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The Phenomenology of Liturgical We

Lasha Matiashvili
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

Abstract

This paper examines the phenomenological structure of liturgical experience, highlighting the role and function of affectivity in constituting the sense and feeling of "us" in liturgy. First, it emphasizes the role of a plurality of pre-reflective bodily awareness of each other as one of the minimal preconditions for the affective constitution of a liturgical "we". Second, considering the corporate nature of worship and the theological primacy of the "we" in liturgy, it elaborates on the proposal that affective experiential structure of it hinges on the constitutive interdependence of I, you, and we, rejecting an undifferentiated homogeneity of the liturgical we.

Keywords: phenomenology, affectivity, liturgy, theology, We

Introduction: Liturgy as Ritual

The term 'liturgy' before assuming a religious meaning in Christianity, in ancient Greece designated a certain obligation imposed by the city-state on wealthy citizens to provide certain services for the common good at their own expense.[1] Etymologically, it derives from the Greek "leitourgia", which is a composite of two Greek words: "Laos"

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(people) and "Ergon" (work), and literally means "public work". Christians perform liturgy as one of the most significant ritual practices, which implies the participation in the sacred mystery by performing collective prayers, chants, acts of repentance, and other types of ritual. Liturgical practices create an interpersonal affective atmosphere, opening the horizon for getting closer to the divine. Apart from this purely sacred role and dimension of liturgy as a divine worship, it constitutes a special kind of communal identity. Members of this community are united not only by shared beliefs but are intrinsically bound together by sharing affective moods, attunement, and atmosphere. According to Gschwandtner, "The ritual structures of liturgy, especially in their focus on imitation and examples, serve to make us one of many, to absorb our peculiarity and self-absorption into the larger "I" or "we" of liturgy so as to free us from ourselves and open us up to each other" (Gschwandtner 2019, 163-164).

According to Senn, liturgy is "a communal ritual response to the sacred through activity reflecting praise, thanksgiving, supplication, or repentance…The rituals serve as the means of establishing a relationship with a divine agency, as well as with other participants in the liturgy" (Senn, 2012: 5). And as Gschwandtner remarks, "In liturgy, our finite and fragile selves are welcomed into the plural experience of the community" (Gschwandtner 2019, 166).

Many theologians have emphasized the specific communal character of liturgy. They have also reflected on the intersubjective relationships among the members of a religious communion, arguing for their unification in the body of the Christ. In liturgy, physical co-presence of believers forms a type of religious communion. They are unified not only by shared cognitive and practical intentional attitudes, but their sense of unity in the first-person plural form may also be constituted through shared affective experiences. Thus, how and in what ways can one share the certain affective experience and what specific affective state is at work during the participation in ritual of liturgy? Attending liturgy, one might experience what German Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann called the "joy in existence" and "ecstasy of

happiness" (Müller-Fahrenholz 2000, 88). Full-fledged membership in religious communion is not bound to physical co-presence of faithful individuals, while liturgy as recollection and reenactment of the primordial mystery of Christ presupposes the physical proximity of bodies. One cannot be so sure, however, that participating in a communal liturgical ceremony will necessarily be accompanied by singular or shared affective experience. One might attend the liturgy without being able to feel or experience certain emotions or other affective components. Being emotionally detached from liturgical ritual does not always lead to doubts about belonging to a specific religious community. However, it does reduce the emotional and experiential identification with the group. When we think of liturgy as a ritual, it brings to mind Durkheim's early sociological theory on elementary forms of religious life. Durkheim emphasized the social nature of religious experiences and attributed the function of group solidarity to rituals. He also included an emotional element in rituals, which gives rise to collective emotional excitement that serves as the binding force of communal solidarity.

> Rituals are designed to arouse a passionate intensity, feelings of "effervescence," in which individuals experience something larger than themselves. These emotional responses cause people to identify their innermost selves with this sense of a larger reality, what is, in effect, the collective community in a disguised form (Bell 2009, 24).

Indeed, rituals range from everyday behavioral habits to much more complex, socially mediated actions that may have a purely symbolic character. Liturgy, as one of the most sophisticated and rule-based rituals, is historically and culturally formed. It presupposes a shared, collective performance of certain preordained ritual roles, such as prayer and chanting. Out of these roles, or simultaneously with them, an affective experience might emerge. However, whether this affective experience remains on a singular level, being exclusively part of the self and inaccessible to others, is a complex question. Liturgy is an embodied experience and it may also involve interbodily resonance. Participating in liturgy can enhance the sense of group membership. However, beyond this, as a specific type of ritual, its manifest aim is to repeat the

initial sacred experience. In other words, it involves the collective remembrance and actualization of Christ as the head of the body-church.[2] Apart from its manifest aim, liturgical celebration might also have a latent integrative function. According to Robert Merton's distinction, manifest functions are those that are intended and recognized by members. Conversely, latent functions are those that are unintended and of which participants are unaware (Merton 1968, 105). The latent function of performing various joint activities in liturgy is to provide a sense of belonging to the group. However, even this integrative process would not be possible without assembled bodies and synchronized co-prayer and co-chanting, out which a certain affective state might emerge.

Rituals are normatively grounded in the performance of subjects in accordance with prescribed conventions. They serve to maintain the integrity of time, actualizes the past in the present and are directed towards the future. Robert Taft, a scholar of liturgy and church historian, summarizes this idea as follows:

> Ritual is a set of conventions, an organized pattern of signs and gestures which members of a community used to interpret and enact for themselves, and to express and transmit to others, their relation to reality. It is a way of saying that we as a group are, with our past that made us what we are, our present in which we live what we are and the future we hope to be (Taft 1997, 162).

Thus, liturgy as an enactment of primordial experience is a specific shared situation, generating the sense of temporal cohesion and forming an identity of the group and its self-understanding through collective memory of both profane and sacred time. Liturgy as a ritual, according to Taft, is dependent "on the group's collective remembrance of things past" (Taft 1997, 162), which serves as a binding glue for a community as a whole.

1. Pre-Reflective Bodily Awareness in Liturgy

Liturgy is an embodied practice. Bodies may be in both passive and active positions. They do not stand still; rather, during participation in liturgy, they respond to the words and actions performed by priests. According to Gschwandtner,

bodies do not merely stay within the Church. Instead, by practicing litany-that is, collective walking around the certain sacred object or around the Church itself-they ultimately receive a communion in sanctuary.

> Walking becomes worship. Each time anew, the body must enter into the liturgical space, cross the threshold between narthex and nave, approach the sanctuary for the reception of communion (Gschwandtner 2019, 81).

Participation in liturgy does not always imply mutual awareness and eye to eye contact. The presence of another body might be felt pre-reflectively, without cognitive appraisal. One can be pre-reflectively affected by the presence of other bodies and, while being focused on the content of prayer or chanting, co-laterally experience an affective interbodily atmosphere and concomitant bodily phenomena. These phenomena can include hearing other's breath, shivering, feeling warmth coming from other bodies, whispering, or uneasiness. However, pre-reflective bodily awareness of others cannot be the sufficient requirement for producing the communion. Rather, it can be a minimal precondition for generating affective dispositions and subsequent sharing of them among the participants of the liturgy. According to Randal Collins;

> When human bodies are together in the same place, there is a physical attunement: currents of feeling, a sense of wariness or interest, a palpable change in the atmosphere. The bodies are paying attention to each other, whether at first there is any great conscious awareness of it or not. This bodily inter-orientation is the starting point for what happens next (Collins 2004, 34).

However, being physically co-present in one space, does not necessarily create the sense of "us". People might pray or chant alongside each other, but not necessarily together. There has to be something in common, or a unified principle, for the constitution of the sense of togetherness. One might raise the question regarding the appropriateness of affective sharing as a candidate for the constitution of "we", particularly within the context of liturgy. In this context, the level of anonymity must be taken seriously into account. From an outsider's perspective, an assembled congregation might appear as intrinsically unified community, sharing the same axiological patterns and

conative attitudes. Moreover, one might expect that they know each other and are mutually aware. Certainly, this might be the case, but in liturgy, one can maintain anonymity without disclosing oneself or being acknowledged by others. Randal Collins specified four ingredients of ritual: 1) Group Assembly 2) barrier to outsiders 3) mutual focus of attention 4) shared mood (Collins 2004, 48). Physical co-presence as a necessary requirement for successful enactment of liturgy, might presuppose foreground as well as background awareness of others. "Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not" (Collins, 2004: 48). Being reflectively aware in the perceptual presence of another person is not enough for an affective state to be shared. In the case of liturgy, the physical co-presence of a plurality of subjects does not always imply integration and common concern. Attending a ritual, subject might be disintegrated from others by being emotionally alienated and unable to be in tune with others. This would be the case of negative participation, when, one participates formally, without actually having a motivation to do so.

This is a reason to examine the second ingredient for ritual proposed by Collins, which is the barriers to outsiders. "There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded" (Collins 2004, 48). Does this mean that participants already know each other and define themselves as the "we"? If that is the case, then liturgical communion would be limited only to those who actively take part in it. However, liturgy is also performed for absent people, thus it exceeds mere physical engagement. To summarize this insight, the liturgical "we" is a much broader and more overarching phenomenon than its particular forms of enactment. Romano Guardini, in his analysis of the peculiarities of liturgy and worship, stated that Christian "we" is not limited and circumscribed by the physical attendance of members in a church. Rather the "we" is above and beyond any assembly. Thus, Guardini writes:

> Until now we have spoken of congregation as the Christian "we" in its encounter with God, the community of those united by the same

> faith and by mutual love. But this is not all. The conception must include also those outside any particular building, even outside the church, for congregation reaches far beyond (Guardini 1997, 134).

Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas also endorses the view that liturgy addresses not only those who attend the ceremony, but also encompasses those outside of a church. Thus, when analyzing the importance of the Eucharist during pandemics and the necessity of the presence of at least a few believers during the service, Zizioulas assessed that:

> A community (κοινωνία and κοινότητα) is never complete in terms of the participation of the entire community. There is always a minority present; however, it still represents and acts on behalf of all those who are absent.[3]

However, presence and participation in liturgy have paramount importance for experiential identification with each other and with the given congregation via collectively performing chants, prayers, or acts of repentance. Undoubtedly, a physically absent person still aligns with the liturgical communion, but in that case, the mutual focus and awareness of each other's experiences would be lost.

> Bodily presence makes it easier for human beings to monitor each other's signals and bodily expressions; to get into shared rhythm, caught up in each other's motions and emotions; and to signal and confirm a common focus of attention and thus a state of intersubjectivity (Collins 2004, 64).

Even without being entrained affectively in the very process of liturgy and reluctantly repeating words and actions, there is still something like tacit interbodily resonance among participants. Other bodies are implicitly resonating with me, their presence might be experienced pre-reflectively, as if we are tacitly tracking each other's postures, gazes or movements. Being pre-reflectively aware in the bodily presence of others is the most rudimentary level of other-relatedness. In a pre-reflective experience of other bodies, participants are not taken to be embodied objects, rather they implicitly experience each other as co-subjects. [4] Pre-reflective awareness of others in liturgy might create the sense of "us", or implicit shared identification with a given religious community. Liturgy as corporate worship of God, does not have to be understood in

terms of ontologically extended body, or plural subjectivity having its own peculiar form of existence, beyond and above of changing members of congregation. Participation in liturgy is not solitary, but shared experience, when subjects pre-reflectively monitor and track each other's bodily movements. Pre-reflective bodily awareness of others precedes more complex mechanisms of experiential unification by reflectively performing joint activities, such as chanting and praying. However, during that minimal pre-reflective experiential dimension, there may not be any mutual awareness of each other's experiences at all. Instead of reciprocal other awareness as one of the basic conditions for experiential sharing, on that pre-reflective level of bodily self and other awareness, there might be an interbodily mimicry. According to Ciaunica:

> When we engage with others, there is a pre-reflective layer of implicit bodily coupling at work through involuntarily synchronizing with the mimicking of the gestures, facial and bodily expressions of others (Ciaunica 2005, 433).

Liturgical intersubjectivity thus presupposes unthematized and pre-predicative awareness of the presence of other bodies. There is some kind of presumed interbodily dialogue among participants, which includes what Ciaunica calls involuntary synchronization of varieties of bodily movements.

I would assume that pre-reflective bodily feedback might be considered as the most elementary or minimal level for producing the sense and feeling of liturgical communion. Spatial proximity of bodies, tacitly or subliminally monitoring each other, does not necessarily imply the face-to-face encounter and what Alfred Schutz called "Other-orientation". For it requires the conscious recognition of Other not as anonymous "he" or "she" among the plurality of participating subjects, but as "thou", to whom, according to Schutz, I can form the "pure We-relationship".

> The face-to-face relationship in which the partners are aware of each other and sympathetically participate in each other's lives for however short a time we shall call the "pure We-relationship" (Schutz 1967, 164).

Pre-reflective bodily awareness of others, despite having entailed immediacy of co-presence, does not amount to reciprocal I-thou relatedness and remains unthematized possibility for transition to the "we" communion. To what extent can one speak about integrated "we" communion of liturgy? What has been analyzed above, namely, pre-predicative interbodily experience, instantiates only one component for constituting the sense of "us". Liturgy as first and foremost embodied and embedded practice is plural in its nature, but there has to be some supplementary affective and cognitive mechanisms at play, which would enable to form the "we", or liturgical communion. Embodied plurality of liturgy does not yet represent the "we". Plurality without integration and experiential endorsement of belonging can be compared to the type of collectivity, which Sartre called "seriality".

Seriality implies substitutability of subjects, who does not recognize each other and are not integrated as a group having some common unified principle. They are atomized and "do not care about or speak to each other and, in general, they do not look at one another; they exist side by side alongside a bus stop" (Sartre 2004, 256).

Body is forming the space and environment, but at the same time is formed by externality too. My existence is hinged upon the body, I cannot be outside of it and I am able to experience my bodily self only from within as mine, having privileged or exclusive access to my intrabodily sensations. Interoception is the first-person bodily awareness of internal states such as sensation of hunger. According to Bermúdez "Bodiliy sensations certainly provide one of the ways in which we are aware of our bodies from the inside" (Bermúdez 2013, 159), while proprioception apart from being conscious physiological element of knowing the positions of body parts might also be non-conscious. According to Gallagher and Zahavi;

> I have a tacit sense of the space that I am in (whether it is crowded, whether it is wide open, or whether it is closing in). Likewise, I have a proprioceptive sense of whether I am sitting or standing, stretching or contracting my muscles. Of course, these postural and positional senses of where and how the body is tend to remain in the background of my awareness; they are tacit, recessive. They are what

> phenomenologists call a 'pre-reflective sense of myself as embodied (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 136).

While there are first-person conscious and unconscious forms of bodily awareness, it is still confined by and centered to one's own body and does not provide information regarding tacit comprehension of external objects and other bodies. Exteroception despite also being centered on the body, might be considered as non-conceptual awareness of external world, as Mezue and Makin pointed out "exteroceptive perceptions include sensory aspects such as touch, temperature, and vibration" (Mezue and Makin 2017, 34).

In the liturgical space, assembled bodies, despite keeping a distance, might even accidentally touch each other, or feel the temperature or vibration between the bodies. However, one aspect has to be noted again: the plurality of bodies and their pre-reflective awareness does not yet constitute the consciously approved sense of "us". In the next section, I will address the following question: What are those necessary conditions which have to be fulfilled in order to share an affective experience?

2. Affective sharing and Liturgical We

What type of "we" exists in liturgy, and does it have an affective constitution? If liturgy is a shared or collective worshiping of God, where can this sharedness be located? French philosopher Jean-Yves Lacoste's raised the question: "When we pray, what is this "we" that prays? (Lacoste 2005, 93). For Lacoste, the liturgical experience blurs the line between the subject and object. The "we" is, first and foremost an "coeffective experience" (Lacoste 2005, 93). Drawing on the classical phenomenology, particularly on Heidegger and Husserl, Lacoste states that "we exist in the plural" and "the world is a shared world, a with-world. The Other was always already present in it, and present as other ego" (Lacoste 2005, 94-96). But does being with others in a "shared world" amount to "we"? I think, and it has been already elaborated by Gerda Walther, being together with others does not necessarily presuppose intrinsic membership of community as well as the "we", especially in liturgy, in which, as Lacoste claims,

dichotomy between "subject" and "object" no longer exists. For Lacoste collective prayer assumes what he calls "an act of communion", which is an affective in nature.

> Those who pray together undertake an act of communion. This communion is the fact of the living among them, it is also the fact of the living and the dead, the assembly of those who are and those who were, a unity that knows no barrier, neither temporal nor spatial…The "we" is here self-evident, and in a rich way, that of a possible communion. But it is not so self-evident that the existence of this "we" is translated indubitably into the life of the affects (Lacoste 2005, 99-100).

What does it all mean? Why does "we" have to be translated into affects? Lacoste highlights that sharing affective experiences with others is not deprived of affective components, but he does not pay much attention to the constitutive function of affections in joint activities forming the liturgical "we".

> To be at peace with the Other, to rejoice that he is there, and (if need be) to share his suffering with him: there is no lack of affective tonalities that would witness a "with" lived as communion (Lacoste 2005, 101).

In contrast to this picture of the interrelatedness of coaffection and liturgy, which does not say much about the "we", I would like to endorse the view that the proper candidate for the constitution of the "we" might be an affective sharing. Coaffection does not necessarily imply mutuality or reciprocal awareness of each other's affective states. It presupposes the existence of a shared situation and a certain focus, out of which an affective experience is produced.

I would like to proceed by taking on the account proposed by Dan Zahavi, that for having the sense of "us" or we-experience, emotional contagion and empathy do not seem to be plausible; rather, the proper candidate for the constitution of we might be what Max Scheler called emotional sharing ("Mitfühlen," or "Miteinanderfühlen") (Zahavi 2015). Emotional contagion should not be considered as the premise for the constitution of liturgical we, because, as it has been supposed, it is "self-centered" (de Vignemont 2009, 63), whereas in liturgy, communion with fellow believers and Christ rests upon an unconditional love and self-donation. The jointness of liturgical action, whether it be a collective prayer or collective chanting,

presupposes synchronicity and coordination among participants, which also implies tacit awareness of others, constituting together with me what I call liturgical communion. The distinctive feature of affective sharing in liturgy is that it goes beyond dyadic reciprocation, implying reflective awareness of each other's affective experience. Affective states can be shared across a plurality of participants by virtue of being directed together at the same focus and unified by the commonality of evaluative attitudes. Affective sharing in liturgy would not be possible without plurality and integration of participants, who are interdependent on each other, and by preserving the self and other differentiation co-constitute liturgical we. Liturgical communion being formed by affective sharing neither amounts to fusion nor to affective segregation and is not reducible to an aggregation of individuals either. As Zahavi pointed out:

> "You cannot be a member of a we without somehow affirming or endorsing that membership experientially. To be part of a we, you have to experience it from within" (Zahavi 2021, 13).

Though Zahavi did not imply and specify liturgical we, his take on can be equally applied to religious phenomena. According Gschwandtner, "liturgical selves experiences themselves first within the context of community, in a prepared and oriented space and time, which precedes them and provides horizons of experience that enable intentionality" (Gschwandtner 2019, 166). Gschwandtner seems to claim that liturgical self does not exist outside of community and is experientially depended upon it.

But, why not to consider an opposite view that the liturgical community itself is possible by means of affirmative experience and identification of self with it? Neither I would like to suggest the primacy of liturgical "we", nor some form of solipsistic account. Instead, my proposal is that, if affective sharing is a proper candidate for the constitution of the" we", one does not have to overlook the role of relational structure of experience composed by I, you and "we". Collective worship of God does not abolish the difference between I and you, as well as worshiping the God by me and you within the context of corporate liturgy does not diminish, rather makes the liturgical "we" possible.

In a recent article on the taxonomy of collective emotions, Gerhard Thonhauser delineated four structural features for enactment of collective affective experience: 1) Collective evaluative perspective; 2) Collective appraisal; 3) a sense of togetherness; 4) self and other awareness (Thonhauser 2022, 31). I am not going to discuss all of these structural components in detail here, but drawing on Thonhauser's taxonomy, I would like to emphasize that among emotional contagion, emotional matching, emotional segregation and emotional fusion a sharing of emotional as well as an affective experience in its broader sense corresponds to all of these four structural features. Participants of a liturgy have a collective evaluative perspective, that is to say, they "share a pattern of corresponding concerns" (Thonhauser 2022, 37), this, together with what Thonhauer calls "dynamical self-organization" leads towards a collective appraisal of situation, meaning an experience of same or similar type of affection. A sense of togetherness implies that participants experience the joy or effervescence as a collective, the joy is experienced neither by me nor by you, rather collectively as our joy. I would like to add that, apart from a sense of togetherness, one might argue that there is also a feeling of togetherness as Gerda Walther would put it, which is an affective in nature. Thonhauser does not conceive of a sense of togetherness in terms of a collective mind as it was a case in crowd psychology. The last in this list is self and other awareness. To experience affection collectively does not abolish the difference between self and other. Affective sharing presupposes at least tacit monitoring of each other and reciprocal awareness, "they are in a situation of joint attention, experiencing each other as co-subject of the collective experience" (Thonhauser 2022, 37).

3. Liturgical We: Theological Account

In both catholic and orthodox theological traditions there is a tendency to endorse the primacy of "we" in liturgy. It would be more evident when looking at the synchronized corporate activities such as joint prayer and polyphonic chanting, both in western and eastern Christian traditions. The liturgical text and practice itself is plural in nature, but does

this plurality should to be understood in aggregative way or it has to be conceived of as having formed phenomenal collective body? One of the leading voices of liturgical movement, catholic priest and theologian, Romano Guardini endorsed extremely corporate conception of assembly in liturgical practice. Guardini clarifies that in liturgy the primacy has been given to first person plural form. According to him, "As a rule we is used: we praise thee. we glorify thee. we adore thee; forgive us. help us. enlighten us. This we is not spontaneous. But the carefully nurtured fruit of genuine congregation" (Guardini 1997, 133). Guardini also insisted that liturgy does not rest with "collective groups" composed of variety of individuals (Guardini 1997, 140-141).

What then is the meaning of liturgy and does it have the unified body, which is not reducible to mere aggregation of individual participants, rather instantiates certain phenomenal commonality, or, what Guardini calls "corporate body", which "infinitely outnumbers the mere congregation" (Guardini 197, 141). This hyper communitarian account of liturgy seems to eliminate the constitutive role of interpersonal I-thou relation, which is a subject-subject relation. Instead, there is something like phenomenal fusion of individuals in liturgical "we", or in an all-encompassing and comprehensive "selfless objectivity" (Guardini 197, 138), this is the reason why "liturgy does not say "I," but "We"." (Guardini 197, 136). However, Guardini seems to be oscillating between aggregative and holistic accounts of liturgy, as on the next page, he insisted that individual members are not merged with a whole, rather "they are added to it" (Guardini 197, 139), which complicates and makes his argument even more obscure. According to Guardini, union of members "is accomplished by and in their joint aim. goal and spiritual resting place - God - by their identical creed. sacrifice and sacrament" (Guardini 197, 139). In another passage, Guardini reflects about Christ as the fundamental principle of communion or unification. Referring to St Paul's epistles he writes, "His life is ours; we are incorporated in Him; we are His Body, "Corpus Christi mysticum" (Guardini 197, 136).

As lesser well-knows Gerda Walther also pointed out, for having something like community, there has to be an "inner bond" (innere verbundenheit) (Walther 1923, 33) and "feeling of

togetherness" (*Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit*) (Walther 1923, 33). Dominik Zelinsky analyzing Walther's explicit engagement with Max Weber, especially regarding his theory of charisma, pays attention to the passage from Walther's dissertation, where she writes that "every genuine Christian must […] feel a priori connected with all other genuine Christians, and they with him, albeit not as individual but "as a Christian"" (Walther 1923, 84).

Therefore, the principle of communal unification here is identification with Christian co-believers, which does not require knowing something about each other. As in case of liturgical assembly discussed above, when participants do not necessarily know each other. The reason of being the "we" is their shared system of believe. Liturgical community is structurally very similar to what Walther calls communities "in and for itself" (Walther 1923, 84). For that type of community, which does not have an aim outside of itself and does not operate instrumentally as temporal association, the members have to refer to the same intentional object, they have to know each other (*Wissen-von-einander*) and be aware of other's same intentional directedness towards an object and because of that knowledge, they might reciprocally affect each other (*Wechselwirkung miteinander*) (Walther 1923, 29; Mühl 2018, 21; Szanto 2018, 93). In liturgy participating subjects might be co-affected, but for forming liturgical communion, it is not necessary for them to know each other. What is a constituent element of an inner bond? As Leon and Zahavi explicated, Walther sought to explain an inner bond not by looking at an impact of members on each other, but through the concept of reciprocal unification (*Wechseleinigung*) which is an affective in character (Leon, Zahavi 2018, 229). Inner unification or joining happens through affective identification, it is a matter of feeling rather than "an act of cognition (*Erkenntnisakt*) or judgment (*Urteil*)" (See: Walther 1923, 34; Leon, Zahavi 2018, 229; Mühl 2018, 21). According to Mühl, Walther's account of social communities might be interpreted as a hybrid model: "Walther combines an ontological individualism with an ontological holism such that a community is both the sum of its members and an independent social entity" (Mühl 2018, 20). Knowing of

each other (*Wissen-um-einander*), according to Szanto, "does not carry much cognitive overload…Rather; it is a non-reflective knowledge of my fellow members' intentional and affective lives" (Szanto 2018, 94). This appraisal perfectly corresponds to the proposal of pre-reflective bodily awareness of others in liturgy, which I have discussed above. Moreover, the German (*Wissen-um-einander*) has a richer meaning and might be understood not only in terms of direct reciprocal knowledge of co-presented individuals, but something more, it is a background knowledge of other's experience.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger develops Guardini's line of thought and endorses the primacy of "we" over "I". Ratzinger referring to Galatians 3:16 wrote: "My "I" is transformed and opens up into the great "we", so that we become "one" in him "(Ratzinger 2000, 90). It also resembles certain phenomenal fusion[5] of multitude into one single body, where all differences and identity markers are blurred.

According to Ratzinger, Christian liturgy is essentially communal in nature and is performed not separately by individual believers but within the context of community. In liturgical context, without conceptually distinguishing them from each other, Ratzinger ascribes the primacy of "we" and "you" over "I". Ratzinger's line of though is phenomenologically inconsistent, because he missed the point that "you" also takes the perspective of "I", "you" does not exist without "I" and "you" is always already an "I". Cardinal Ratzinger claims that "Eucharistic personalism" is certain drive or ground for unification and "overcoming of barriers between God and man, between "I" and "thou" in the new "we" of the communion of saints" (Ratzinger 2000, 87). However, overcoming of barriers does not necessarily imply an elimination of difference between God and man, between "I" and "Thou". Even analyzing the role of art regarding liturgy, Ratzinger maintains that creative or producing subjectivity is hinged upon the Church; "No sacred art can come from an isolated subjectivity. No, it presupposes that there is a subject who has been inwardly formed by the Church and opened up to the "we" (Ratzinger 2000, 134).

According to Miroslav Volf, "Ratzinger locates the essence of the church in the arc between the self and the whole;

it is the communion between the human "I" and the divine "Thou" in a universally communal “We” (Volf 1998, 30). Volf’s take on is that Ratzinger conceives of the universal church as “I” to which laity is bound in the form of liturgical “we”. Accomplishment of the goal of liturgy, that is to say representation of Christ, is not only priest’s responsibility; believers have to participate actively in worship by jointly performing prayers and chants. Volf remarks that “the subject of the liturgical event is "precisely the assembled congregation as a whole; the priest is the subject only insofar as he co-embodies this subject and is its interpreter “(Volf 1998, 62). Volf himself stands on the different ground and does not share with Ratzinger universalistic account of liturgical communion:

> Communal liturgical expression requires that it be individually internalized without such internalization, a person plays merely a communal "role" at the celebration of the liturgy, which can only mean that this person's communion with others and so also with the triune God is merely "pretended communion (Volf 1998, 65-66).

However, it is not clear, what exactly Volf means by internalization, does he suggest that first and foremost, individual participant should live through the liturgy itself? It seems that answer to this question would be positive. One might say that Volf endorses some kind of methodological individualism by acknowledging the constitutive primacy of individual experience over group. Otherwise, it turns out to be mere instrument for liturgical performance, incapable of constituting authentic communion with others. Volf conceives of the ontology of church by endorsing plurality of it and criticizing totalizing narratives regarding the constitution of universal church. This is the reason, why he wrote that “the church is not a “We”; the church are we” (Volf 1998, 10).

Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas developing certain theological personalism drawing on the eastern patristic tradition, states that “in the New Testament the Eucharist is Communion” (Zizioulas 2011, 35), but this Eucharistic communion is not corporate merging of many in one body, rather “personal existence in the context of communion” (Zizioulas 2011, 35). According to Zizioulas, Eucharist “makes each one fully capable of saying ‘I’, but always in relation to

'you' and 'us'" (Zizioulas 2011, 35). Thus, Eucharistic communion does not instantiate the constitutive primacy of "we" over "I". "We" does not precede an "I", rather, one can assume that they might be equiprimordial. This horizontal, or relational structure of Eucharistic communion perfectly corresponds[6] to Martin Buber's insightful assessment, which has been noted by Dan Zahavi, that "Only men who are capable of truly saying Thou to one another can truly say We with one another"[7] (Buber 2002, 208). Zahavi also pointed out that similar account can be found in the works of classical phenomenologists such as Husserl and Schutz (Zahavi 2021, 17). Guardini's idea of liturgy as "selfless objectivity" stands in an obvious opposition to Buber's account of "we", as for Buber nameless and faceless crowd "in which I am entangled is not a We but the "one". But as there is a Thou so there is a We" (Buber 2002, 208). For being able to refer to each other as "we", first and foremost one has to relate to one another as I and thou.

But how is it possible in liturgy, to acknowledge and relate to an anonymous "other" as "thou"? Does it mean that "we" of liturgy rests on the recognition of each other? Participants of liturgy do have something in common and they mutually focus an attention to common object, but it is not always the case that they know each other in person. Out of this theoretical predicament one question arises, to what extent can liturgical "we" be formed without reciprocal awareness and recognition of each other? Buber speaks about other structures within which a requirement of knowing of each other, or relating to one another in terms of I-thou does not take place, but it still amounts to "we". According to Buber, "there are still other, remarkable structures which include men hitherto unknown to one another, and which are at least very close to the essential We" (Buber 2002, 209). But what kind of "essential we" is it? Is it robust or fragile? Is it temporarily persistent or fluid? I would like to differentiate between actual and potential "we" of liturgy. Actual "we" of liturgy is its very performance, its collective and joint enactment by reading, praying and chanting together, while potential, or anonymous "we" of liturgy, exceeds physical co-presence of faithful individuals as it refers to those who are absent and might be

potentially referred to as one of "us". It would be interesting to note that not only collective or joint action constitutes the sense of "us" in liturgy, but everything practiced individually, according to Zizioulas, "cease to be 'mine' and become 'ours' […] The Eucharist is not only communion between each person and Christ, it is also communion among the faithful themselves" (Zizioulas 201, 128).

4. Conclusion

The primacy of "we" and the form of the corporate worship in liturgy has been widely acknowledged by theologians. Liturgical communion as a specific shared situation is produced not only by having a focus on common intentional object, but also through jointness and synchronicity of performance such as a collective form of a prayer, chanting and repentance. This leads towards an emergence of an affective experience, sharing of which among participants might be considered as a proper candidate for the constitution of the liturgical communion. I think, first and foremost identification with concrete liturgical "we" proceeds from an affective experience. I did not argue against plural nature of liturgy, but instead of ascribing an overwhelming primacy of "we" over "I" and "thou", I propose to conceive of the liturgical "we" as a relational entity which does not abolish the difference between self and other. However, one does not have to neglect a radical case too, when, for example, due to the strong identification with "selfless objectivity" of congregation, one tends be fused in it without maintaining autonomy and subjectivity.

NOTES

[1] For more detailed historical reconstruction of the genealogy of liturgy see (Senn 2012).

[2] Mirchea Eliade stated that "Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, "in the beginning." Religious participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the mythical time reactualized by the festival itself" (Eliade 1987, 69).

[3] See full interview on the following website:

https://anglican.ink/2020/03/31/the-church-without-the-eucharist-is-not-the-church-interview-with-john-zizioulas/

[4] For Developmental account of self-awareness as co-awareness see Rochat (2004, 1–20). See also Ciaunica (2016, 422-438).

[5] An idea of fusion of individual members into the group and subsequent diminishing of individuality and differences among them can be already found in Gurwitsch (1979). Phenomenological fusion account has been developed also by Schmid (2009, 3-28). For more detailed analysis of Gurwitsch's position, see Zelinsky (2021).

[6] Zizioulas himself refers to Buber as well as to Berdyaev when he discusses the specific structure of "koinonia", which literary means a "common life". According to Zizioulas, the notion of "koinonia" is linked with the notion of a person, as "to be a person is to be in a communion. Without this communion, one is an individual, but not a person" (Zizioulas 2011, 21).

[7] For finding Buber's account, I am indebted to Zahavi (2021, 17).

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Lasha Matiashvili is an Associate Professor at Tbilisi State University. He has gained international experience as a visiting researcher at the a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities and Husserl Archives at the University of Cologne. He was also a visiting fellow at the Center for Subjectivity Research at the University of Copenhagen. His research interests include Phenomenology, Social Ontology, Collective Intentionality, Philosophy of Emotion, and Social Philosophy. Recently, he has begun exploring the field of Disability Studies through the conceptual and methodological lenses of phenomenology.

Address:
Lasha Matiashvili
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
1 Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi 0179, Georgia
Email: Lasha.matiashvili@gmail.com
Lasha.matiashvili@tsu.ge