



"The danger of a Single Story". Corporeality - Spiritual Polyphony - Epistemological Diversity as a Challenge to Lutheran Liturgical Identity

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Abstract: This article explores the transformative potential of worship in the face of epistemological tensions within Lutheran liturgy. The study contends that Lutheran worship must challenge its entrenched Western thought patterns. In this context, the paper identifies three challenges: epistemological diversity, the polyphony of the Spirit, and embodied cognition of God. It argues for a more inclusive worship that recognizes alternative knowledge systems and embraces the varied modes of the Holy Spirit's work, promoting an embodied understanding of faith. The author engages with post-structuralist and post-colonial critiques, urging Lutherans to break free from a unidimensional narrative and allow worship to be a space for epistemic diversity and relationality. The conclusion highlights the need for ongoing self-critical reflection and openness to diverse forms of worship, challenging leaders to facilitate transformative experiences in Lutheran liturgy.

Keywords: Lutheran worship; transformation; epistemology; diversity, plurivocity of the Spirit; Body knowledge

What is worship for you?

Mia: For me, worship is a language that you speak when you can't get anywhere with words. It expresses something that my head doesn't have to think about because my heart simply connects. That's right, it's a form of art and beauty to encounter God. And when you connect with worship in this way, it's so much easier to express yourself or to find or name emotions when you have music with you. Because it just allows something to resonate that you sometimes don't have words for. [It's] like my heart.

My contribution begins with a story: the story of Mia (the name has been changed), her relationship with God and how she experiences and nurtures this in worship. I was touched and ashamed by these words. Touched - because I was reminded of those moments when the Christmas

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Oratorio or Johann Sebastian Bach's Passions moved me, right down to my bones - a holistic, living event. And I was ashamed by Mia's description because I have always assumed that praise in charismatic or Pentecostal church services is superficial, a manipulation of feelings or even - in terms of the lyrics of praise songs - a theology of domination or sovereignty.

One of my students documented Mia's story in her bachelor's thesis on "Praise and worship music as a constitutive feature and focus in Pentecostal churches - impacts of the restrictions on singing during the COVID-19 pandemic".² Since the 1990s, worship culture has become highly eventized and commercialized. As Peter Bubmann puts it, it reflects the "late capitalist adventure society"³ - in which prosperity, success and (spiritual) warfare play a central role. On the other hand, the beginnings of praise culture lie in American gospel music, which was born out of the experience of racism and slavery and which interprets these experiences of the worst violence in the light of the Gospel and then expresses faith in this embodied and sensual way.

Worship culture is therefore ambiguous and exemplifies that in order to become sensitive to the "changing faces of Lutheran worship", we must first and foremost be prepared to listen to the "other" stories, to allow ourselves to be surprised and to break down entrenched thought patterns, in other words: to question and interrupt the "single story" of Lutheran worship.

Because, according to Nigerian writer Chimanda Adichie, the "single story" bears the risk of producing stereotypes:

The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story... I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person.

The task facing "danger of a single story" is therefore to abandon the one-sidedness and dominance of this *one* story - i.e. also its *one* truth, the *one* knowledge system - which has suppressed other stories and knowledge systems with colonial violence.

Adichie's demand is, as you can see, fed by post-structuralist and post-colonial criticism of the production of hegemonic knowledge and by the call to decenter the West and its supposedly universal orders of knowledge.

² I would like to thank Helen Ziegeler for permission to quote from her work.

³ BUBMANN, Peter. *Flucht ins Formelhafte*. Kassel: Baerenreiter Verlag, 2016. p.52f.



In my paper, I will explore this trace in more depth and ask what this decentering means for Lutheran worship, which is also shaped by Western orders of knowledge - even after its global expansion (NB: sometimes worship services in the Global South seem more "traditionally Lutheran" to me than a worship service in Erlangen, Germany).

In other words, as a thesis in advance: In my opinion, Lutheran worship today faces the task of breaking open the single story that owes its long-term placement in "deeply entrenched Western forms of thought". These forms of thought, practiced in both the academic and popular spheres, are highly "bipolar", to quote an expression from the systematic theologian Michael Welker. This means - and I am summarizing Welker's thought here - Western forms of thought reduce both the human/human spirit and the spirit of God to intellectualistic-rational quantities. According to the Cartesian "I think", the "person" is primarily understood as a mentalistic and subjectivistic being and - parallel to this - the divine spirit is intellectualized.

In my opinion, this reduction can often also be observed in Lutheran worship. Little consideration is given here to the "multimodal" forms of the Holy Spirit's work. The Spirit is still invoked in a very intellectualistic and subjectivist manner and is supposed to enable the mostly intellectual and subjective understanding of the Gospel. At the same time, it seems to me that the Lutheran church service offers hardly any space for the equally "multimodal" modes of experience and expression or practice in which people experience God, both inside and outside the church service. Especially in the example of Mia, but also in biblical testimonies or examples from the history of Christianity, we can see that these devotional practices also include non-verbal forms. We only need to think of mysticism.⁴ Martin Luther was also unfamiliar with this bi-polar reduction of people - and of God's spirit. I will shed some light on this at the end of the paper.

In the following, I would like to explore three challenges for Lutheran worship that are particularly visible today through interculturally interwoven stories:

1. **Epistemological diversity**, i.e. the variety of ways in which people "know" God, experience God and relate to God

⁴ In my opinion, it would be a research desideratum to examine whether this intellectualist bipolar reduction is really "Lutheran" - I think not: because for Luther, multimodal forms of experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit can certainly be recognized. Even more important would be a genealogical reconstruction of the hegemonic bipolar-intellectualist forms of thought in Lutheran worship mentioned by Welker, including those incisions, such as pietism, in which excluded forms of thought make themselves heard.



2. The **polyphony of the work of the Spirit**
3. **The embodied cognition of God:** the embodied knowledge of God, the physical resonance with God

Space for epistemological plurality and creativity

At the beginning of his Systematic Theology, Paul Tillich describes a tension that is also fundamental to worship and preaching:

Theology stands in tension between two poles: the eternal truth of its foundation and the contemporary situation in which this truth is to be received. Most theologies only suffice one of these two basic conditions. Either they sacrifice parts of the truth, or they talk past their time. There are also theological systems that make both mistakes at once. Worried about missing the eternal truth, they simply equate it with a great theology of the past, with traditional concepts and solutions, and now try to graft these onto a new and changed situation. They confuse eternal truth with one of its temporal manifestations.⁵

You will probably be familiar with examples of these different variations between traditionalism and "arbitrariness" in the field of worship from your own experience. According to Tillich, we need to radically participate in the present and take people - including ourselves - seriously in their existential questions and answers in order to do justice to this tension.⁶ This is the only way to access the depth in which God encounters people, as the one who absolutely affects me.

Tillich (1886-1965) developed his *method of correlation* at a time (STh 1958) that was characterized by liminal experiences⁷: two world wars, anti-colonial awakenings, the emergence of a new world order - or perhaps I should rather say: a world disorder, alienation and existentialism, but also the flourishing of the sciences, both technical and scientific as well as psychology. The orders of knowledge, narratives and systems of meaning that provide orientation experienced profound disruptions during this time.

For some time now, we have - once again - been living in a time of upheaval in knowledge systems and knowledge hierarchies. This upheaval is also characterized by a neoliberal culture that

⁵ TILLICH, Paul. *Systematische Theologie I/ II*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987. p.9.

⁶ "Only radical participation in the situation, in the existential interpretation of modern man, can bridge the current vacillation of kerygmatic theology between prophetic freedom and orthodox fixation." (TILLICH, 1987, p.12.)

⁷ cf. SCHARF, Uwe Carsten. "Auf der Grenze" (1962 = 1936?). In: *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation: Interpreting the Divine-Human Interplay in Paul Tillich's Work 1913-1964*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999. p.272-277.



results in the exploitation of people and nature and leads to great existential vulnerabilities. In paradoxical simultaneity, this upheaval is giving rise to new insecurities on the one hand and new systems of certainty as a result of the search for seemingly certain truths on the other (including fake news).

How do the existential questions posed in this context correlate with questions of the Gospel? How do people interpret their existence in the light of the Christian faith? What do their interpreted stories look like? The intercultural theological answer to this is: diverse, even dissonant. The intercultural theologian from Rostock, Klaus Hock, recently stated:

One of the great tensions, if not conflicts, between different forms of Christianity lies in the fact that they are based on different knowledge systems, which becomes clear both in their performative practice and in the form of different theological concepts.⁸

This insight into the diversity of knowledge systems is not new per se. All theologies of inculturation, but also church services, attempt to connect Christian faith with the pre-Christian. Resistance to the hegemony of Western knowledge systems has also been known at least since the much-quoted final declaration of the assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in Dar es Salaam in 1968:

We reject a merely academic theology that is separated from action as irrelevant. We are ready to make a radical break in epistemology that makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection or Third World reality practice.⁹

However, today's epistemological tensions between Christianities worldwide go beyond the tension between faith and action, "faith&order" and "life&work", political theology and "orthodoxy" as stated by EATWOT. Rather, today's tensions focus on the fundamental tensions between competing systems of knowledge, the perceptions of the world that guide thought and action.

One could speak of a "clash of epistemologies", i.e. a clash of knowledge systems - in the style of Samuel Huntington (Clash of Civilizations) or Philip Jenkins, who announces the "end of liberal Christianity" as the supposedly Western-rational Christianity and ominously predicts that

⁸ HOCK, Klaus. L'art pour l'art. *Intercultural theology*. Leipzig, v.47 n.2, p.88-111, 2021. p.97.

⁹ EATWOT. Herausgefordert Durch Die Armen: Dokumente Der Ökumenischen Vereinigung Von Dritte-Welt-Theologen 1976 – 1986. *Theologie Der Dritten Welt*, Freiburg, v.13, 1990. p.43f.



this enlightened Christianity will be overrun by a miracle-seeking, irrational Christianity from the global South.¹⁰ The term "clash of epistemologies" however, is misleading because it suggests that the individual epistemologies - European or so-called "indigenous" - could be "isolationistically essentialized" - as if they had not already long been transculturally intertwined.¹¹

Nonetheless, there are dissonances that are particularly evident in worship (and perhaps so striking here because worship appeals to different sensory forms of knowledge). One example:¹²

Dispute in Viersen, Germany¹³

On September 17, 2000, an African migrant congregation - the Kingdom Exploiters' Ministries - celebrated a church service in the small town of Viersen on the Lower Rhine in Germany. It had been advertised throughout the town. The large Protestant church located on the central market square was crowded. The many Germans present clapped and danced to the music,

¹⁰ JENKINS, Philip. *Die Zukunft des Christentums – Eine Analyse zur weltweiten Entwicklung im 21. Jahrhundert*. Gießen: Brunnenverlag, 2006. [see critically: USTORF, Werner. "The beast from the South" und das "Ende des liberalen Christentums". *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* v.27 n.1, p.39-69, 2010.]

¹¹ HOCK, Klaus. Erweitertes Wissen. In: NEHRING, Andreas (Ed.). *Postkoloniale Theologien II*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2018. p.155-171.

¹² a) Deliverance worship and prosperity gospel in the Kimara Lutheran Parish in Dar es Salaam
In 2006, Lutheran pastor Willbroad Mastai began offering Deliverance services at Kimara Lutheran Parish in the ELCT's Eastern and Coastal Diocese in Dar es Salaam, a mixture of healing services and exorcism, which are of course based on the assumption of a non-visible world populated by demons and spirits, but whose influence can be felt.

These services now take place three times a week and attract several hundred worshippers each time. Most of them are Lutherans, but members of other denominations, including Pentecostals, and Muslims also come to the service. Many other Lutheran dioceses are quite appalled by this and consider it a betrayal of the Lutheran heritage. When I went to Dar es Salaam in 2017 with students from the theological seminary in Makumira and we attended the church service there, some were horrified and thought it was a sign of the degenerating church. My doctoral student Leita Ngoy, herself a pastor of the ELCT Eastern and Coastal Diocese and an enthusiastic charismatic, argues (with Karen Lauterbach) that both the deliverance rituals and the proclamation of prosperity are based on a traditional Tanzanian system of economic equalization and exchange of giving and receiving. According to Ngoy, the Tanzanian criticism of the charismatic approach of the ELCT-Eastern-and-Coastal Diocese follows a hegemonic (Western) pattern of interpretation that understands prosperity to mean purely economic prosperity and not also social and holistic "prosperity". Charismatic Pentecostal rituals, on the other hand, appeal more to the latter idea of holistic physical, psychological, social, religious and therefore often also economic well-being. Deliverance rituals in church services create space for this perception of the world and for reconciliation.

¹³ cf. KAHL, Werner. Vom Verweben des Eigenen mit dem Fremden. Impulse zu einer transkulturellen Neuformierung des evangelischen Gemeindelebens. *Studien zu interkultureller Theologie an der Missionsakademie*, Hamburg, v.9, 2016. p.91f. [based on a report by Claudia Währisch-Oblau; paraphrastically quoted and translated: CJ.]



but remained silent during the sermon. A minority of Africans from various migrant communities, on the other hand, cheered the preacher.

After the sermon, the preacher called forward all those "who wanted to give their lives to Christ". There was some murmuring in the front row, where I was sitting with two Protestant pastors and some churchwardens. Some Germans sitting further back stood up and left the building. Suddenly, an African woman, who was being prayed for, fell over backwards in front of the German pastors. A turmoil erupted. One of the churchwardens rushed to the exit of the church and shouted for someone to call an ambulance and the police. Most of the Germans who were still inside the church building now rushed outside. After a few minutes, everyone who had fallen down stood up again and appeared completely normal.

The preacher then quickly ended the service - in a now almost empty church.

After the service, the congregation was divided: the German pastors and churchwardens were shocked and angry, while the preacher, his wife and some church elders could not understand the reaction of the German pastors and churchwardens. They themselves were excited because the Holy Spirit had proved to be much stronger than they had expected. The preacher was not afraid of conflict: This was normal when the Holy Spirit manifested himself, he said.

Claudia Währisch-Oblau, who reported on this incident, assesses it as follows: "When paradigms simply clash, the result is not spiritual renewal, but embarrassment and anger. In the case described, neither side was prepared to at least understand the other's point of view."

What caused this conflict? Is it the theological doctrine of how the Holy Spirit works or should work? Is it an intercultural clash of opposing epistemologies - a Western rational, disenchanted worldview versus a worldview that reckons with personified demons and spiritual forces? Or do expectations differ with regard to the involvement of the body in religious experience?

It is probably a bit of everything. However, the incident in Viersen also illustrates how the increasing intercultural encounters between the different forms of Christianity have led to the emergence of a variety of pneumatologies. I will come back to this later.

So how do we deal with these tensions between the different Christianities, which are based on different perceptions of the world and systems of knowledge? Who has the power of interpretation here? And who decides what a Lutheran, Reformed or United service should look



like? Of course, we cannot avoid questions of content here - such as the work and fruits of the Spirit or whether and how the good news of the cross, of the compassionate God, is given space in worship in different systems and forms of knowledge.

Before I turn to these issues of content, I would like to share with you Klaus Hock's proposal, which is on a more fundamental level. Hock proposes to speak of "epistemic dissonances" with regard to the differences between Christian denominations worldwide. Taking up key ideas from the ethnologist Ignacio Fariás, he says:

The concept of epistemic dissonance [offers a] model for relating theory and practice as well as apparently incompatible theologies [I add: worship practices] to each other in order to discover and develop similarities (in faith) and communities (in life).¹⁴

The model therefore does not aim to level out the necessary particularity of the individual cultural formations of Christianity, but to build bridges of understanding between the different interpretations of the world. Epistemic dissonance is understood positively here. Once again, according to Klaus Hock, the aim is

'the productive utilization of alternative perspectives of knowledge on an object that does not yet exist', in that 'the most diverse stocks of knowledge are placed in relation to one another, which allows the creation of new ... alternatives', in the sense of a 'necessity of openness and ambiguity'.¹⁵

It is therefore ultimately about the insight that knowledge is incomplete, it is about the "not yet" of knowledge, about being constantly surprised by new forms and contents of knowledge - or about turning away from a "'closure effect' of all too perfectly constructed concepts [...]"¹⁶. Consequently, Hock (following Schmidt-Leukel) emphasizes the "fractality, fracture, fragility" of knowledge, the endurance of ambivalences and "epistemic dissonances".¹⁷ For it is precisely that which opens up a space where epistemic diversity and relationality can be explored.

This implies neither an insubstantial adaptation to the zeitgeist (see Tillich's critique), nor arbitrariness or normative nihilism - an accusation that critical theory likes to make of post-

¹⁴ HOCK, 2021, p. 111.

¹⁵ HOCK, 2021, p.99.

¹⁶ HOCK, 2021, p.101 [Quoted from: BOURDIEU, Pierre. Bezugspunkte. In: Ders., *Rede und Antwort*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992. p.50-75]

¹⁷ HOCK, 2021, p. 103.



structuralism and post-colonial theory.¹⁸ Rather, keeping open and enduring epistemological diversity is highly normative. It requires tolerance of plurality and, according to Hock again, the enabling of "responsive action(s) for the shaping of a just and wholesome community", which in my opinion is thoroughly in line with the Gospel. Where would be the place for this open, deeply vulnerable, but also enriching responsive action, if not in worship?

Polyphony of the Spirit

What does this mean in specific terms for worship services? Following on from the examples described above, I would like to illustrate this by looking at the question of how the Holy Spirit is dealt with - or rather, the expectation of the Holy Spirit (who has its liturgical place in the epiclesis in particular).¹⁹ The topos of the Holy Spirit in particular, however, is directly linked to the discussed incompleteness of knowledge: the Holy Spirit is known to blow where he/she wills - in polyphony and in multiple (multimodal, according to Michael Welker) forms.

It is no coincidence that the demand made today by postcolonial critics as well as by many Christians in the Global South to recognize the diversity of stories, knowledge and approaches to the world and to God is being voiced at the same time as the significant growth of Pentecostal-charismatic piety within the so-called historical denominational churches as well as in Pentecostal and mega-churches. Pentecostal piety can also be understood as "other knowledge" that resists bipolar, Western knowledge, its claim to universal validity and its powerful - hegemonic - exclusion of other forms of knowledge.

In this sense, Pentecostal Christianity appears in the works of the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe. At first glance, it may come as a surprise that Mbembe, who is known for his critical analysis of (post)colonial, racist and capitalist structures and whose theology is primarily linked to liberation theologies²⁰, writes enthusiastically about Pentecostal glossolalia as a political and aesthetic project, a kind of "linguistic epiphany". For glossolalia overcomes the "night of

¹⁸ DHAWAN, Nikita. Die Aufklärung retten: Postkoloniale Interventionen. *Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie* v.7 n.2, p.249-255, 2016.

¹⁹ Undoubtedly, there are also other topoi that could be examined from the perspective of epistemic dissonance and openness: for example, the treatment of Scripture (to what extent does it also materially - as Scripture - represent the "gospel"?) or the blessing

²⁰ Like Fabien Eboussi Boulaga and Engelbert Mveng



language" - the colonial reduction of African diversity of language, thought and perception - and overwrites orthodox Western concepts of truth and reality with alternative narratives.²¹

It is important to note that Mbembe is not attempting to establish an emotional African religiosity in a nostalgic or even fundamentalizing way. Nor is he interested in a commercialized version of Pentecostal churches. Rather, he is seeking to give a voice to sensual and body-related approaches to truth and the perception of reality and to consider non-Western forms of knowledge as equally valid.

Like the theologians of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) cited above, Mbembe calls for an epistemological break with the West. But he goes one step further:

"We must [...] learn," he writes, "to write and read starting from the rupture. So there is no need for a synthesis [here he refers to Sartre, who understood European knowledge as a thesis, African knowledge as an antithesis and common knowledge as a synthesis]. No need for 'prescriptions' either."²²

When Mbembe speaks of glossolalia as a "linguistic epiphany" or of the "re-enchantment" of Africa, he is not talking about a renewed exoticization, but rather the opposite: he is talking about the "liberation [of Africa] from the ghetto [...] into which 'African studies' have locked it."²³ "Western metaphysics" and Western religion are not universal in their exclusive linking of "God and reason", but rather a particular Eurocentric narrative.²⁴ According to Mbembe, many Pentecostal communities in the African context understand truth less as a rational argument and more as an experience: "It presents itself immediately, in the power of revelation directly from God."²⁵ In Mbembe's reading, pentecostal piety thus subversively questions Western forms of knowledge and Western concepts of religion in particular - "God and Reason".

²¹ cf. SHIPLEY, Jesse Weaver. Africa in Theory: A Conversation Between Jean Comaroff and Achille Mbembe. *Anthropological Quarterly*, Washington, v. 83 n.3, p.653-678, 2010. p.661.

²² MBEMBE, Achille. *Postkolonie*. Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2006, p.37.

²³ MBEMBE, 2006, p.37.

²⁴ cf. SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty. Religion, Politics, Theology. A Conversation with Achille Mbembe. *Boundary 2*, v.34 n.2, p.149-170, 2007. p.156.

²⁵ SPIVAK, 2007, 157. Mbembe's remarks make it clear that the pentecostal emphasis on the immediacy of experience is less or not always an expression of a fundamental authenticism that claims to have subjective and unquestionable (for who can question "personal experience") direct access to truth, to sense it, to experience it or even to feel it.



I am aware that a different perception of Pentecostalism dominates especially in Brazil and that Pentecostalism here often appears more as a "denomination" oriented towards prosperity, power and influence. This shows that not every multimodal of the Spirit of Man or the Spirit of God is equally good. Rather, a distinction must be made between the effects of the Spirit that promote life and diversity and those that hinder it.

But what I want to make clear with my comments on Mbembe as well as on the incident in Viersen is that the increasing intercultural encounters between the different forms of Christianity make it necessary to recognize the polyphony of the Spirit's work and challenge Lutheran worship to make space for the manifold work of the Spirit and to break open the "single story" that reduces the work of the Spirit to the mental reassurance of subjective religious certainty.

I would also like to add a dimension of this work that has recently gained in importance in the wake of the climate crisis and which can also be seen as an effect of bipolar Western logic: the work of God's spirit in creation. This idea can be found as the spiritual soul or inspiration of the earth or nature in numerous cosmologies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, but also in newer spiritualities in Europe, Australia and the USA.²⁶ The biblical understanding of the work of the Spirit includes this concept as well as the idea that the human being animated by the Spirit is in resonance with the creation animated by the Spirit. This brings me to my third point:

The embodied cognition of God: the embodied knowledge of God, the physical resonance with God

The human consists not only, to quote Welker again, of "self-referential cognition", but of the entire body, of animate flesh. Recent neuroscientific approaches to "embodied cognition" have

²⁶ In this sense, the biblical statement that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28) can also be seen as a clear expansion of the understanding of the Spirit - both the human and God's Spirit - that goes beyond an intellectualistic understanding. The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh sums up this bodily interpretation of the workings of God's spirit, in which resonance with the world is decidedly included, in the following words: "When we touch the Holy Spirit, we touch God not as a concept but as a living reality", and: "When the energy of the Holy Spirit is in us, we are truly alive, capable of understanding the suffering of others and motivated by the desire to help transform the situation."

[HANH, Thich Nhat. *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. New York: Penguin, 2007. p.21.] Thich Nhat Hanh makes a central point regarding the discernment of spirits. What the human spirit and the Holy Spirit do is not arbitrary: the spirit works life in fullness ("we are truly alive"), compassion with a suffering person and transforming commitment.



shown how much our thinking is dependent on sensorimotor experiences, which - as phenomenologists of the body such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others have already emphasized - bring us into resonance and interaction with the world, even before language. Many different terms such as "embodied mind", "knowledge in the bones", "tacit knowledge" aim to question the dualism of body knowledge and mind/spirit knowledge and to emphasize the complexity within the body.

Inter-bodily communication and physical experience are, according to the insight of recent phenomenology of the body, multi-faceted, ambivalent and full of ruptures and unpredictability.²⁷ The corporeal-bodily experience and action is sometimes characterized by something surplus, a liveliness that points to the "original interconnectedness" of nature and spirit, body and consciousness and which is only restricted by the "intellectual superstructure", as the body sociologist and phenomenologist Käte Meyer-Drawe states.²⁸ Thomas Alkemeyer speaks of bodily self-determination, of "bodily stubbornness" and "unavailability" - bodily practices that are particularly evident in the suddenness and spontaneity of bodily reactions.²⁹ This expresses a "creative force in social practice" that "manifests itself in the creation, linking and reinterpretation of given structures, ideas, images and symbols [...] a 'constant source of becoming different' [Castoriadis 1990, p. 603] and 'inexhaustible source(s) of new meanings' [Condoleo 2015, p. 72f.]" (Alkemeyer 2019, p. 306).

This unavailability of bodily experience and action corresponds to the unavailability of the multimodal work of the Holy Spirit. At this point, I will leave it open as to what this may mean for the organization of the service and will briefly address the points of reference of the above-mentioned considerations in Luther's theology.

²⁷ e.g. according to Meyer-Drawe and Alkemeyer

²⁸ MEYER-DRAWE, Käte. Wenn Blicke sich kreuzen. Zur Bedeutung der Sichtbarkeit für zwischenmenschliche Begegnungen. In: JUNG, Matthias et.al. *Dem Körper eingeschrieben*. Wiesbaden: Springer, p. 37-54, 2016. DOI 10.1007/978-3-658-10474-0_3, Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden 2016.

²⁹ ALKEMEYER, Thomas. Bedingte Un/Verfügbarkeit. Zur Kritik des praxeologischen Körpers. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, v.44, p. 289–312, 2019.



The image of the crucified in the heart: corporeal dimensions in Luther

We find many points of reference in Martin Luther for the consideration and promotion of the physical dimension of faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. His search for the gracious God in particular is not a purely intellectualistic one; his piety for Christ is deeply bodily. I will quote just one passage from his writings in the context of his dispute with the iconoclasts:

I also know for certain that God wants us to hear and read his works, especially the passion of Christ. But if I am to hear or remember it, it is impossible for me not to form an image of it in my heart, for whether I want it to or not, when I hear of Christ, an image of a man hanging on a cross takes form in my heart, just as the reflection of my face naturally appears in the water when I look into it. If it is not a sin but good to have the image of Christ in my heart, why should it be a sin to have it in my eyes? This is especially true since the heart is more important than the eyes, as this is the right seat and dwelling place of God.³⁰

Luther's assumption is that the image of Christ is located IN humans through the performative word.³¹ The performative resonance between the image of the crucified Christ and the body thus shows that Luther understood the experience of God's grace to be multimodal - i.e. also physically tangible.

Luther's reflections on the two natures of man in "The Freedom of a Christian" - i.e. man as a spiritual and a carnal being - also show that he was by no means advocating the *homo duplex* scheme. The following sentence always makes me wonder:

Although man is inwardly, according to his soul, fully justified by faith [...], yet he remains in this bodily life on earth and must govern his own body and deal with people.³²

The sentence virtually anticipates the sensorial-bodily resonance promoted by the phenomenology of the body: as human beings, we are in interaction and resonance with the world

³⁰ LUTHER, Martin. *Wider die himmlischen Propheten, von den Bildern und Sakramenten* (1525). In: WA 18, p. 83 [quoted from: DESCHAMP, Marion. *An Embodied Theology. Body, Images and the Imagination of God by Luther*. In: EUSTERSCHULTE, Anne /WÄLZHOLZ, Hannah (eds.). *Anthropological Reformations - Anthropology in the Era of Reformation*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. p.220.

³¹ It reflects the pre-reformatory tradition of the Imitatio Christi and the beginning of modernity and its idea of the individualized body. [DECHAMP, 2015, p.227.]

³² LUTHER, Martin. On Christian Freedom. In: WENGERT, Timothy J. (Transl.). *The Freedom of a Christian 1520: The Annotated Luther Study Edition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016. [Available at: https://www.elca500.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Freedom-of-a-Christian_final-proof_3.17.20201.pdf]



around us, and also with the others, and we communicate with each other - and with God - not only in intellectual words, but with all our senses.³³

And Luther's anthropology of the "*homo incurvatus in se ipsum*" offers points of reference for today's demand for the recognition of epistemic diversity: the person who is bent in on him/herself is related to him/herself. He/she is turned away from God and the neighbor, one could also say: He/she revolves around him/herself and remains in the bubble of his/her own perception, his/her own knowledge, his/her own story. The justification of the believer - *sola fide* - on the other hand, comes from *extra nos* - from outside, shaking up one's own "knowledge" and perception of the world, because it follows a different logic, a different system of knowledge. The fact that Christians live from faith and thus from a knowledge *extra nos* is a self-critical reminder to question one's own interpretation of the world and to view epistemological diversity and dissonance also in this respect as an enrichment and a critical corrective.

Non-concluding remarks

What do these perspectives from cultural studies and intercultural theology mean for "the faces" of Lutheran worship? How can/should different "ways of knowing" be incorporated here? What does it mean to reckon with the polyphony of the Holy Spirit's work in worship? How can the multimodal - i.e. also the sensual and pre-linguistic - forms of knowledge of the human spirit be given more space in worship?

Answers to these questions can certainly not be found without the context, i.e. - I remind you again of Tillich - only in "radical participation in the situation, in the existential interpretation of modern man".

³³ This makes it all the more important to question the "dualistic separation of body and mind", in which, according to Luther researcher Marion Deschamp, research works on Luther "remain trapped" [DESCHAMP, p.210]. Yet, the material and the body turn have also led to an increased interest in the material/body history and, thereby, in the topic "Luther and the body", based on the assumption that the material and the immaterial dimension as well as nature and culture, body and spirit are interwoven, see e.g. the conference on the occasion of the Luther jubilee: „Madensack“, „Fleischsbrod“ und Doktorbrett. *Luther, der Leib und die Valenz des Materialen*. Kassel, 2017. [available at: <https://www.uni-kassel.de/fb05/fachgruppen-und-institute/geschichte/fachgebiete/geschichte-der-fruehen-neuzeit/infothek/aktuelles/detail/2017/04/30/madensack-fleischsbrod-und-doktorbrett-luther-der-leib-und-die-valenz-des-materiellen-luther-tagung-im-april-2017?cHash=8b55ee6c87e1f8aba48861d7af7fa3e5>]



In the context of East Germany, which is characterized by a process of unchurching, the offer can consist of singing Christmas carols in a soccer stadium. Under the motto "Singing is communication between souls", for example, the diaconal organization Oberlinhaus, in cooperation with the soccer club SV Babelsberg, organizes an annual Christmas carol sing in Potsdam's Karl Liebknecht Stadium, in which 6,000 people take part. "In singing, as in sport, boundaries between religion, nationality or handicap disappear" (Dr. Matthias Fichtmüller).

In contexts of the global South, in which indigenous forms of knowledge were exposed to an "epistemicide" - as the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos describes the "killing" of indigenous interpretations of the world by Western knowledge³⁴ - the "misa crioula" by Ariel Ramírez (1950s) is possibly a first step in the direction of recognizing other cultures of knowledge in worship.

For a filmmaker like Mexican director *Ciro Guerra*, however, this would not go far enough. His 2016 film "El abrazo de la serpiente" (eng. "Embrace of the Serpent") presents a "Christianized" indigenous culture more as a dystopia and contrasts it with a spirituality based on the connection between humans and the surrounding nature. The religious aesthetics (i.e., according to Aristotle, the perceptive interpretation) clearly goes beyond logocentric and anthropocentric constrictions and also opens up a sensually perceptible and tangible dissolution of boundaries for the viewer, according to the motto: "Another knowledge is possible!"³⁵ (Boaventura de Sousa Santos)³⁶

Ultimately it is not really possible to plan - and perhaps should not be completely planned and thus controlled again - how the face of Lutheran worship is changed by the fact that worship mirrors the existential questions of its participants/actors and the polyphony of the Spirit of God.

³⁴ DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura. *Epistemologien des Südens – gegen die Hegemonie des westlichen Denkens*. Münster: Unrast, 2018.

³⁵ DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura. *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*. London: Verso, 2008.

³⁶ A certain degree of caution is advised: Nikita Dhawan's warning against simplification should be taken seriously. According to the political scientist, simply replacing Western-colonial knowledge with other, for example "indigenous" epistemologies overlooks the fact that non-European knowledge systems also produce hegemonic knowledge elites and exclusions. De-subalternization is a much more complex challenge. On the other hand, de-subalternization cannot mean, according to Dhawan, that Enlightenment values as Western knowledge should be thrown overboard in an undifferentiated critique of normative violence. "We cannot not want them", Dhawan quotes Gayatri Spivak. Rather, what is needed for an epistemic change is to "renegotiate our relationship to the legacy of the European Enlightenment [DHAWAN, Nikita. Can Non-european Philosophize? Transnational Literacy and Planetary Ethics in a Global Age. *Hypatia* v.32 n.3, p.488-505, 2017].



However, two aspects need to be considered more closely - self-critically - because they are clearly marginalized in Lutheran worship, at least in large parts of the West: The understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit and the importance of the body.

The central question though is whether worship leaders allow themselves to be repeatedly affected by new things - new aesthetics, different assumptions of reality and truth, differently lived and "known" practices of piety, different stories - and enable transformations.

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