evidential way or to make the claim that God exists more plausible. Rather, as we saw, Franciscan knowledge characterizes the processes of justification and sanctification by which God draws our ultimate good from suffering. Stump's account is presented as a possible world in which God exists and the relevant claims about suffering, etc., hold. The Biblical narratives she uses help facilitate our understanding of why God would permit human suffering. In any case, if interpersonal knowledge in Benton's sense is fallible, it will be subject to the same sort of problem: we might *think* we have interpersonal knowledge of God but be mistaken.

Finally, Stump claims that there are degrees of Franciscan knowledge. I think she could elaborate on this aspect of her view by claiming that the highest degrees of Franciscan knowledge are gained through second-person experiences of a particularly intimate sort. She could claim that this degree of Franciscan knowledge is existence-entailing, while lower degrees attained through narratives are not existence-entailing.

15.2 Conclusion

Eleonore Stump has started an important conversation in philosophy of religion with her introduction of Franciscan knowledge and her use of narratives to address the problem of evil. She has opened up new avenues for addressing topics of the utmost importance, such as the nature of personal relationships and our ability to know God. In this chapter, I've tried to give a basic introduction to Stump's account of Franciscan knowledge, answer some objections to it, and discuss some of the recent ways it has been applied and interacted with. I've had to leave out other intriguing responses to and interactions with Stump's work: for example, Nicholas Wolterstorff (2016) finds points of connection with Stump's account of Franciscan knowledge in his work on liturgical knowledge, and Matt Duncan (2020) acknowledges connections between Stump's account and his account of knowledge of things. But I hope to have given enough of a sense of the excitement of this topic and the intriguing conversations that have opened up to induce the reader to explore further.

16 Liturgically Infused Practical Understanding

Terence Cuneo

In this chapter, I grapple with a long-standing concern about corporate ritualized religious activity ('liturgical activity,' for short).

The worry stems from a trio of observations. The first is that the major monotheistic traditions enjoin having attitudes such as faith, hope, and love, as well as performing actions that express these attitudes. The second is that these traditions call for their practitioners regularly to engage in liturgical activity, participating in rites of corporate worship. There is, however, a condition on whether such activity has religious worth, fittingly relating the community and its members to God: it must align in the right ways with core religious attitudes—in the ideal case, expressing them. The third observation is that liturgical activity systematically fails to align in this way, often being rote, mechanical, insincere, or focused on whether it is being performed correctly.[1] Hence the long-standing worry that liturgical activity systematically fails to have religious worth – or at least its worth is severely diminished or defeated by the lack of alignment. The problem is only exacerbated by the fact that some religious traditions place great emphasis on participating in liturgical activity. This emphasis can seem misplaced, since the conditions under which such activity has religious worth systematically fail to be satisfied.

Several strategies of response present themselves. One is to insist that the lack of alignment just mentioned is either exaggerated or unproblematic. Another is to acknowledge that the lack of alignment between core religious attitudes and liturgical activity is real and problematic but that there are ready ways in practice to remedy it. A third response is to hold that the lack of alignment is genuine and problematic but probably less significant than the worry voiced above alleges. Using the Eastern Orthodox Christian liturgies as my focal case, I develop a variant of this third response to what I'll refer to as the 'alignment worry.'

[1] After studying large-scale fire rituals in India, the Dutch linguist and anthropologist Frits Staal concluded that when people perform rituals, they "concentrate on correctness of act, recitation, and chant. Their primary concern, if not obsession, is with rules. There are no symbolic meanings going through their minds when they are engaged in performing ritual" (1979: 3).

The response proceeds on the assumption that liturgy is practical in orientation, being constituted by actions that function to shape us and the world in various ways. The first stage of the discussion sketches an account of practical understanding that could underwrite such action, albeit one that emphasizes the epistemic dimensions of such understanding. How exactly do the church's liturgies function to shape their participants? The second stage of the response lays out a multifaceted vision of the world, human beings, and God that animates and finds expression in the Orthodox liturgies. It is practical understanding of this vision, I suggest, that the church's liturgies function to instill in us. This is the 'liturgically infused' understanding to which the title of this chapter adverts. With these materials in hand, I contend that we have reason to hold that liturgical activity has significant religious worth, even if it has other worrisome features.

I believe the response just sketched blunts the force of the alignment worry. I doubt, however, that it represents a complete reply. For one thing, the reply draws upon the resources of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. But there is a legitimate question of whether anything like those resources is available to other religious traditions. For another, one might wonder whether traditions like Orthodoxy are themselves well situated to draw upon these resources. At the close of this chapter, I revisit these concerns, gesturing toward where further work needs to be done.

16.1 Practical Understanding

Some of us have had the experience of being coerced into taking piano lessons when children. If things went well enough, this experience instilled practical knowledge of how to play the instrument. We learned how to move our fingers to play the correct notes, how to play in time, and how to use dynamics when playing, emphasizing some passages but not others. In addition, we learned when to apply our knowledge-how – when to use the piano's pedals to deaden the sound, play with increased emphasis, or pause for effect. This knowledge-how and knowledge-when coalesced into practical musical knowledge.

The process of learning piano didn't advance much further than this for many of us. But for some the process continued. They learned how not only to perform musical works, but also how to listen to music, appreciating its compositional properties and nuances. Some even learned how to perform musical works with others, learning how and what to pay attention to in these joint performances. Indeed, some have had the experience of progressing to the point at which they developed not just practical musical knowledge, but also musical sensibilities of certain kinds.

By musical "sensibilities," I mean sub-doxastic abilities of a certain range, which involve being sensitive to subtle cues for what a composition or a

performance of it calls for, being able to discern whether a composition or performance meets certain levels of adequacy and excellence, and the capacity to experience the performance of a musical work as expressing musical influences of certain kinds. So understood, sensibilities are interpretive and evaluative abilities of a given range. Like many such abilities, articulating their deliverances, let alone the exact features of a composition or performance that they key into, is often extraordinarily difficult. Still, with time, repetition, and training, musical sensibilities can be inculcated, developed, refined, and evaluated, delivering verdicts and responses that are more or less fitting. When developed to a high degree, these sensibilities can be very finely attuned to the nuances of compositions and performances. Although, it should also be said that musical sensibilities can be highly idiosyncratic: it is not as if they simply track extant norms of adequacy and excellence. They can also yield highly novel ways of approaching or engaging in composition, performance, listening, and the like.

I have presented a sketch of musical cognition according to which agents progress from gaining rudimentary practical musical knowledge to acquiring musical sensibilities of certain kinds. I have, however, refrained from calling these musical abilities *skills*. My thinking is simply that practical knowledge can be rote or highly circumscribed, failing to be guided by a grasp of the activity one is performing. Similarly, sensibilities can be developed only to a low degree and exercised indiscriminately. Skills are different. To be skilled in an activity involves being able not only to engage competently in that activity, but also to be guided by one's grasp of that activity in such a way that one can competently engage in it in a wide range of circumstances.

John Campbell draws attention to these features of skills when he writes of tools:

> [I]f you understand how a tool works, there will be a certain systematicity in your understanding of it. You will know how to use this tool in a wide variety of contexts, under various permutations of its intrinsic characteristics . . .. The modulation of the pattern of use is systemic, in that the pattern of use covaries with the variation in the standing properties of target and tool. And the modulation of the pattern of use is general, in that the same underlying sets of connections can be exercised in connection with endlessly many different tools. (2011: 174–5; 179)[2]

Campbell's observations about tools extend to the realm of music. You may know how to perform the piano part of a score composed for an ensemble. But if you lack the ability to attend to and coordinate your actions with the other instrumentalists, then you lack a relevant performance skill: your practical

[2] Quoted in Bengson (2020: 219). My treatment of practical understanding is indebted to Bengson's essay.

knowledge is too parochial. To possess the requisite performance skills, you must be able to perform your part competently with other instrumentalists in a variety of contexts. Similarly, you may know how to listen to performances of a particular work of music. But if you do not know how to listen to novel interpretations and adaptations of it, then you lack crucial listening skills: your practical knowledge is too narrow. To have the requisite listening skills, your knowledge of how to listen to performances of a piece of music must generalize to unusual adaptations and interpretations of it. Let me reemphasize that more is required than this. For you to manifest the requisite skills, it is not enough that you can exercise your musical abilities in a variety of contexts. In the cases of performance and listening, your abilities must flow from your grasp of what it takes to competently perform or listen to works of music; it can't be merely rote or haphazard.

These observations about practical skills suggest that we need a category of practical cognition that goes beyond practical knowledge. In keeping with recent developments in epistemology, I propose that the relevant category is that of *practical understanding* (see Bengson 2020). It won't be necessary for my purposes to present anything like a full characterization of practical understanding. It is enough to note that having such understanding incorporates elements central to having skill: it involves an agent's grasping a type of activity (and any means used to perform it) in such a way that that grasp both guides and explains that agent's performance of that type of activity in a wide variety of conditions. To have practical understanding of how to listen to a work of music, for example, involves having a grasp of this activity that guides how one listens to performances of that work, including ones that are rather different from those to which one might be accustomed to hearing.

Achieving the type of grasp involved is demanding in some senses, but not in another. It is demanding insofar as it is incompatible with deep or systematic confusion regarding the type of activity in question. Imagine that you know how to play a score for a work of music and, indeed, regularly perform it competently. Your grasp of how to play this piece would not constitute practical understanding if you were deeply confused about its time signature. For in that case, your ability to perform the piece would not flow from and be guided by a correct and stable grasp of some of its most important features. (I should emphasize that this last condition is compatible with an agent's having a variety of misconceptions regarding a work of music, such as who composed it.) Likewise, your grasp would not be of the requisite sort if it failed to cohere with other things one understands about music, such as that a work of music can shift time signatures multiple times. The sense in which practical understanding is not demanding is that agents can understand how to perform an activity without grasping why that activity has certain relevant features. Someone may understand how to improvise over complex chord changes without grasping what accounts for why the use of certain note patterns over certain chord

progressions is fitting. In this regard, there is probably a significant difference between practical and theoretical understanding. While the latter typically involves resolving explanatory questions as to why things have certain properties or certain events have occurred, the same is not true of the former. The types of questions that practical understanding resolves are not why-questions but practical ones regarding how to perform a given activity well.

In characterizing practical understanding this way, I have taken a stand on some fairly contentious issues. I've rejected so-called anti-intellectualist views, which minimize the cognitive dimensions of practical understanding, as well as 'explanationist' views, which hold that understanding (of any sort) must incorporate the resolution of why-questions. These maneuvers have advantages. For one thing, they help to make sense of what strikes me as an independently plausible thesis, namely, that gaining practical understanding is a bona fide epistemic achievement. Think of agents who enjoy the types of musical skills mentioned above. These people are admirable not simply because of their musical prowess but also due to their understanding of how to engage with music. Their practical understanding incorporates a grasp of how to perform and listen to music that is stable (it doesn't wax and wane), robust (applies to a wide variety of circumstances), coherent (it fits with their grasp of other core musical activities), and free of deep and systematic confusion. The enjoyment of these features explains why practical understanding is epistemically meritorious.

16.2 The Maximian Vision

Liturgical activity is many things, but worship lies at its core. Worship of God, in turn, is adoration – to use Nicholas Wolterstorff's characterization, it is awed, reverential, and grateful adoration of God (2015: 26). Given the centrality of worship to liturgy, it is a striking and puzzling feature of the Eastern Orthodox liturgies that they so often involve their participants directing their attention to not God but a wide variety of material objects, such as water, oil, bread, wine, chalices, icons, crosses, copies of the Gospels, vestments, and the like. These items elicit a wide range of bodily responses. They range from approaching, viewing, touching, kissing, bowing, and prostrating to eating, drinking, and readying one's body to receive. For example, in the small parishes where I've celebrated Great Lent, at the end of the service of Holy Wednesday, a copy of the Gospels is taken from the altar and placed in the middle of the room on a stand beside an icon of Christ. The people individually file forward, each fully prostrating themselves to the wood floor three times before the copy of the Gospel and the icon. They kiss both, and then proceed to where the Priest stands; he anoints the forehead of each with oil and they kiss a wooden cross held in his hand. The question I'd like to pursue is: Why would the church's liturgies regularly prescribe the performance of actions such as these?

In broad outline, the answer I'll propose is that the liturgies present a multifaceted vision of the natural world, human beings, and God, and how they are and should be related. What the vision endeavors to disclose about the natural world, us, and God is not apparent to the untrained eye; it is obscure in the sense of being largely veiled or hidden. Nonetheless, I want to suggest that this vision informs and helps to make sense of liturgical activities of the sort to which I've called attention. Given that this vision incorporates themes central to the work of the Orthodox theologian Maximos the Confesssor, I'll refer to it as the 'Maximian vision.' The overarching proposal I will develop is that liturgy functions so as to develop in its participants practical understanding of how to view, treat, and experience the world in accordance with the Maximian vision. This proposal will form the core of my response to the concern, which has framed our discussion, about the religious worth of liturgical activity.

Let me identify some themes central to this vision. The first is that God bears a very intimate relation to the natural world. As the tradition tends to characterize it, that relation is not simply that of *being the creator of*. Instead, it involves God being intimately present in the creation in a way (say) that an artist is ordinarily not present in an artifact. The theme of *God being present in* the creation is impossible to miss in the liturgical texts of the church. The Trisagion Prayers, which are probably the most commonly used prayers in the Orthodox tradition, begin with the invocation:

> O Heavenly King, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, who is present everywhere, and fills all things, Treasury of Good and Giver of Life, come and dwell in us, cleanse us of every stain, and save our souls, O good One. (McGuckin 2011)[3]

The prayer at once acknowledges the Holy Spirit's omnipresence while also inviting it to inhabit and act in particular ways in those who pray.

The flipside of the relation *God being present in* – namely, *being present in God* – is also widely affirmed in the tradition. In her fine book, *Living in God's Creation*, Elizabeth Theokritoff notes that, when responding to Gregory the Theologian's description of each human being as "a particle of God," Maximos writes:

> The one Creator of all enters into all things . . . and the many things that differ from one another by nature come into one, converging around the one nature of man. And God himself becomes all things in all, encompassing all things and giving them real existence in himself. (2009: 61)[4]

[3] I lightly modify the translation from the Greek.

[4] Maximos is echoing Gregory of Nyssa: "That God should have clothed himself with our nature is a fact that should not seem strange or extravagant to minds that do not form too paltry an idea of reality. Who, looking at the universe, would be so feeble-minded as not to believe that God is all in all; that he clothes himself with the universe, and at the same time contains it and dwells in it? What exists depends on Him who exists, and nothing can exist except in the bosom of Him who is." Quoted in Clément (1993: 41).

It is because of claims of the sort made in this last sentence that Bishop Kalistos (Ware) of Diokleia writes that he finds "no difficulty in endorsing panentheism," according to which God is present in the creation and the creation in God (2013: 90).[5] Ware goes on to note that the tradition has endeavored to find ways of speaking that could make sense of this mutual *being present in*. Most famously, Gregory of Palamas invoked the essence/energy distinction to do so: "God is in the universe and the universe in God, the one sustaining, the other being sustained by him. Thus all things participate in God's sustaining energy but not his essence."[6] To be clear: in highlighting these ideas, my claim is not that the Orthodox liturgies presuppose a form of panentheism. It is rather that the tradition has affirmed a relation between the creator and creation of sufficient intimacy that some of its most prominent voices have seen fit to describe it in panentheistic terms.

The liturgical texts emphasize that God is not simply present in creation, but also active in it. In the Great Blessing of Waters, performed on Theophany, the text likens God's activity in the world to a rescue mission:

> For you, being God uncircumscribed, without beginning and inexpressible, came upon earth, taking the form of a servant, being found in the likeness of mortals. For you could not bear, Master, in the compassion of your mercy to watch the human race being tyrannized by the devil, but you came and saved us. We acknowledge your grace, we proclaim your mercy, we do not conceal your benevolence. You freed the generations of our race.

The text does not stop here, however. It voices a second Maximian theme, which is that the activity of redemption extends not just to human beings but to all of creation. In highly poetic language, the text speaks of the significance of Christ's baptism in the Jordan:

> Today the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove dwelt upon the waters. Today the Sun that never sets has dawned and the world is made radiant with the light of the Lord. Today the Moon with its radiant beams sheds light on the world. Today the stars formed of light make the inhabited world lovely with the brightness of their splendor . . .. Today the streams of Jordan are changed into healing by the presence of the Lord. Today all creation is watered by mystical streams . . .. Today all creation shines with light from on high . . .. Today earth and sea share the joy of the world, and the world has been filled with gladness.

[5] *Cp.* Theokritoff (2009: 245). One is put in mind of St. Paul's affirmation of "For in him, we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

[6] Quoted by Theokritoff (2009: 64).

The language here does not suggest that the moon, sun, stars, and streams have been emancipated in the way that human beings have. Rather, it suggests that the natural world is being transformed or renewed: "Today the streams of Jordan are changed into healing by the presence of the Lord." The text, then, suggests that human beings are being redeemed in the sense of being rescued, while the natural world is being redeemed in the sense of being renewed – each transformed in its own way. In his extensive work on liturgy, the eminent Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann emphasizes that the contrast with which these texts operate is not between the *sacred* and *profane*, or the *natural* and *supernatural*, but rather the *old* and the *new*. Somehow, through divine action, the world is being made new (1973: 120–1).

The upshot – and this is a third Maximian theme – is that, insofar as it is being renewed, the natural world can function as a bridge to God. The sentence just quoted gestures at this idea, but it comes into even sharper focus in the text read during the blessing of the water itself. Echoing the baptismal rite, the blessing calls upon God to act so that

> this water might be hallowed by the might, operation, and descent of the Holy Spirit . . . That [it] may become the gift of sanctification, redemption from sins, for the healing of soul and body, and for every suitable purpose . . . That it may be for the purification of soul and body to all who with faith take and drink of it; let us pray to the Lord.

The point of this passage is not to invoke God's power in order to change the nature of water; there is no transubstantiation. Nor is it to endow the water with special powers of redemption or purification. Rather – or so the dominant interpretation runs – it is to impose on the water a new function. Theokritoff characterizes the imposition as one in which water is "'promoted' to doing the Holy Spirit's work of sanctifying and giving life," extending the ordinary life-giving work that water already does in our daily lives (2009: 185). Schmemann affirms a yet stronger claim. The renewal of the material world not only enables it to function as a conduit to God, but worship also reveals otherwise obscure aspects of the material world's nature. The imposition of a sacramental function on material objects enables us to recognize that the world is "an *epiphany* of God, a means of His revelation, presence, and power." Indeed, "worship is based on an . . . experience of the world as" an epiphany: "the world – in worship – is revealed in its true nature and vocation as 'sacrament'" (1973: 120). As Schmemann understands things, that is more or less what it is for a material object to be a sacrament: it is for it to function as an epiphany of God (1973: 15).

Which leads us to the fourth Maximian theme: our role as human agents lies, in part, in orienting ourselves properly to the creation. Again, Schmemann's work is especially relevant here. His thinking is that this orientation consists in offering thanksgiving or *eucharistia* for the creation and its

various elements. In emphasizing this theme, Schmemann is not claiming that offering thanks is the only apt response to the creation; cherishing, loving, revering, and the like are also fitting responses. The thought, rather, is that thanksgiving is the fundamental orientation for human beings to take toward the creation, especially in the context of worship.

The leading idea here echoes the passage quoted above from Maximos: when fulfilling their vocation, human beings play a unifying function in the created order, acting as that which brings the created order into communion with God. That, in turn, consists in their both blessing elements of the created order, such as water and oil, and offering them back to God as a sacrifice. In the remarkable first chapter of his book *For the Life of the World*, Schmemann states the idea as follows:

> Human beings stand in the center of the world and unify it in their act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God – and by filling the world with this eucharist, they transform their life, the one that they receive from the world, into life in God, into communion with God. (1973: 15)[7]

When we combine this passage with the one quoted just above, all four Maximian themes emerge. God is intimately related to the creation (the first theme); worship is founded, in part, on an epiphany that this is so. Human beings are called to bless the creation in worship, offering elements of it back to God as sacrifice (the fourth theme). Such blessing consists in imposing functions of certain kinds on elements of the created order, whereby they can play the role of contributing to the flourishing of human beings and communion with God (the second and third themes).

My primary concern in this section has been to present (a compressed version of) the Maximian vision. I've merely begun to sketch a case for the claim that this vision animates and makes sense of central elements of the church's liturgies. A fully developed case would involve examining the church's liturgies in finer detail, eliciting elements of the vision, while also considering competing explanations of why these liturgies take their particular shape. No liturgical scholar, to my knowledge, has developed such a case. Still, as the quotations from thinkers such as Schmemann, Ware, and Theokritoff indicate, the way has been paved. So, I'll proceed on the assumption that, while a fuller case awaits development, we have powerful reason to hold that the Maximian vision animates and explains puzzling but important elements of the church's liturgies. Or to approach the matter from the opposite direction, I'll assume that the church's liturgies give expression to the Maximian vision. So expressed, the vision is there for participants in the liturgy to understand. Understanding how to treat, view, and experience the

[7] This is an ungendered "quotation."

world and God in accordance with this vision is what I have called 'liturgically infused' understanding of the world and God.

16.3 Liturgically Infused Understanding

At the beginning of this discussion, I noted that while many of us took piano lessons as children, rather few of us emerged with anything more than rudimentary practical musical knowledge. Something similar is true of ritualized religious activity. Although our younger selves were frequently inculcated into religious traditions, the result was often nothing more than rudimentary knowledge of how to engage in these services. To progress further, much more was needed than what we experienced.

In the musical case, the way to progress would typically involve immersion in social practices of certain kinds. Specifically, making such progress would require immersion in practices of performing, composing, and listening, which would facilitate developing the skill-like activities constitutive of practical musical understanding. This, in turn, would ordinarily involve gaining facility with musical traditions of performing, composing, and listening, and the musical visions that animate them. The parallel to religion is close. The route to gaining practical religious understanding (broadly construed) also goes through immersion in social practices, such as religious instruction, study of the scriptures, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and so forth. I've suggested that achieving liturgically infused understanding would involve immersion in the liturgies of the church wherein the Maximian vision finds expression. But merely absorbing the Maximian vision to some degree through such immersion would not be enough. The grasp of this vision and the ways it is expressed in these liturgies would also need to shape agents' participation in these liturgies.

For example, such a grasp would guide how they listen to, focus on, and interpret texts such as those used during Epiphany. These texts are not just evocative poetry; they express the idea that somehow God is renewing the creation, and that we have a part to play in this. The grasp would also guide the performance of bodily actions such as receiving anointing of oil, viewing it as a rite by which both God and human beings can be active in healing, extending the healing powers already possessed by oil. Moreover, such a grasp would guide how agents view their own performance of these very actions and their subsequent reflections on them. In this case, agents might strive to perform these actions so that they conform to the liturgical scripts but resist making correct performance their focus, as if omissions and mistakes somehow invalidate the ways in which their actions express elements of the Maximian vision. And so forth. At a minimum, a satisfactory practical grasp of the vision that animates the liturgies would guarantee that agents could not

view venerating an icon, blessing water, or kissing a copy of the Gospels as simply something that one does in church. Instead, such a grasp would involve grasping that these activities are ones by which God reaches out to human beings and they reach out to God.

Yet making progress to this extent wouldn't be enough to achieve the type of understanding I have in mind. In addition to stably guiding one's activities, grasp of the Maximian vision and how it is expressed would need to cohere with one's convictions about the material world, human beings, and God. Imagine, for example, you were to endorse the Manichean claim that the material world is an obstacle to divine presence, or that the point of liturgical action is to curry God's favor. It is very difficult to see how such views could fit with a practical understanding of the liturgy that is in accordance with the Maximian vision. Or, to emphasize so-called practical coherence, there would be considerable tension between treating the Eucharistic elements with great reverence during enactments of the Divine Liturgy but, say, throwing them in the garbage after the completion of the service. Even if coherence of either sort could be achieved, this would be insufficient for enjoying the type of practical understanding in question. For views such as Manicheanism and what Kant calls religious "fetishism" are seriously mistaken (2018 [1793]). They could not be aspects of a liturgically infused practical understanding of the world and God.

It may be worth acknowledging that I've employed this last phrase deliberately. The phrase suggests that the understanding in question does not pertain solely to what transpires in liturgical settings. The understanding pertains to the world, which includes a good deal more than things liturgical. This point is a natural application of the earlier observation that skill-like activities must generalize in appropriate ways. Understanding how to use a tool, or how to listen to the performance of a work of music, cannot be highly circumscribed; they must be applicable to a wide range of circumstances, even novel ones. The same is true of practical understanding of the type under discussion here.

In making this observation, my concern is not with cases in which agents faithfully participate in the church's liturgies but view such participation as having only very limited implications regarding how they conduct their lives. Rather, my concern is with cases in which agents grasp important elements of the Maximian vision as it is expressed in the liturgies, but this understanding fails to extend to how they treat, view, or experience the world at large. Think of agents who view the liturgies as expressing the Maximian vision but, outside of a liturgical context, treat, view, or experience the material world as devoid of the divine presence, merely there to be used and enjoyed. They do not treat, view, or experience it as a locus of the divine energies or as that which is being renewed by the work of the Holy Spirit. They do not view themselves as playing any sort of unifying function. In short, their understanding of how to view, treat, and experience the world in accordance with

the vision fails to generalize. To be clear, the claim is not that a person's liturgically infused practical understanding would be overly restricted were that person to fail (say) to treat all water as if it were holy (blessed) water. That would be no more plausible than maintaining that a person's love of neighbor would be overly restricted were she to fail to treat all fellow human beings as if they are family, friends, or loved ones. In the case of neighbor-love, achieving the relevant ideal consists in recognizing that there are clear limits on how to treat one's neighbors, that there are ends that we should desire for them and often pursue on their behalf, and that we should be prepared to make significant sacrifices to realize these things. These things are true because one's neighbors are fellow bearers of the *imago dei*. Similarly, achieving the ideal of adequately grasping the Maximian vision consists in recognizing that there are evident limits on how to treat the creation, that there are ends we should desire for it and often pursue, and that we should be prepared to make significant sacrifices to realize these things. The creation is, after all, intimately related to God in the ways specified by the vision. The person who has liturgically infused understanding of the world recognizes this and, so, extends their grasp of the Maximian vision beyond the confines of the liturgy to the world at large.

Like Ware, Theokritoff, and others, I believe that these points have substantive ethical implications. But given my present aim of exploring the character of liturgically infused practical understanding, I want to emphasize three points about it.

First, such understanding is distinct from what I earlier called the core religious attitudes, such as faith, hope, and love, and actions that express them. Their intentional objects are different: practical understanding concerns *ways of doing things* (broadly construed), while the core religious attitudes concern persons or propositions. In addition, the type of grasp that constitutes practical understanding is not a species of belief, trust, desire, or the like, which I take to be the primary candidates for the types of attitudes that constitute the core religious attitudes. Indeed, if what I've said is correct, liturgically infused practical understanding involves the possession of religious sensibilities, which are broadly sub-doxastic interpretive and evaluative abilities, and whose deliverances needn't be beliefs, credences, or the like.

To spell this out just a bit: having liturgically infused practical understanding involves grasping *ways of viewing* the world and how God is related to it, *ways of treating* the creation in light of how human beings and God are related to it, and *ways of experiencing* the world in light of how human beings and God are related to it. The implementation of such understanding lies, in considerable measure, in the exercise of these sensibilities. Implementing a way of doing something, such as viewing the world in a certain way, needn't involve believing that things are as that way characterizes the world. I should also emphasize that, while I understand *ways of doing things* broadly so that

they needn't involve intentional doings, it may be that grasping ways of viewing, treating, and experiencing the world and God requires intentional agential activity. Just as one may try to hear a work of music in a certain way – say, by intently focusing on some of its features or suspending one's expectations of how it should proceed – so also one may try to view, treat, and experience the world in accord with the Maximian vision.

In distinguishing the cognitive constituents of liturgically infused practical understanding from the core religious attitudes, I do not mean to suggest that they float free from each other. Having this type of practical understanding can be the product of an individual's faith, love, or hope, or an effort to implement or acquire it. It is certainly the product of the community's faith, love, and hope. But I wish to underscore the point that the liturgies appear to do more than generate in their practitioners the core religious attitudes or be activities whereby these attitudes are expressed. Instead, they appear to function so as to get their participants to see, treat, and experience the world and God differently.

The second point I want to make is that having and exercising the type of practical understanding described appears to have considerable religious worth. Grant, for argument's sake, that the Maximian vision is largely accurate. Having practical understanding of the type under discussion is exactly the sort of thing that helps to bring one, and one's community, into fitting relationship with God. My own view is that this worth is not merely instrumental; having and exercising practical understanding of the world, human beings, and God in accordance with the Maximian vision looks like it is not a mere means to something else that has religious worth, such as faith. Instead, having and exercising such understanding appear to be ways of doing things that themselves have religious worth (all else being equal). If that were true, it would make sense of why the liturgy functions to instill such understanding in its participants.

The third point is that having this type of understanding is an epistemic achievement. For it involves an accurate grasp of how to view, treat, and experience the world and God that stably guides action, is free from deep misunderstanding, coheres with one's other views and practical commitments, and generalizes in the way that skills do. What is more, the epistemic achievement in question is not an add-on to the religious worth that such understanding enjoys: instead, there is considerable overlap between what grounds the religious worth of practical understanding and what grounds its epistemic meritoriousness. Think, for example, of the generalizability of such understanding. That is something that both grounds the religious worth of such understanding and its epistemic meritoriousness. The agent who has this ability grasps how to see, treat, or experience the world and God in ways that do not suffer from defects such as being provincial, shortsighted, or arbitrary. (Indeed, it may be that liturgically infused understanding owes its religious

worth, in part, to its epistemic meritoriousness.) In this regard, the epistemic status of such understanding looks rather different from other epistemic merits to which epistemologists of religion have devoted extended attention. That one's belief in the existence of God is supported by evidence or reliably formed may have little or no religious worth. But that cannot be fairly said, I believe, of ways of viewing, treating, and experiencing the world and God in accordance with the Maximian vision.

16.4 The Alignment Worry, Again

We are now ready to return to the worry that has framed our discussion. Recall that it runs as follows: the major monotheistic traditions enjoin having core religious attitudes such as faith, hope, and love, as well as performing actions that express them. These traditions also call for their practitioners regularly to engage in liturgical activity. But such activity systematically fails to align in the appropriate ways with the core religious attitudes and actions. Hence the worry that liturgical activity systematically fails to have religious worth, or that its worth is seriously diminished or defeated by the lack of alignment. I said that the response I would offer, which focuses on the Eastern Orthodox liturgies, acknowledges that the worry is genuine but that it is less significant than it might seem. Let me close by explaining why.

The justification for thinking the alignment worry is real hinges on a pair of convictions. The first is based on the empirical observation that liturgical activity is often rote, mechanical, insincere, or primarily focused on satisfying certain correctness conditions of performance. This is the curse of ancient religious traditions. They tend to ossify, being more concerned with self-preservation than anything else. The second is that these deficiencies jeopardize the religious worth that the enactments of liturgies may have due to other factors. For example, enactments of the liturgies may have some religious worth because they are *expressive of* apt attitudes – where, roughly, this is a matter of those liturgies incorporating activities that are fitting ways to express these attitudes (even if their enactments fail to actually express them). But this worth can be severely diminished or neutralized by an enactment's being rote, mechanical, insincere, performed in bad faith, and so forth.

As for why the lack of alignment is probably less significant than it might seem, the following exercise may help to explain why. Imagine that there is a complex property *F* such that understanding how to view, treat, and experience the world as being *F* has religious worth. Assume, further, the world's being *F* is obscure: it is not manifest to most and, even when it is apparent, there are a variety of dynamics that would occlude its presence. Add now that there is an activity that instantiates some aspects of *F* and, when performed well enough, would position agents to gain the requisite sort of understanding

of how to view, treat, and experience the world as being *F*. With these assumptions in place, we can ask whether that activity would thereby have religious worth as well.

I believe it would, as that activity bears a very intimate relation to realizing the religious worth at issue. Think of practices of character formation as a comparison. Having character traits such as kindnesss and wisdom is of moral and prudential worth, yet their worth isn't always apparent; we often need practices that reorient our thinking in order for us to appreciate their value. And we will not acquire these traits on our own; we need to be immersed in practices that are suited to form them in us. These practices, I would say, have moral and prudential worth insofar as they are intimately related to the goal of inculcating admirable traits, playing indispensable roles in achieving it. This is true even when these practices are infrequently successful in this endeavor. In a similar way, the liturgies of the church have religious worth insofar as they are intimately related to the end of achieving liturgically infused understanding, playing indispensable roles in contributing to achieving this good. This is so even when they are frequently unsuccessful in producing such understanding, as they often are.

To spell this out a bit more, consider the complex property specified by the Maximian vision, whose components include *being the locus of divine presence and activity* and *being renewed by God*. That the material world has these properties is hardly manifest; in fact, there are powerful dynamics at work that would occlude recognition that the world has these qualities. Furthermore, the church's liturgies instantiate components of the Maximian vision. The Eucharistic liturgies, in particular, involve acts wherein the church expresses its thanks to God's gift of the world and offers elements of it back to God in sacrifice. Finally, these liturgies appear uniquely calibrated to position agents to gain practical understanding of how to view, treat, and experience the world in accordance with the Maximian vision – viewing, treating, and experiencing the world as one in which God is present and active in particular ways. If all this is correct, then we have reason to hold that enactments of the liturgies have significant religious worth even when they exhibit the lack of alignment described above. For they are uniquely poised to provide agents with liturgically infused practical understanding.

The claim here is not that the 'Maximian property' (as we might call it) uniquely possesses the profile of property *F*. Other properties may as well. Nor is the claim that *F*'s profile is the only thing whose possession would confer religious worth on the church's liturgies. There might be others. The claim is simply that the liturgies have religious worth in virtue of poising their participants to gain practical understanding of the Maximian vision.

I believe the response just offered helps to address the alignment worry. But for reasons canvassed at the outset of this chapter, it is probably not fully adequate.

One limitation is that the alignment worry pertains to not just Eastern Christianity, but also to many other theistic traditions. The response I've developed, however, draws upon resources specific to Eastern Christianity. But a commitment to the Maximian vision is largely alien to other theistic traditions, even other Christian ones; so it is hardly evident that they can feasibly draw upon the resources assembled here. This raises the question of whether the type of strategy I've employed can generalize, being available to other religious traditions in responding to the alignment worry. The honest answer is: I am not sure. I suspect that it can in some cases, but the details would need to be worked out.

A further limitation of the response is that, even if correct, it may gesture toward a deeper concern. The "worry behind the worry" is that Eastern Christianity tends to proceed as if its adherents will absorb the Maximian vision by osmosis. Other theistic traditions appear to proceed similarly. But this looks naive. As the response above concedes, these traditions are infrequently successful in forming agents who enjoy liturgically infused understanding. And so, in a way, the response highlights the limits of what could reasonably be expected from immersion in the church's liturgies. Arguably, for the liturgies to play their formative roles effectively, they must work in concert with other influences. These might include widely accepted interpretations of the functions of liturgy and how to view one's own experience of ritual. As recent empirical work on teaching people how to experience awe illustrates, agents often need to be "primed" in the right way. When agents have firmly in mind that they are looking for what inspires awe, and attend to their own responses of feeling awe, they tend to experience it more frequently in a wider range of conditions (Weger and Wagemann 2021). Something similar may be true of liturgically infused understanding. When an agent firmly grasps the Maximian vision and attends to their own attempts to view, treat, and experience the world and God in accordance with it, they may deepen their understanding of how to do these things.[8]

[8] Thanks to John Greco, Tyler McNabb, Kenny Pearce, and Nick Wolterstorff for comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

17 Knowledge-First Epistemology and Religious Belief

Christina H. Dietz and John Hawthorne

The approach to epistemology known as "knowledge-first epistemology" puts knowledge at the explanatory center of things as far as epistemology is concerned.[1] It is pointless to try to carefully investigate which doctrines do and don't belong to knowledge-first epistemology – that would be to confuse a somewhat vague slogan with something it is not. But one can nevertheless identify some important themes that are often found in the work of those theorists that give knowledge explanatory primacy within epistemology. In this chapter we shall present two such themes. In each case, knowledge-first ideas have interesting implications for philosophy of religion.

17.1 Two Themes of Knowledge-First Epistemology

17.1.1 Evidence

The concept of evidence plays some important theoretical roles. It is used to explain why some theories are better supported than others. It is used to explain why it is appropriate to be more confident in some outcomes than others. And it is used to explain why certain choices of action are better than others. One way of giving knowledge center stage is to argue that these theoretical roles for evidence are best served by knowledge. It is worth distinguishing two versions of this idea.

The most radical version takes the form of Williamson's "E=K" equation, which "identifies the total evidence available with the total knowledge available" (Williamson 2000: 189).[2] This thesis is best not advanced as capturing all ordinary uses of the expression "evidence." (As Williamson notes, we may speak of a "bloodied knife" as evidence [2000: 194], but a bloodied knife is not a proposition, and thus this is not an instance of propositional knowledge.) Rather, the idea is that the "central theoretical functions" (2000:194) of

[1] The idea of writing about how religious belief connects with knowledge-first epistemology was suggested to us by John Greco. It struck us as a good idea.

The knowledge-first approach is associated above all with Timothy Williamson (2000). This introductory section will draw heavily from that book.

[2] Of course, it is a further matter to explain what makes one's total evidence count as evidence *for* some given proposition.