The Body in Conviviality

Towards a Conceptual Recognition of the Aesthetic Layers of With-ness and Epistemological Diversity in Religious Communities

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1 Why the Body Matters in Studies on Conviviality

1.1 Conviviality: Questioned by Body Knowledge

This chapter outlines the significance of the body and the senses for developing an appreciation of conviviality in religious communities in super-diverse societies – as well as its failure to do so. It brings together insights from body phenomenology, praxeology, discourse theory, and postcolonial critique and starts from the assumption that bodies are not mere products of social discourses and order, trapped in passivity and only to be interpreted in the context of social interaction, but rather have their own agency as subjects of knowledge (Alkemeyer 2019). This body knowledge is acquired through the senses and is known as "knowledge in the bones", "tacit", or "implicit" knowledge (Kraus 2017). It brings up questions that are crucial to the cohesion of multicultural and multireligious groups and communities as well as the cause of tensions and contradictions. How is knowledge that is contained in the bones and learned by bodily experience communicated, especially: can it be passed on to those who are not familiar with the elementary experiences and powerful politics of the aesthetics that shaped this knowledge? Where do religious practices and their involvement with the body and senses create dissonances because e.g. other members of a community are disturbed by them? Under what conditions do these dissonances become opportunities that promote new learning and understanding and thus strengthen cohesion and a sense of with-ness? When and why are "other" religio-sensual experiences and epistemologies exoticized and considered as cultural deviations from orthodox belief and practice? When are they assimilated into an "economy of the Same" – a project that aims at "diversion, deflection, reduction of the Other in the Same" (Irigaray 1985: 74)? This economy of the Same eradicates differences, excludes diversity, seeks to harmonize tensions and epistemological incongruities, and desires a "decaffeinated alterity" (Zalloua 2020: 3). Who sets the agenda, has the power of interpretation, and determines the norm that includes and excludes certain body prac-

tices and sensual-aesthetic ways of knowing from the convivial arena? And where do bodily practices disclose acts of resistance, be they in a clearly recognizable public form or in a rather hidden way, e.g. as a form of camouflage?

1.2 The Embodiment of Racism and "White"[1] Privilege as a Challenge to Convivial Situations

These questions show that the present chapter understands conviviality as an analytical term and seeks to develop an approach that makes it possible to shed new light on convivial stories by including body-related knowledge. Yet they also reveal that I closely connect the meaning of the body in convivial religious situations to postcolonial perspectives (the chapter thereby unavoidably contains normative references despite its analytical interest). By linking to postcolonial perspectives, I seek to raise awareness about strategies of Othering in religious communities that relate in particular to "non-Western" bodies. The power of colonial fantasies and desires, that have turned "Black" bodies into a commodity or exoticized "Asian" bodies, has a *longue durée* and continues to linger in the communal memory. Deliberations on the body in superdiverse convivial situations must therefore reflect these dynamic forces of colonialism and racism. To claim that racism today – after decades of anti-racist struggles – is no longer a structural problem reveals both ignorance and a shift of perspective. Paul Gilroy, whose understanding of conviviality has inspired the volume at hand, has convincingly demonstrated how in the 1980s and 1990s the post-war anti-racist movement in Great Britain[2] underwent a drastic shift towards an "End of Anti-Racism" (Gilroy 1990: 191–209). This meant a shift away from collective and political demands and towards a rhetoric of diversification and multiculturalism which went hand in hand with the perception that racism is a problem of individuals or groups but not of structures. As a result, more individualized models of self-help and trauma relief were established. In addition, the fact that people of color have less access to higher education or medical care was treated as an issue for departments of social welfare to address, while the underlying structural injustices remained unquestioned. Hence, to deny structural racism also reveals not only ignorance but an interest in de-politicizing racism, if not also – in Slavoj Žižek's words – a "complicity in and co-responsibility for the miserable situation" (2008: 22)[3] which has been created and continues to be maintained by racist logic and the adherence to "White" privilege.

1 "Black", "White", and other stereotypical attributions are written here in capital letters and in quotation marks because they do not represent skin color, but a construct.

2 The arguments that seek to prove the end of structural racism and that, thus, conceal its continuity vary from context to context. For Germany, Astrid Messerschmidt has noted four arguments and strategies in the post-racist rhetoric: (1) racism is portrayed as a scandal and thus as an exception from the social norm; (2) the rhetoric has shifted from racism to right-wing extremism; (3) "culture" has replaced "race"; (4) racism is a problem of the past, namely of National Socialism (Messerschmidt 2010: 41–57).

3 Žižek's argument is raised in the context of "White" charity in humanitarian aid. For a reflection of Christian complicity in racism (Rose 2017: 53–64).

1.3 The Critical Role of Postcolonial Body Studies

In postcolonial critique, the body of the marginalized and oppressed has always played an important role. Yet a systematic inclusion of the perspectives of body phenomenology and body knowledge as tacit and implicit knowledge has taken place only recently and in connection with the critique of the hegemony of Western forms of knowledge (Alcoff 2006). To give one example: Influenced by postcolonial critique, as well as by body phenomenology, Manuel Vásquez criticizes the privileging of the written text in the study of religion and calls for epistemic pluralism (2011). Religious knowledge is not primarily cognitive, Vásquez claims, but is instead bodily knowledge. To understand religious practices such as *Santería* in Cuba, Catholic pilgrimages in Mexico or Lourdes, or dance performances by Hindu migrants, body- and sense-based approaches are indispensable.

Hence, theories of body knowledge and postcolonial critique share the criticism of the exclusive authority of reason and challenge the ideal of human autonomy, understood as rational freedom. Both theories consider the heteronomy and unavailability of practices and acknowledge interdependence, relationality, and resonance to other humans and to more-than-human beings as important factors for the creation of knowledge. Knowledge is learned and habitualized through intertwining (*Zwischenleiblichkeit*), as Merlau-Ponty has frequently elaborated. It is, thus, always relational knowledge in which the self positions itself in relation to the world. This knowledge shapes the perception of the world and of the self in the world. Postcolonial scholars use this insight to analyze this knowledge-as-world-and-self-perception not only for "persons of color", as Frantz Fanon did, but also for those who have grown up under the conditions of a "White privilege". Critical-race scholars like Helen Ngo (2016)[4] e.g. state, that "White" privilege is "not only a matter of receiving benefits but also consists in *ways of being in the world*" (Applebaum 2010: 30).

A crucial element in postcolonial body approaches is the vulnerability of the body. Structural, (post)colonial injustices make the body of the oppressed even more vulnerable. A paradigmatic text, emphasizing the vulnerable body as suffering under oppression and epistemic violence, is "Black Skin, White Masks" by the aforementioned Algerian psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon (1967). Fanon describes the agonizing effect that the Western "White" gaze has on people of "Black" skin. Under the gaze of the "White man", who sees the "Black" body as an object and reduces it to its skin color, the human being with "Black" skin color ultimately dissolves and is de-substantialized. According to Fanon, this is the experience of "countless fragmentations of my being", of the "fragmented body", and of "broken pieces" which occur as a result of the "White" gaze regime.

In convivial situations in religious, intercultural, and diverse contexts, different experiences and various learned ways of perceiving the world and the self shape the dynamics of living together in unspoken ways. As tacit and implicit body knowledge, these ways of perceiving the world can support cohesion: they are expressed "through an affectively motivated explication of an implicit knowledge" and may be or become "a shared 'knowledge in the bones'" (Engel/Paul 2017: 113). As a result, "implicit understanding can create

4 Other postcolonial, critical-race scholars who relate to body phenomenology are Sara Ahmed, Mariana Ortega, Alia Al-Saji, and George Yanci.

the conditions for political transformation" (Shotwell 2011: xviii) or for the transformation of concrete convivial communities. On the other hand, implicit knowledge "can also block such transformation" (Shotwell 2011: xviii), precisely because it is implicit and habitualized and, thus, often the result of social repression, normative standardization, and "normalization" (Engel/Paul 2017: 113). The study of the body in convivial religious situations can help to reveal these dynamics of normalization and asymmetries in the distribution of power and can support the disclosure of racist, sexist, or other forms of discrimination and social injustice.

1.4 Pentecostal Ritual Practices – Preliminary Remarks

In the following analysis of two field studies, I will focus on ritual practices and, in particular, on Pentecostal practices. In rituals, power relations manifest themselves in sensual experiences. These experiences are marked by forms of sensing (Meyer 2010: 741–763), which are not at all random but are authorized ways of eliciting and organizing access to the transcendent by evoking specific, recallable feelings and sensations. This process involves body practices in which perceptions, sensations, and interpretations continually influence and confirm each other. The sensing forms that are developed, situated, and sedimented in certain contexts, and continually reshaped in intercultural and interreligious negotiations, evoke repeatable patterns of feelings and actions. In convivial situations, shared rituals and their habitualization and transformation into tacit and body knowledge can support strong affective cohesion. However, the opposite can also occur: Different forms of sensing can collide or even clash and demand new negotiations between members of a particular convivial group. Leaning on Birgit Meyer, forms of sensing are "authorized modes for invoking and organizing access to the transcendental that shape both religious content (beliefs, doctrines, sets of symbols) and norms" (Meyer 2010: 751). Thus, the encounter of different religious aesthetics – e.g. in the form of rituals – may lead to a confrontation between different authorities and powers of interpretation and practice.

The first example that I will provide demonstrates such a collision. It is not a collision between the regular members of a certain worship service but between the regular congregation and a "guest" who, in this case, is also the researcher. I deliberately chose a case study in which one of the parties involved in the collision is the researcher himself. This sheds light on convivial situations as not only "objects" of research. It also demonstrates that the body knowledge and perception of the researcher, his or her "sensation and interpretation" (Grieser 2015: 14–23), are also relevant. This fact not only demands self-reflection but also contributes, as I want to show, to the critical and decolonial assessment of research methodology.

Yet, before introducing this case study, one more note is needed regarding the specific Pentecostal character of ritual practices. In the last two decades "Pentecostal body logics" (Brahinsky 2012: 216) and Pentecostal "aesthetics" (Meyer 2010: 741–763) have become a field of growing scholarly interest.

However, assigning a "special" logic to Pentecostal practices is not unproblematic and reveals a rather Eurocentric perspective that conceptualizes the ritual practices of traditional church as "normal", whereas "other" religious practices are considered deviant.

Wilkinson and Althouse have highlighted this problem (2017: 2): Calling Pentecostalism a "bodily religion" creates the impression that more rational theological reflection is alien to Pentecostal churches. Furthermore, this judgment of "deviation" is reinforced by the fact that Pentecostal churches are predominately located in the global South. This leads all the more to the perception and interpretation of body-related practices as exotic phenomena in Pentecostal churches. In addition, it reactivates colonial chains of argumentation that solidify corporeality, the global South, irrationality, superstition, etc. into a stereotype of the Other. This focus on the body can run the risk of promoting colonial images of primitive and irrational religiosity, especially in the global South.

In contrast, it is important to emphasis that Pentecostal churches are phenomena of modernity and that the appearance of Otherness in their bodily practices is the result of dispositives[5] that have conditioned, shaped, and regulated thoughts and knowledge since modernity. These dispositives have also constructed the Other of modernity as the irrational and defined forms of bodily and religious practice that are not considered "rational". Pentecostal churches, and especially their bodily practices, therefore pose a challenge to the critical reflection and historicization of knowledge-generating, normalizing, and normative assumptions about the body and religion.

2 Convivial Field Study I

The cultural anthropologist Joshua Brahinsky reports the following experience during a participant observation at a Pentecostal worship service in the small town of Scotts Valley in Northern California. The worship takes place during the "Spiritual Emphasis Week" at Bethany University, a small Bible school, and lasts several hours. Bethany University is "a cultural hybrid": The students differ in their denominational and spiritual backgrounds, as they come from Pentecostal Evangelical churches, conservative congregations, and even esoteric branches of Christianity. They also vary in their "ethnic and cultural backgrounds sport ripped jeans, tattoos, and eyebrow piercings, together with the occasional suit and tie" (Brahinsky 2012: 221). The convivial situation thus reveals a broad diversity and, although located in a rather remote area, it features the characteristics of a culturally and religiously complex, mobile global world.

During the worship, Brahinsky becomes overwhelmed by a physical experience. He reports:

> I feel a burning in my thighs down by my knees. As if a flamethrower aims at my legs, a fiery heat rises through to my hips, belly, chest, and I am drenched in an all-out sweat. This is not familiar. Years of epileptic pareasthesia have prepped me for strange sensations, and in fact makes them suspect, but this heat is new, not erotic or esoteric

5 According to Michel Foucault (1977: 299), a dispositive (*le dispositif*) is a "thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble, consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural planning, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the dispositive. The dispositive itself is the network that can be established between these elements." English quote cit. from Raffnsøe (2014: 1).

> in any usual sense. It feels both separate and within. I can understand how it would seem an outside force. The MRIs [Magnetic Resonance Images] of Pentecostals show that they can learn these neurological patterns […]; I wonder if I am learning.
> The truth is I hadn't done so much to earn my way into the Pentecostal culture of sensation—their sensorium. Yes, I had been sitting in on services, but I didn't raise my hands, ask for speaking in tongues, or pursue any of the other routes to physical conviction. I just stood there, maybe rocked back and forth in time to the music—I didn't even sing. On one hand, I was psyched to feel the burn—what incredible research data. But more intensely, I simply wanted it to go away—a wish made more poignant by my ever-present fear that I might be on the verge of an epileptic seizure. Yet, even my cynical body somehow responded to the call. (Brahinsky 2012: 216)

2.1 Conviviality Touches and Transforms Body and Mind

Brahinsky's account reveals how a convivial situation can spontaneously activate highly intimate, compassionate, and new experiences. Far beyond cognitive decisions and ethical reasoning, the convivial space of the Pentecostal worship, with its sensual aesthetic formations, provokes physical and emotional reactions in Brahinsky that he recognizes, only to some extent, as familiar. Especially the sensation of heat and burning is new and uncanny to him. It obviously nearly exceeds the limits of what the researcher can endure and goes beyond what he has searched for. Nevertheless, despite his fear, Brahinsky is "psyched to feel the burn" and wonders if he is "learning" the neurological patterns that neuroscientific tests on Pentecostal brains have shown (Newberg et al. 2006: 67–71). The convivial situation of the worship service, thus, impacts his body and mind and sparks his fear but also his curiosity and readiness for further learning.

There is obviously a difference between Brahinsky and the other participants in the worship. While Brahinsky is not accustomed to the social bodily practices of the ritual, these practices re-activate a sense of togetherness in the other participants. Brahinsky is only starting to participate in this *communitas*. Even though, in the opening of the article, he states strong reservations about a possible conversion, he feels a sense of togetherness through participating in sensual experiences. He, thus, reveals a disposition that scholars of cosmopolitanism and conviviality perceive as mandatory for creating convivial spaces and for living together with difference: an "intellectual and aesthetic openness to people, places and experiences which involves mobility, curiosity, self-reflexivity and cultural literacy" (Wise/Noble 2016: 426; see also: Urry 2003). Aesthetics, in this context, refers not mainly to the appreciation of beauty. Adopting the Aristotelian understanding of aesthetics, the more recent discipline "aesthetics of religion" (Koch 2019) understands aesthetics as the ways in which sensory experiences are structured and valued within a community. Embodied practices, such as rituals and ceremonies, are vehicles through which aesthetics are realized. They engage the senses and facilitate the transmission of these otherwise highly particular and private body-related religious experiences within a broader public field, contributing to the formation of a shared communal identity. Aesthetics thus embraces "sensation *and* interpretation" (Grieser 2015: 14–23): lived, sensed religion on the one hand, and its discursive interpretation and construction on the other. Reactions and emotions like those that Brahinsky describes are therefore not arbitrary,

although they might include uncontrollable events. They are driven by a powerful and persuasive "politics of aesthetics" (Rancière 2006), that touch the senses and stimulate the imagination as well as epistemologies that are crucial for the formation of imagined communities. Hence, what an individual feels and interprets as "true" is highly political.

It is a truism that conviviality is not a rational concept with tools that can be learned and applied – at least not exclusively or primarily. It rather extends beyond mere cognitive interactions, involves aesthetic practices and sensory experiences, contains moments of passivity, overwhelms, and – even unwillingly – sparks emotional and physical reactions. The question that follows is, first, how are these aesthetic sensations and interpretations learned and passed on (2.2) and second, for scientific research, it is necessary to ask methodologically how these processes can be analyzed without, again, reducing them to "texts", as Vásquez has criticized, or by assuming that these experiences contain the paradox that Michael Polanyi has described as: "we can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi 1966: 4) (2.3). Lastly, deliberations on body knowledge in convivial situations lead to a broader discussion on epistemology in the present debate on the decolonization of knowledge and the assertion of a polyphony of knowledge (2.4).

2.2 "I am rooted, but I flow" – Conviviality Between Learned Habitualization and Unavailability

From the outside, Pentecostal practices like speaking in tongues, healing experiences, and states of altered, ecstatic consciousness might appear as spontaneous occurrences. Pentecostal theologians affirm this view from the emic perspective. Wolfgang Vondey (2017: 427–446) e.g., distinguishes between affects and emotions: While emotions embrace a certain activity, like training and interpretation on the side of the believer, affects cannot be controlled. They are immediately evoked as the Holy Spirit and, thus, prove that the experience is caused by God, not the human. They are *Geisterregungen* – arousals stimulated by the Spirit (Vondey 2017: 439f.).

Scholars of cultural and religious studies on the other hand assess these experiences as a result of a training and learning process and the repeated use of certain body techniques. Pentecostal ecstasy does not simply occur but requires constant training and routine practices, such as rituals, and psychological techniques that embody knowledge about God, Tanja Luhrmann states (2010: 66–78). The communal training process then supports the sense of conviviality on the level of body and mind.

Yet, the tendency to assess Pentecostal and other religious experiences and practices exclusively as a result of habitual learning overlooks the fractures and the "unconditionality" of social processes and follows a "predilection for successful formations of order", as Thomas Alkemeyer states:

> Their theoretical interest is primarily in the permanence and repeatability of routines, not the impermanence of the social; ruptures, interruptions, reversals, departures, or breakdowns in, between and of practices, bundles of practices and practice-arrangement complexes are neglected in favour of their robustness and continuity. (Alkemeyer 2019: 291)

Brahinky's report confirms both the aspect of training and the unavailability of his bodily experience. To further illustrate these two aspects and their relevance for convivial situations, I find the observation of Devaka Premawardhana, concerning Pentecostal embodiment practices, helpful: "I am rooted, but I flow" (Premawardhana 2018: 21). Studies on Pentecostal embodiment which favor Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus are often "too unilinear to capture all the dynamics at play", Premawardhana states (ibid: 143). He therefore proposes a "phenomenology of embodied indeterminacy [which] better discloses the connections and kinesis between religious traditions and between social spheres" (ibid). Sedimented body-knowledge and embodied certainties – "I am rooted" – are, thus, not static and predetermined. In moments of activation and in new convivial contexts they can also "flow". There is always room for indeterminacy, unpredictability, and bodily agency (ibid: 150–151).

2.3 Convivial Methodology

Brahinky's report is not only revealing for the question of how (body-related) learning in new situations is triggered and might be stimulated in intercultural religious communities and their ritual practices. It also conveys important insights about the methodology of scholarly research in a convivial context. In the more recent decades, there has been a shift towards partnership in research and bicultural forms of research. This can be understood as a reaction to the ethnographic and representational turn since the 1980s and, more recently, to the demand to "decolonize methodology" (Smith 2021) with its call to decentralize the power of representation and interpretation and be transparent regarding a researcher's own positionality.

Brahinsky's research points to a further aspect that, in my view, is also highly relevant for research on conviviality: the role of the emotions, the senses – and the body – of the researcher. His comment that his own "feeling of the burn" provides "incredible research data" suggests a research methodology that uses the physical and emotional experiences of the researcher as a source for new insights on the topic analyzed. Strictly speaking, Brahinsky was not completely free in choosing this research methodology. It was not – at least not exclusively – a rational decision that helped him gain new insights. He was rather, and to his own surprise, overwhelmed by the physical and emotional reactions that the situation precipitated. The convivial situation itself released an energy and a dynamic that countered the script of an unentangled "neutral" research position.

The inclusion of emotions in research contradicts the longstanding imperative to keep an emotional distance and assumed neutral position. Questioning this norm means questioning a fundamental assumption of "Western" academic research. To the historian Shobana Shankar, the "social control of emotions" and the practice of "scholarly 'social distancing' is an act of power" (2020). The inclusion of emotions in research is not unscientific nor does it impede knowledge creation, but is an ethical requirement, Shankar claims in an article written at the height of Covid-19 and, thus, impacted by physical, social, and emotional distancing. Times of uncertainty, like during the Covid-19 pandemic, show that it is necessary to make "human sciences more humane" (Shankar 2020; Nelson 2020). Shankar suggests: "Rather than assume that emotions impede knowledge-

creation and dissemination, we might consider how emotions and their manipulation are part of social norms, including norms of scholarly work." (ibid)

To sum up: in convivial situations the degree of uncertainty and fragility can be challenging and social norms are tested. A researcher who remains at physical and emotional distance and maintains control would probably not acquire physical and emotional knowledge because these exceed what can be experienced (Polanyi 1966). As Brahinsky's case study shows, the researcher is part of the convivial group, so he or she cannot distance him- or herself from their own or others' emotions and sensual experiences, but can use them as valuable sources of knowledge.

2.4 Embodied Convivial Epistemology

The question of methodology leads directly to epistemological questions. As previously noted, the focus on body knowledge and the ways people make sense with their senses (including emotions) represents a shift away from exclusively rational knowledge towards an appreciation of the polyphony of ways of knowing within hyper-diverse societies. Demands for a recognition of and education in epistemological diversity (Horsthemke 2019: 19–26) are receiving increased attention in the academy and wider public sphere. This recognition implies an end to what is being called the "monochromatic logic of Western or male epistemology" (Odora Hoppers 2002: vii–xiv) or a "mono-epistemic", "mono-historical", and "mono-cultural" "reconstitution of global citizenship education" (Abdi 2015: 21), or, simply, but very convincingly, the "single story" (Adichie 2009) of experiencing, perceiving, and interpreting the world. This requires taking the marginalized stories seriously, as well as the paternalized, invisibilized and silenced (Robel Afeworki Abay 2023) epistemologies, which are still shaped – as Paul Gilroy emphasizes in his concept of conviviality – by the "imperial and colonial past" that "continues to shape political life in the overdeveloped-but-no-longer-imperial countries" (Gilroy 2004: 2).

Raymond Boisvert has started to develop a concept of a "convivialist epistemology" that holds the potential for further deliberations on epistemological polyphony in convivial situations. I intentionally quote his proposition more extensively than it is often the case:

> For the convive, the one who emphasizes the with-ness of existence, neither of these emphases [that the human mind shapes reality or that reality shapes the mind] gets at the resonating center of the dealings with things that lead to knowledgeability about them. We are neither projectors nor mirrors. We are sapients, tasters, and, as such, look to trials, experimentations, lived experience, and conversations with others to enhance our understandings. The real action takes place neither with subjects nor objects, but with the intermediaries that mark their intersections between what would now better be called 'inquirers' and 'subject matters'. When Lorenzo Spallanzi, the eighteenth century researcher, wondered about the stomach's functioning, he developed mediating instrumentalities. He extracted gastric juices from animals, placed the juices on meat, and, in order to approximate internal bodily temperature, 'kept tubes containing minced meat, bathed in gastric juice in his armpits, for up to there days' […]. *A convivialist epistemology places the focus on precisely such mediating instrumen-*

> *talities. It is by adding layers of with-ness* that curious individuals like Spallanzi come to have some grasp of the way things are. (Boisvert 2010: 63)

Reading the whole passage with the research example of Spallanzi – and not only the frequently quoted passage (here in italics) – reveals how concrete and extreme Boisvert conceptualizes convivial epistemology. Knowledge can only be acquired with others. This demand questions the idea of an autonomous human subject as the creator of knowledge which is at the heart of the "story of Modern philosophy" and which has "sought to occlude, if not entirely exclude, the 'with'-factor in existence" (ibid: 58). Boisvert, by contrast, sharpens the idea of interrelatedness, interdependency, or interstitial spaces by including not only other human beings or animals but also meat, gastric juices, bacteria, and other *materia* into the processes of generating knowledge. "Adding layers of with-ness" goes beyond rational knowledge. It also demands the acknowledgement of different knowledge systems that exist next to each other in convivial heterogeneous situations and the affirmation of their diversity and polyphony. Convivial epistemology means that new knowledge emerges where different ways of being and intersectional interwoven layers of knowledge, as well as different perceptions of the self and the world, are accepted, sensed, and experienced. As the example of Brahinsky has shown, this new knowledge is not accessible by intentional choice alone but is evoked by the convivial atmosphere. It can be marked by a suddenness and spontaneity and by the subjective agency of the group dynamic as well as by the self-determination of the body, which Alkemeyer calls "bodily obstinacy", and "unavailability" (Alkemeyer 2019: 289–312).[6] Thus, spontaneous bodily reactions can reveal a "creative power in social practice," "which shows itself in the creation, linking and reinterpretation of given structures, ideas, images and symbols […] a 'constant source of becoming different' and 'inexhaustible source(s) of new meanings'" (ibid: 306; see also: Castoriadis 1990: 603; Condoleo 2015: 72f.).[7]

3 Convivial Field Study II

The second field study from Miriam Rabelo et al. (2009: 8–9) focuses on the cultivation of the senses among "poor Pentecostal women from the city of Salvador, North of Brazil" (ibid: 1). The study offers an illustration of the complexity of the aforementioned "layers of with-ness". It describes the contrasting convivial settings these women live in and how they negotiate conflicting expectations, bodily learned behavior, and knowledge. In their domestic living situation, they undergo not only poverty but also patriarchal subordination, yet during the Pentecostal worship they experience "the body as both container of divine power and source from which this power may flow and […] a sense of the self as emergent from ongoing dialogue with God" (ibid: 16). The following sequence reports a visit to the Igreja Primitiva de Christo Jesus in Salvador:

6 Translation: CJ.

7 Translation: CJ.

> While the choir sang songs of praise, a young woman gave signs of being taken over by the Holy Spirit. Her behavior was very peculiar, even for church members. First her posture exhibited clear signs of transformation: her arms moved synchronically like waves in the air, then she leaned her body and bent her knees as though supporting a very heavy weight on her shoulders. She cried out words of praise and spoke in tongues. As the preacher accelerated the rhythm of his own prayers, she was drawn to an even more peculiar state. Clearly moved she gave signs of a power that grew from inside her, inversely proportionate to her ability to control her body. She went on speaking in tongues, until she began to spin and make disorderly movements with her arms. Suddenly she started to move around and touch people as though transmitting some of the energy that was inside her. At this point the singing was intensified, preparing the faithful for the experience of the Holy Spirit: There is fire burning in the church, flames of fire. There is fire burning in the church, flames of fire. Fire, fire, fire, fire! Flames of fire! (Rabelo 2009: 8)

3.1 Conformity and Non-Conformity of Body Knowledge

This passage illustrates the deliberations on body knowledge and the unavailability and agency of the body itself that I have already pointed out: The reactions of the woman are not entirely random but follow a clear and normative script for this convivial context and, thus, a "prescribed visibility" (Pelmus 2018: 61–80) of how to move when the body is filled with the Holy Spirit. The analysis of this situation becomes more complex if we take into consideration the prescribed visibility of the woman in the domestic space. In the domestic surroundings, which Rabelo et al. have described as poor and patriarchal, the bodily behavior that the woman showed in the Pentecostal worship would express non-conformity with the social expectations or even express protest and subversion. Based on the studies by Rabelo et al. and other earlier researchers – like Brusco (1995) or Machado (2005) – it can be assumed that the Pentecostal body knowledge and sensations the women described are interwoven with the body knowledge gained in the domestic sphere – as well as the knowledge acquired in many other places like their family of origin, school, work, etc. All of this knowledge and these sensations are deposited in sedimental layers on the body and mind. Boisvert's various "layers of with-ness" are thus located not only in convivial spaces where people meet but also within the experiences of the Pentecostal women – like in every person – within themselves.

It is important to note that these layers, and the knowledge embodied in them, are not exclusively "individual". Rather, they are to a high degree shaped by worldviews and social discourses that performatively mark any experience and sensation and their interpretations. It is necessary to connect phenomenological research on the body with discourse analysis and historicization. The body phenomenologist Hermann Schmitz has described this important research process by figuratively portraying discourses as a "jungle" of "historical precedents" (Schmitz 2015: 11).

It is not easy – if not impossible – to discern between the discourses that are prescribed and inscribed onto the body and their "own" sensations. Are the body and the self only conforming to the expectations of the discourse? Or are they non-conforming? Rabelo et al.'s study shows that the layers of "historical precedents" – like the traditional

subordinate role of women – are activated in concrete places. However, the researchers also give examples of how this knowledge is transformed by new sensual experiences acquired in and through different convivial settings. They conclude that Pentecostalism "strengthens women's position in their relationships with the family, enhances their self-esteem, and offers them opportunities for the exercise of leadership outside the domestic sphere, thus promoting women's autonomy" (Rabelo et. al. 2009: 15).

3.2 Epistemology of Embodied Recognition

The precondition for the visible transformation of the women is that the convivial Pentecostal space is trustworthy and valued. No one rebukes the woman for dancing through the room, no one laughs at her, and no one wonders about her. The congregation seems to offer a safe place of belonging, marked by what the philosopher Axel Honneth has called an "epistemology of recognition" (2015: 111–126).[8] This means that the Self is recognized by the Other. Honneth's deliberations are illuminating for further reflections on a bodily convivial epistemology as he relates his epistemology of recognition to physical experiences that are crucial for the development of human beings. From the beginning, babies and children usually experience and embody recognition through prelinguistic gestures, like the smile of the parents etc., Honneth states. This bodily act of recognizing the Other is by no means an innocent gesture but an act of power: It does "justice" to the person recognized (Honneth 2015: 118) while at the same time, in the recognizing subject, a "decentering takes place […] because she concedes to another subject a 'worth' that is the source of legitimate claims infringing upon her own self-love" (ibid: 122):

> The act of recognition is […] the expressive demonstration of an individual decentering that we carry out in response to the worth of a person: we make known publicly by means of corresponding gestures and facial expressions that we concede to the other person a moral authority over us on the basis of their worth, that sets limits to the realization of our spontaneous impulses and inclinations. (ibid: 125–126)

The capacity to recognize the Other is, Honneth states, at the disposal of "every adult who has been socialized successfully" (ibid: 125). Hence, where it is missing, a distortion exists. For the study of convivial religious communities, these insights into an epistemology of recognition and its distortions are highly relevant. It reinforces the need to look at bodily practices of recognition, as well as at the denial of recognition and strategies of invisibilizations, as a particular form of othering. Applying Honneth's deliberations to the study of convivial contexts of religious communities would, thus, mean analyzing which stories, (body) knowledge, and ways of thought are told and which are invisibilized, and detecting how these dynamics impact not only the invisibilized and not-recognized person or group but also the whole convivial context. Without the capacity to

8 Honneth takes Ralph Ellison's novel "The Invisible Man" as an example to describe the difference between seeing and perceiving. The "Black" man is invisible to the "White" people around him because he is not "recognized" by them as a person.

"decenter" there is no communication and no community and vice versa, where moments of mutual recognition are encountered it is difficult to remain alone.

4 No Cheap Conviviality

The field studies reflected upon in this chapter convey powerful dynamics and politics of exclusion and inclusion acted out in body practices, which in turn are indicators of complex social dynamics, power structures, and hierarchies, as well as of the openness to change in convivial settings. As in the broader society, religious communities display a plurality in gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and (dis)ability. All of these factors are body-related and as such are highly vulnerable to acts of violence – be it in the form of misrecognition, normalizing assimilation, or invisibilization.

Therefore, research on convivial communities calls for an awareness of embodied colonial, racialized, sexualized, ableist, or class-related knowledge that has become assumed, normative, and normalized as implicit, latent knowledge in the community, in other words: on the convivialist epistemology at hand that becomes manifest in aesthetic and embodied practices and knowledge.

The plurality of the various layers of with-ness becomes particularly apparent in situations of epistemological dissonance. These dissonances are a reminder that conviviality – as an analytical term – is not an idealized and highly normative image of living together peacefully. The logic of conviviality rather embraces living together with tensions, conflicts, contradictions, unequal relations, hierarchies, and, finally, power. This postcolonial and body-related perspective on conviviality furthers the attempt to avoid re-telling official stories of conviviality which tend to harmonize tensions and to invisibilize inequalities but to instead consider the complexity and inequality of convivial contexts that are written into the body and experienced by it. In order to avoid the banalization of power, which often acts as camouflage and operates in embodied, naturalized, and tacit ways, research on conviviality with a focus on the body describes dissonances and even "hardship and failure" (Heil 2019; Mbembe 1992: 1–30) rather than success. It starts with the human body because "there is no humanity [and thus no conviviality] without our bodies" (Mbembe 2021: 58–62).

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