the conviction that Christ lives in us:

- towards economical justice that is not restricted to our own state community;
- towards love of myself and neighbor and those who consider themselves to be my enemies
- - to be an expression of the love of God.

So my question is: *how are we transformed?* How will our way to make decisions and act upon these decisions actually change towards that life?

- One common answer is that we need to *understand* the aspects of such a life. If only we would comprehend the breadth of God's love and the depth of God's self-giving in God's own son and God's Spirit to His Church; if only we understood well enough the challenges ahead of us; and if only we had the *full will* to act upon that we are called to – then we would take the right decisions and act accordingly. I am not denying that – but what means understanding? Grasp the idea intellectually is certainly not enough. Speak of the heart? Of emotions?
- But there is this riddle we sometimes call the power of sin: We have understood, we have the means, we want to on some level of consciousness – and still walk in another direction. I could sell some of my possessions and help to establish an infrastructure to make room for some refugees to settle in my village. But before I think further I hear a thousand voices in my head that tell me about the difficulties involved so I do not take even one step further. On a larger scale: the European Churches have enormous wealth, and the Pope is calling for immediate action to stop this scandalon going on in the Mediterranean Sea. And we are all too ready to say that this is too simple, that there are *problems on a systemic level* etc. And the Church keeps its palaces and continues with its moral calls upon the state.
- There usually are two kinds of answers to such questions: either the people are *not really willing* to pay the costs of what would be needed. Or there is a referral to some

kind of *super-structures that cannot be changed by the individual*. Real change must come on a supra-individual level. I will challenge this dichotomy between the possibilities of the individual and its will, and the system of supra-structures.

- I will do this in two aspects:
 - I do not believe that our decisions are simply steered by a will that follows in intellectual insight into what is true. Our decisions are steered by what we *worship*, what we *desire*. We need to *reshape our desires* when we want to be transformed to a different way of living in this world.
 - And secondly: If we are talking about supra-individual changes, we need to look at the *concept of habitus or habits*. By habit I mean the background of my assumptions of how the world works. Mostly not conscious. It might be called the common believes of the community I belong to. But by believes I do not mean such things as that the world has been created by God. I rather mean convictions that are expressed in our behavior in everyday life. How I send informations to others. When I take the bicycle and when the car. Perceptions of characteristics of gender: how do I recognize a person as female or male, and at what level of perception does that distinction come into the picture? What kind of behavior is steered by that distinction?
- *Example*: Giving way getting out of the train: After an intercultural convention some of our group took the local train together, all people I did not know well but all in leading positions in the church, with different cultural backgrounds. As the train stopped, some entered immediately, the same moment while other people were still getting out. I felt the unease almost physically: I have in my bones that anyone *considerate* waits until everybody who wants to get out has descended. First out, then in. But I was also quite sure that these church leaders *were not inconsiderate* people – two kinds of background assumptions that run my habitual perception of the world were running counter against each other, and only *then* did I start to think about what might be going on.
 - It could be that these people were simply not seeing this situation as a crossing of two streams: there were only about 10 people getting out and 10 in. In a culture where you regularly travel with hundreds of people, the outside and inside place simply seemed to be empty to them.
 - It could be that they approached the situation from a different practical angle: getting in and out at the same time might be faster.
 - Or public behavior in either way simply had no social meaning, you would not even recognize that there is a question of consideration, trying to arrange the differing interests of various groups involved.
- I believe that those desires that shape us most in decision making, are on the level of *habitus*, something that is not accessible simply by intellectual will. That does not mean that it is not learned. We are shaped into a habitus by the assumptions of a group we grow into, and at the same time we are creating and shaping these assumptions as we live in a group. It is by no way determinist (fit into a ruling social behavior) counter individual freedom (you are free to make your own choices and responsible for them).
- This has to do with *Faith*: If faith is to be the ground layer that steers my behavior in the world, the background of my decisions that directs me towards the obvious far before I make a deliberate choice – or operates on the level where my body makes deliberate choices – then faith must work on this level. It is not enough to speak about faith in terms of intellectual consciousness or systems of believes, held convictions. In

order to really guide my behavior, faith must work on the embodied level of habitus.

- Film: This video shows a kind of knowledge that is bodily. [I do not quite agree with the terms used – knowledge and understanding. I would rather say: understanding and bodily knowledge, or habitus] This kind of knowledge needs to sink in, be learned by my attitude. Over many repetitions. It is not enough to have understood the principle, to know in my mind and understanding what to do: I know from watching what I would have to do: steer to the left, if I want to go right; and simultaneously lean towards right to counter the centrifugal forces. (Plus do everything else I usually do when I ride my bike)

But: My body will still not be able to do it, even if I know exactly what to do, even if I prefigure it in my imagination, even if I am totally dedicated and concentrated. My body tells me by its habits that something else needs to be done and does it. This kind of learning and knowledge does not act only on a body level. You might say: Of course, on things to do with my body, brain structures need to change, my body needs to learn how to do it. But the same kind of thing happens when my habitual perception of the world needs to change. It is not enough to have understood intellectually how to reorient. As riding a bicycle has been learned and automatized at a very deep level, so have basic perceptions of how the world works, what is worth being achieved, what the good life looks like that I desire, what is desirable – these kind of things are learned physically, bodily, on a physical level as well. They are embodied knowledge that is pre-conscious. When we want to change them, we need the same kind of effort as is needed in relearning of riding a bike in a different way. So we need to look at what body is in order to understand how deeply this kind of knowledge – habit, shapes how I am in the world, my unconscious reactions. With our bodies we are in the world, perceive and interpret a situation far before it reaches my conscious awareness.

- A story: David and Goliath: 1 Sam 17, 31-51:

David said to the men who stood by him, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?' 27The people answered him in the same way, 'So shall it be done for the man who kills him.'

[28 His eldest brother Eliab heard him talking to the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David. He said, 'Why have you come down? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart; for you have come down just to see the battle.' 29David said, 'What have I done now? It was only a question.' 30He turned away from him towards another and spoke in the same way; and the people answered him again as before.]

31 When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him. 32David said to Saul, 'Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.'33Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.' 34But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, 35I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch

it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. 36Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.' 37David said, 'The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.' So Saul said to David, 'Go, and may the LORD be with you!'

38 Saul clothed David with his armour; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. 39David strapped Saul's sword over the armour, and he tried in vain to walk, *for he was not used to them*. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.' So David removed them. 40Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

41 The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42When the Philistine looked and saw David, *he disdained him*, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 43The Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44The Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.' 45But David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.46This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give you into our hand.'

48 When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

[50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand.51Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 52The troops of Israel and Judah rose up with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. 53The Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp.]

54David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

- "I am not used to" or "I am used to": How many times have you heard this story? What did it move in you? The simplicity of David, not being caught up in this military world, his frankness and trust in God, simply looking at the world from a different angle. This lightness of the boy, the beauty of his speech – this has more than impressed me. It became a role model for me, and I am sure, for many children who grew up with sunday-school teaching and children's books with biblical stories.

What strikes me today is indeed that the figures in this story look at the world from a different angle and see differently, decide differently on spontaneous reactions depending on what they are used to.

- David, coming from his flock, sees in Goliath an uncircumcised philistine that resembles a bear threatening his sheep. He keeps to this first impression and consequently refuses to call him by his name.
- Saul brings it to the point: “you are a shepherd boy, he was a warrior from his youth. You are not used to war, but for him, war has been his life.” The two are shaped by different worlds, and consequently perceive the situation very differently. For a warrior, this enormous armament means invincibility, strength. Goliath speaks the language of fear and impression, big, strong high, heavy: all seems to be of advantage in this situation. And most Israelites, themselves trained in war, accept that language and are impressed. They are shaped by the same world, and in this world they simply seem not to have a chance.
- David is used to something else: keeping the sheep. His way of life has taught him something else: that a different perception than that of the predator makes the beast vulnerable. He simply kills the beasts, catching it by the jaw. Seems easy and seems to have worked so far. A different experience that gives a different perception of what is going on in the valley of Elah.
- David refuses the arms of war with one argument: I am not used to them. I have not tried them enough. I have not been shaped enough by them in order to use them naturally as I could walk in them.
- The strangest in this story is perhaps Saul allowance to let David fight. He risks all of Israel's army becoming slaves to the philistines. He risks his kingdom on that lad. What makes him do that? Is there really enough realistic faith left that he believes that Adonai would be with him as he showed no fear?
- Interesting is also that Goliath is blinded because he knows only one world. He does not recognize the danger he is in because of what he sees: arms fit only to fight a dog. He understands the language of mocking, but not that of the shepherd. He simply does not see in what danger he is. He could easily protect himself, had he anticipated what the lad was up to – but his habits told him nothing. His body told him of no such possibility. This heavy armor, this weight and largeness were not only hindering him in the battle *David chose*, it hindered him to perceive the world with Davids eyes. His life, his walk, his way of training that only knew heros as enemies, all that provided nothing for the necessary perception here and made him walk in a way that actually made him vulnerable in a way he had no idea.
- Habits: this story makes not only visible how the world I live in shapes us, what I assume to be the nature of the world as the accustomed background of my choices and perceptions guides the possibilities of choices I have. It does more: As a story it has become such a background of assumptions of worlds. It reduces the battle to *either / or*. It accepts the challenge of the Philistine, the challenge of a God-battle, Adonai proving himself greater. Yes, it fuels the imagination with the possibility that heavy strength can be undermined. But it swallows the assumption that Goliath has to be brought down as the enemy of God.
- When you raise up the images of beheadings in our times, where a seemingly powerless small group of people displays its victims in online-videos just as David took the head of that uncircumcised philistine – this vile man, lacking true holiness – what do you see then? This legend of a man Daoud who enters battle with

almost no arms and defeats the much mightier enemy – what imaginations does this fuel today? How are today's perceptions of choices shaped by this story? The goals set and ways to reach that goal? What does it then mean that David keeps the armor of Goliath in his tent?

- Does the story actually tell a different tale than the one I assumed in Sunday school – that David in his victory over Goliath actually treads on a way to become a bit more like him? To lose the lightness of this shepherd lad? Or does it simply speak of the atrocities of war, where a war agreement is nonsense. It was agreed that only *one* will get killed, then the war has decided who will be whose slaves – that this treaty. The Philistines do not keep to the promise and flee – naturally of course, and the Israelites simply slaughter them. None accepts the terms of the battle.
 - When I ask these questions I am actually demonstrating what happens when conflicting stories are confronted and begin to deconstruct each other: new realities become visible. When the story of the so-called IS is confronted with our thinking of biblical heroes.
- What governs these decisions, *habitus*, is desire. Something I learned that it is good and lovable, worthy to be desired. This needs more than intellectual, rational conviction. It is dependent on a vision of how my life fits into the larger story of the world, where I want to fit in, where I want my place to be, of what I hope that will be the shaping reality of the world. It is not so easy to become aware of these desires because they work on a preconscious level.
 - It may appear as wanting a certain pair of jeans. Because I like the look of people I saw? Because of a certain life-story that is portrayed in a commercial? But why that lifestyle? It might be that *at the deepest level what makes me tick* is belonging to a group that seems to protect me from being exposed, embarrassed.
 - Same for high education: the better you know to express yourself, to avoid the unwanted traps, the better people might think of you, the less the danger that you make a fool of yourself.
 - What makes young people in Europe join the IS? What desire is caught in those imaginations? What makes them leave their families and go to kill people in a country with which they have no life-connections, they do not know? These are fanatics of a different kind. They adhere to a different desire, or maybe they find their desire just represented somewhere else: Being of value, being on the right side.

- When I think back to what shaped me deeply, it was a song that my mother sang often as she was clearing up after dinner. "

Das Blut des Lammes reinigt uns,
das Blut des Lammes reinigt uns.
das Blut des Lammes reinigt uns und machet alles neu,
alles neu, alles neu.
Das Blut des Lammes reinigt uns und machet alles neu.

2. Der Heiland starb am Kreuz für mich,
der Heiland starb am Kreuz für mich,
der Heiland starb am Kreuz für mich und machet alles gut,
alles gut, alles gut.
Der Heiland starb am Kreuz für mich und machet alles gut.

She sang it in an easy, peaceful mood, expressing hope of lightness in situations that

might not be so easy: a trust that things will be well, yes, already are well, being dressed in a light summer dress in summer evening wind.

What made that song stick with me?

- Repetitions
- the mood
- a desire for a world where real new beginnings are possible, where all will be good
- My story with the song is complicated:
 - during time my studies and church affiliations brought me to convictions that ran counter to the theology expressed in the song. I do not believe anymore that the violent death of Jesus on the cross is the center of salvation but his life, the incarnation of Gods love made present, of Gods power brought into social, political and spiritual realities, a life made present ever through the Spirit that brings into presence this life as the life of the one raised from death.
 - When I heard and sang the song, I did not see a lamb slain, or a man crucified, nor blood being spilled. No agony in pain. I rather felt the newness of a new beginning, being lightened of burden weighing me down: the hope, yes, the conviction, that a new world is possible, that this life knows something of the renewal of creation.
 - This is what stayed with me, this is what shaped my search in studies and faith.
 - But what accompanied the song was a mood that told me: all will be well. There is a way of deeper trust than the expectations you may have in a certain situation. It is a way to see behind the horizon.
- This song then tells a lot about worship: the aim, end we pursue. What shaped was not a message or theology expressed in the words. It was a life habit of my mother that was of course not only expressed in this song. Something I still feel when I hear it, that says: Yes, this is what I want.
- So how do we learn about what the good life is, desirable? What shapes the basic ground for imaginations? To make sense of the world is to know in which story I am. To believe in a common story is what shapes groups and creates community. Now of course we may think first of actual stories we hear and tell, of movies we see and find meaningful. Biblical stories we recount so often.

Body: Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Body is not just the physical aspect of our being. It is the way of our being in the world. It is by our bodily existence in the world that we make meaning of the world. This starts with the way we perceive objects. We do not first see them as a concretization of some abstract idea. A table is not first an incarnation of the species of tables. But first something I sit down with others to eat, or a desk I lay the books on. What it means and is is shaped and perceived by *what I do with it*.

The body is not just me and the world outside the object. The body is the way of being in the world that constantly belongs to both, is feeling the world outside and transmitting the feeling. In that process I do not feel the body itself, it disappears behind the perception: The ear does not hear itself, although actually the hearing is a complicated melange of sound-waves produced by the ear and those from outside. When I shake hands I do not feel my hand but what the other feels like: warm and dry or wet and cold. Of course I may feel my own hands. So body is a background-feeling that is constructed in the process of awareness of the world but that disappears from that awareness, although it is the only instrument by which I am in the world and may perceive. It is an intermediary that does its work so well that

it is not noticed anymore. Or only when it does not work anymore as usual.

So action is most basically guided by the body and its automatized perceptions:

When I enter a room and cannot see anything, I do not first start to think how to make it light. I “automatically” grasp to the side at the wall to find the light switch. I do not need to understand how electricity works. I do not need to analyze the problem. My body knows by itself what to do. Yet this behavior is not a reflex. It is intentional, but pre-conscious. Of course it is something I learned but something that has become so “normal” I would not even pay attention. When I enter my apartment, I do it so unconsciously I probably could not even tell afterwards whether the light was on when I entered or not. At night I find my way to the bathroom, find the door-handle without seeing it or concentrating. My body simply knows. This way of being in the world builds up on many experiences that are clustered together to automatisms. I can rearrange them, but usually I only take notice when something does not work. It is the constant background of what seems to unimportant.

But this perception is not neutral and not open to everything. It is highly selective, only paying attention to what seems to be important in a certain situation. It assumes certain features and looks for it: I want to cross a street – I look for the signs of a pedestrian crossing and how it is regulated: Green light? I probably will not pay attention to the color of the suit of others waiting. What I perceive, what I look for, is predetermined by the way I interpret a situation. And again that is not conscious:

- The way I walk through the supermarket knows certain moments of decisions but it is all guided by the assumption that what is a display here is for sale. It is a very different way than walking through an art-exhibition. I could do the experiment and look at the supermarket as a display of artful arrangement – I would notice very different things in the same room.

But most of the time I do not think about whether I am entering a home, a restaurant or a supermarket: the situation is interpreted unconsciously on a few signs received by the body but read on a gut-level that does not even come to mind. Only if I am not sure, if the signs that come together do not fit into the story I know, do not make sense, only then I start to think anew and might rearrange my perceptions.

Now the world is not only made up of objects. The daily decisions I take are also connected in a similar way. The supermarket, museum, home and way to the train station all fit together into a larger picture. And that is not only physical, I perceive these places as functions in my life, functions that determine what I do with them in a way they contribute to a larger goal in life. I need to decide when to get up, and I might reconsider that decision after a night without much rest. But I do not ask myself every morning whether I should get up and start working and why I do that. There is something larger that tells me that this is the right thing to do. To have a certain sense of duty. That it is normal that you work to earn your money. I wait outside the train without thinking about it.

And these small chains of habitual automatisms are again brought together to a larger story line of how I make sense of the world, of how I perceive of what is worth being done. These ways I feel about the world are not set for ever, they have been learned, they are continuously supported, they are changeable. But not by a simple act of will because they work on this level of body and habit. We might say that a *habitus* is certain way to perceive what is desirable in the world, is a collective and common way of embodiment, a social body built on what is rooted and planted in each individual body. I may also say that through my body I am in a certain way in this world and with it I carry the common assumptions of what this world is about. Through it we build communities and societies, and it is by belonging to and living in such a group that we learn and embody this perception of the world.

How is this done? How are the stories we believe in taught, shaped and become part of us? I will suggest that we think of the mechanism doing this as liturgies. In order to show what I mean by liturgy I will start with secular liturgies, not that of the church. But I will call for the liturgy of the church to work with similar force than these secular liturgies do.

- There might be something almost global: watching the news on television: I sit down at the same time everyday in front of a flat screen. I do not think about how this black glassy rectangle comes to portray images that have been caught all over the world. It begins with a jingle that will tell me whenever I hear it: Tagesschau! I do not listen to it in the same way as I would to a concert, it is a simple announcement. Then a moderator, announcing the topics. Movies, speeches, pictures with comments by a voice from the off. A quite limited number of formats, always orchestrated in the same way. No way for me to interact (unless I watch a recorded version and can skip), no way to react directly in discussion, questioning. In critical situations I might be aware of a manipulative choice of informations. But I am barely aware of how this posture: sitting, watching, thinking, waiting for pictures that interest me – how all this shapes my perception of being in the world far more than the actual content of the news. Its repetitions have sunk in to become so “native” to my days that the postures with it go unnoticed. And the format will make it almost impossible to recognize the choice of perspectives and themes. Highly selective, but since it comes from all over the world I get the impression that I am served with what is globally important. But I need only step over from Switzerland to France to see immediately that they get a very different selection, from a Swiss perspective usually much more focused on national matters and less international.

Of course I could stop any day and get my information about the world from Dostoyevsky's Brothers Karamazov. But first I needed to recognize what attracts me to this: maybe an easy way of participation without responsibility, being part of a community without being exposed. A craving for the new and exciting. And the ability to then later comment with friends about the matters of the world. To do that with Dostoyevsky is much more strenuous. But a liturgy of reading 50 pages of Dostoyevsky everyday instead of watching the news, interspersed by commercials, would lead to a very different view of the world, starting with a different perception of what matters.

- When you now think of commercials in that format: before and in between news and weather, you will be aware that you think of it as pause of information. Nothing matters, your way of attending to it shifts. And even more so if you see it at the 20th repetition. If you watch it you easily perceive that they try to make you wanting a car by showing you an adventurous life-style, open to spontaneous reactions, a way of life that can handle every situation. And of course you know that the daily way to work you use your car for does not lead you through mountain roads and desert storms. But do you recognize what they are selling with it? That such a lifestyle might be desirable: to be able to handle every situation because you are well equipped? That you somehow are able to participate in a certain group by buying things, even if it is not the BMW? There are underlying assumptions: that there is a connection between the life-story presented and consumption. That liturgy has deeply sunk in, almost everywhere in the world.

Not all life-stories are attractive. To present a cigarette brand with a warlord recruiting boy soldiers would not work, you would not find that type of lifestyle desirable, even if you saw it 100 times. The life-stories presented build on what is already valued in the society. But at the same time, they select, emphasize only certain types and by that create or at least influence the common habitus. So it is too easy to say that

commercials shape our perception of beauty. But by its reduction and monopolizing certain ways, it tightens and stabilizes certain images, excluding others. And the less it is noticed, the more effective it is.

The world of commercials is in itself a liturgy that is connected to the world of buying things. It connects the attractive lives with the assumption that by buying things I buy my way into a community of belonging. And that is the actual *liturgy of consumption*. The jeans I wear are not only a means to keep warm and present my body in a certain way. Depending on the brand, they are a clear sign of my social class. It is a complicated game that plays with understatement, so that a cheap pair of jeans combined with other more subtle sign of status actually shows that I do not need to show my social strata. But even then it remains a sign. And for the large majority in this world who cannot participate in this game, the display of wares and their theoretical availability serves as a sign of exclusion, many times creating the dream to find some ways to begin to become a member of the club. And if I will never be able to drive the car the guy is driving, I might at least have a bit part in his world by drinking the same coke he enjoys.

- Now the actual cleverness of this liturgy is that it has built in its structure the deception and disappointment. When I was a boy, there was but one sneaker to wear: Adidas Rome. But there came a time when you were totally oldfashioned wearing even any kind of adidas. Even the moment you buy a TV you know that it will be outdated in a few years. You know that today to be up to date will require you to buy a new one in a few years. And so consumption creates a certain awareness of time: futility of material incarnations of desire. The desire remains and ever anew focusses on some material expression, *knowing at the same time that it will not last* and that the future will bring a *new expression of the same desire* – the desire itself being “eternal” while the material expression of merely temporal value. So paradoxically, materialist consumerism actually devalues the material existence and leads you to believe in a dualism of transcendent desires, guiding you but unreachable. This liturgy of consumption is probably the most powerful liturgy at work globally. It is part of this believe system that it keeps its creeds hidden, and that the deceptive part of disappointment is balanced by temporal satisfaction, that makes me believe I actually want the car and not the admiring comments of my neighbor.
- We could name more liturgies: those that enact and transport the duty of solidarity with interests of the state: Heroic, self-less self-giving for the common good of the group I belong to, family, friends, fellow citizens. How many of those movies have you seen? Even if the hero comes to recognize that he stands on the wrong side and in a tragic way needs to shift his solidarity: The life-story remains the same: that it is highly valuable to sacrifice your life for the ones you love and belong to. Now most would say: but that is a very high value, much higher than the believe in self-sustainability? Yes, but with the desire to become such a person goes unnoticed the dualism transported in these stories: you need to choose between the groups! There are clear enemies and clear good ones. Of course you have more complex stories with no winners at all but usually they are not blockbusters. And for them it is much more difficult to create this kind of longing: I want to be like her! When a movie shows the ambiguity of all its characters, you are suddenly thrown back to your own choices, and another message comes across: nothing is reliable! That is a counter-liturgy to the ongoing worship of state-solidarity, but it is the one we seek?

Liturgy of the Church as Imagination of the World

Most Mennonite churches I know have no strict or given liturgy. Although the similar elements re-occur, certainly the prayers, the songs change. Most of us do not even think of liturgy as something important. We conceive of the content as important, the words used, the ideas communicated. We might be willing to give the emotions their share: Faith will not shape us only on the intellectual level of comprehension, somehow the heart has to be moved as well. We pay less attention

- Repetitions: Habits are built up by repetitions. We often consider it meaningless or even hypocritical if we repeat prayers without paying close attention to what we are saying. I am not arguing for a kind of magic thinking that thinks that saying the prayer in itself effectuates something. It's not that repeating 10 Our Fathers is more than one. But praying every Sunday for our daily bread does something to us: the awareness sinks in that we do not produce our own welfare. Asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness becomes an attitude of life. I might not even have to think about an answer if someone asks me for forgiveness: it has become my nature to grant forgiveness. Of course this comes not by simply saying the words. But going through the same moves has a similar force like the secular liturgies of commercials: I learn to be shaped according to the desires of God.
- to the structure, the moves we go through, which parts follow in which sequence.
- And also what we do with our bodies: whether we stand, sit, kneel, dance, whether we look at each other or to one common front; and how we get to church: walking through a neighborhood or driving and getting out on a parking lot in front of the building.
- The setting of the building: what does it remind us of? A mall? A cinema? A theatre? A homely living room? A European church in gothic or baroque style?

When we consider the comprehensive way secular liturgies work, we need to recognize that these are part of the story told. They shape the background by meaning the world.

- There is no neutral church building. Rooms that are similar to TV shows bring with them a setting that interprets what is done in it by making allusions to the same setting. But so is a classical church building, sometimes carrying with it the connotations of an imperial court, sometimes of a building that has no similarities to anything else in the world – and supporting a meaning that sees Sunday worship as a leaving of the world without much connection to it. And also where it stands: in the midst of a part of town where people live? Or in an industrial part where no-one is around on Sundays? So it is not about this or that better setting, but about what the setting does to worship as a formative force.
- Sequence: We are enacting a story that starts with our leaving home and ends with our being sent into the world that God has redeemed from sin and its fatal consequences. We are living through a transformation *by being immersed into a world that believes God's presence in the core of the world being, and its future to be the fulfillment of God being all in all*. If we do not pay attention to sequence, we might miss to enact a story. A story cannot be paraphrased, it needs to be told because we live through it, walk it through with our imagination. I cannot tell you the meaning of Brothers Karamazov, you need to read it. And stories are told well and may be told badly.
- Moves: How you take communion: It makes much difference whether you kneel before a priest to receive communion or sit around a round table with no head, or hand around a plate without barely looking at each other or walk around in greeting

and sharing while you share the meal.

- There are significant differences to secular liturgies:
 - participation in God's life through his coming, not our buying our way into that community by ways of exchange
 - the unity of the desired "object" with the desire itself: even if we experience God ever anew, in changing ways, God remains true to Godself. And He valued matter so highly that God did not only create things but became one with this world, took up the form of matter and did not reveal Godself in abstract ideas
 - The community we belong to also has its boundaries. But the dynamic of the body of Christ is to overcome them, there is never a final "us and our God" and "them and their" God – this is a fundamental difference to state-solidarity: you do not need to choose sides because all are called to become part of this community.
- These are just a few examples that hopefully are reflected in the liturgies of our churches. But how do we come to make them stronger, real forces that shape us more than the much more repeated, much more present secular liturgies?

We might say: Let's look at our theology and find corresponding expressions in worship. At some point as a pastor I spent almost a full day for each Sunday to figure out what the best suiting form would be for the message we were trying to get across, carefully orchestrating songs, prayers, images projected and movements of the congregation. It looked different each time, loaded with meaning – and those who gathered for worship were regularly overstrained, unable to enter the story because they never knew what would come next and finding their place with the life-stories they brought with them. They were not at home in this story. So I tried to go back to the structure of age old liturgies, celebrated in the orthodox and roman catholic church – and very soon I was interrupted by someone who spoke up and said "I am sorry that I am interrupting *your* liturgy, but *I* just need to say this..." The church adored the beauty of what was happening, but it was not their story being told, they were not in it, participating by enacting it. The person interrupting me felt somehow that I was celebrating the liturgy and they were just looking at it from the outside passively.

So it is an illusion to think that we simply express a rational content of a theology of liturgy by forms. It is also the forms that shape us, that already provide the background for the perception of the world. So what we need is to see, what story is told by our forms of worship? How can we pay more attention to the "insignificant"? Where do we need to make rearrangements because these forms are not patterned after God's story with His world and the body of God's church. So we need to look at two things at the same time to bring them in accordance with each other:

- God's story, which we discover in many ways, but theology being one of the means, but also life-experience in trusting God's Word.
- The forms and setting of our worship

Both influence each other back and forward. It is not a one way road from story to enactment, our understanding of the story is already shaped by the forms of worship we are used to, into which we grew over many years. But if we neglect to become aware of the "insignificant" we might overlook shaping forces that shape our being in the world in a way that does not tell God's story of His kingdom come.

Telling each other the forms of worship:

- 4 people, best from different traditions
 - Where is your building located?

- How do you get there?
- What are the moves of your liturgy, what is changing every time, what stays the same?
- Do you recognize together a story being enacted?
- What would you name as the most important moment / element, that does something to you or you do something together? Why is that, and how is it related to the other elements?
- What secular liturgies are present in your culture? How does this liturgy of the church counter that liturgy, embody you in a different world?

I would call this – what we do, how we stand, sing, listen, answer, read, recite, together with what is happening – remembering the past in gratitude and confession, blessing God in psalms, confessing guilt and receiving forgiveness, attending to the word of God speaking into the present, celebrating communion, sending and blessing – all this as action and experience – I would call this the *first dimension of liturgy*. Its most basic and maybe the least conscious.

On a second level, it is the telling of stories that are based on God's creating, redeeming, renewing, and consummating work in Christ. The liturgy of worship itself is such a story, but also in the service these stories must be told in such a way to kindle our imagination in the same way as do movies, commercials and our walk through the supermarket. When we compare the time we are immersed in secular liturgies to the time we spend with the liturgy of God's story, we might indeed think of Goliath versus David. But we should be caught short: is it really about two enemies in an either-or-war? Or might it be a joyful recognition that at part in the secular liturgies the same story is told and in others reductions lead to idolatry that must be corrected by broadening the picture? Is the liturgy of the Church opening a so much larger, freer world filled with air to breath, landscapes to be discovered, that the liturgy of the world simply appears as a very bad sketch of a much richer reality?

So even how we perceive the strength and force of the secular liturgies it is in fact shaped by the experience of the liturgy of the Church. But still: wouldn't it be reasonable to find a structure of daily life that extends the experience of Sunday worship to the week? Matins and Vespers as moments of a different time. A prayer of entrance into the church that might become a prayer whenever I enter a building, be it museum or supermarket or a train. To make me aware: whatever other stories might want to tell me: I am entering the creation in which God will fulfill His Kingdom.

Jürg Bräker, 07/24/2015