Article

Afro-Brazilian Religions and the Prospects for a Philosophy of Religious Practice

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Abstract: In this paper, we take our cue from Kevin Schilbrack's admonishment that the philosophy of religion needs to take religious practices seriously as an object of investigation. We do so by offering Afro-Brazilian traditions as an example of the methodological poverty of current philosophical engagement with religions that are not text-based, belief-focused, and institutionalized. Anthropologists have studied these primarily orally transmitted traditions for nearly a century. Still, they involve practices, such as offering and sacrifice as well as spirit possession and mediumship, that have yet to receive attention from philosophers. We argue that this is not an accident: philosophers have had a highly restricted diet of examples, have not looked at ethnography as source material, and thus still need to put together a methodology to tackle such practices. After elucidating Schilbrack's suggestions to adopt an embodiment paradigm and apply conceptual metaphor theory and the extended mind thesis to consider religious practices as thoughtful, we offer criticism of the specifics of his threefold solution. First, it assumes language is linear; second, it takes a problematic view of the body; and third, it abides by a misleading view of the "levels" of cognition. We conclude that the philosophy of religion should adopt enactivism to understand religious practices as cognitive enterprises.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian religions; Candomblé; Umbanda; religious practice; religious cognition; embodied paradigm; conceptual metaphor; extended mind; languaging; enactivism

1. Introduction

In 1945, French anthropologist Roger Bastide wrote, "[Afro-Brazilian] philosophy is not a barbarian philosophy, but a subtle thought that has not yet been deciphered" (Bastide 1945, p. 134). We accept the hypothesis of a "subtle thought" waiting for us to decode it: a revealing opening to human religiosities that, despite having received much attention from anthropologists, has not been engaged with by philosophers of religion—not even in their birthplace. Regarding the two main African-derived traditions in Brazil, namely Candomblé and Umbanda, we aim to demonstrate that these traditions raise methodological worries that the current philosophy of religion has no tools with which to face. In so doing, we aim to offer suggestions on how to remedy this.

In the last decade, the philosophy of religion has withstood mounting attacks on its methodology, scope, and motivations, but not much has changed. Many see it as a discipline in which, on the one hand, outside influences, such as upbringing and education, play a pernicious role, and on the other, a tendency to explore and even formulate its questions solely in terms of its own practitioners' traditions is prevalent (De Cruz 2018a). The titles of monographs and edited volumes have announced its end (Trakakis 2008), questioned its purpose (Knepper 2013), called for its renewal (Draper and Schellenberg 2017) and reconfiguration (Kanaris 2018), and wondered what its future might look like (Eckel et al. 2021). To date, perhaps no work has more forcefully argued for overhauling the philosophy of religion than Kevin Schilbrack's *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto* (Schilbrack 2014).

Schilbrack diagnoses the traditional philosophy of religion as narrow, intellectualist, and insular. Narrowness refers to the fact that it suffers from a very restricted diet of examples. Even though attention to traditions other than Christianity has been growing, the two main branches of the philosophy of religion—natural theology and epistemology of religion—engage disproportionately with Christian traditions. Intellectualism refers to the fact that the philosophy of religion is biased toward the analysis and assessment of religious beliefs to the exclusion of other practical religious phenomena, such as rituals, pilgrimages, feasts, and dietary laws. Finally, insularity refers to the lack of connection between the philosophy of religion and other disciplines in the academic study of religion and even from different fields within philosophy. Traditional philosophy of religion, Schilbrack remarks, does not "play well with others" (Schilbrack 2014, p. 20).

Because they constitute a significant step in the right direction, Schilbrack's insights merit close examination and, if and where necessary, expansion and revision. In Section 2, we offer Afro-Brazilian religions as a case study to illustrate the methodological poverty of the current philosophy of religion. We show that the absence of discussion of Afro-Brazilian (and, more broadly, African-derived) religious traditions substantiate Schilbrack's assessments. In Section 3, we present Schilbrack's threefold solution to methodological poverty: adopting an embodiment paradigm on the one hand and employing the theories of conceptual metaphor and the extended mind on the other. While agreeing with the spirit of Schilbrack's suggestions, in Section 4, we criticize Schilbrack on three counts, namely for thinking of language as linear, adopting a "standard" conception of the body, and conflating basic and high-level (as well as online and offline) cognition. We conclude that adopting enactivism may fruitfully amend Schilbrack's account and point towards avenues for future research.

2. Afro-Brazilian Religions

Atlantic slave traders forcefully brought to the shores of Northeastern and Southeastern Brazil more enslaved Africans than any other country in the world: an estimated 5.8 million people between the arrival of the second Portuguese India Armada headed by Pedro Álvares Cabral on 22 April 1500 and the phasing out of the slave trade in 1866 under Brazil's last monarch, Pedro II (Gomes 2009). These were people of diverse African ethnic and cultural backgrounds who found themselves mixed indiscriminately, especially in the first two capitals of Brazil: Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. They brought their languages, deities, devotions, rituals, cuisine, dances, and music. These mixed with traditions brought by enslaved people from other regions and syncretized with the Roman Catholicism imparted by the Portuguese colonizers. The two main traditions arising from this convoluted and intricate process are Candomblé and Umbanda.

The "Sudanese" and the Bantu people were the main ethnic groups brought to Brazilian shores from Africa. "Sudanese" referred not to present-day Sudanese but West Africans from present-day Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and Togo. They include, among others: the Yoruba, known in Brazil as *Nagô* (subdivided into *Queto*, *Ijexá*, and *Ebá*, among dozens of others); the *Jêje* (from the Ewe and Fon peoples); and the Ashanti. These populations labored in northeastern sugar mills after arriving in Brazil between the middle of the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. Meanwhile, "Bantu" encompassed present-day Congo, Angola, and Mozambique populations. They included the Angolans, Kasanje, and Mbangala peoples, among others. The most significant number of enslaved people is estimated to come from this group. The Bantus arrived mainly through the port of Rio de Janeiro. They labored along the coast and the interior, especially the region between the present-day states of Minas Gerais and Goiás. They were brought into the country from the sixteenth century until the nineteenth century.

Their diasporic worship traditions did not simply replicate their African forms in Brazil. Slavery forced people accustomed to living within specific social, political, and religious organizations into a completely different context as laborers within a society that put an end to previous structures of organization. It also forced them to negotiate their

religion in a hostile environment and articulate their old social customs within the confines of oppressive slave culture. Thus, Afro-Brazilian religions manifest a history of resistance, and the construction of Black and Afro-descendant identities as a wide variety of African nations reorganized themselves in the diaspora to support daily life in a slave regime (Engler and Brito 2016). This negotiation is a process that endured through the abolition of slavery and is still ongoing.

The standard narrative, especially among practitioners, is that the ensuing Afro-Catholic syncretism present in most forms of Candomblé up to this day resulted from the prohibition against worshipping their deities. For example, the deity associated with hunting and usually depicted armed with a bow and arrow, Oxóssi, was syncretized with Saint George in Bahia and Saint Sebastian in Rio de Janeiro. Thus, as Ayodeji Ogunnaike (2020) observes, many analyses of Afro-Catholic syncretism frame it through the metaphor of a mask in which enslaved Africans ingeniously employed the traditions of Catholic saints to disguise their worship of African deities, ensuring the preservation of their practices. In recent years, however, many practitioners of Candomblé have sought to "re-Africanize" their traditions by removing the white masks from their deities. Over the past several decades, it has become one of the most critical aspects of discourse and ritual.

The landscape of African-rooted religions in Brazil is richly varied, including traditions such as Babassuê, Batuque, Jarê, Macumba, Omolocô, Pajelança de Negro, Quimbanda, Tambor de Mina, Terecô, Xambá, Xangô de Pernambuco, and others. Nevertheless, pride of place is usually given to Candomblé for historical, cultural, and demographic, if not simply chronological, reasons. Candomblé is an Afro-diasporic religious tradition—or rather a family of religious traditions subdivided into many "nations"—that developed in Brazil mainly during the 19th century. It features the invocation and celebration of African deities (*orixás*, *inquices*, or *voduns*, depending on the nation in question) as well as semi-divine ancestors and other powerful spirits who possess initiated people.

Candomblé teaches that while every human being is under the government of deities whose identity is revealed through divinatory rites (*ifá*), only some persons can "incorporate" the divine beings in their bodies. The deities are associated with specific elements of nature, such as the air (Oxalá), freshwater (Oxum), the sea (Iemanjá), thunder and lightning (Xangô), rain and wind (Iansã), forests (Oxóssi), iron (Ogum), mud (Nanã), and others. They "come down" to possess human beings in festive and public ceremonies in a specific kind of trance characterized by the complete or near-complete loss of consciousness on the part of mediums. Homage must be paid to the deities through offerings and animal sacrifices to facilitate the transmission of the sacred, vital force (*axé*), which is held to be indispensable for maintaining health and well-being. The worship of the deities, through possession and sacrificial offerings, forms the basis of several religious traditions born in the context of New World slavery, including Cuban *Santería*, Haitian *Vodou*, and Dominican *Vudú*.

The bridge between Candomblé and Umbanda is Kardecism, a Brazilian transplant of the nineteenth-century French Spiritist tradition initiated by Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, best known by his pen name Allan Kardec. Brazilian Kardecism has developed more explicitly religious dimensions than its French counterpart: for example, emphasizing healing and miracles, reflecting a mixture of popular, especially Afro-Brazilian, practices and sanctifying leaders because of their healing and psychic abilities. Brazilians employ the term "Spiritism" (*Espiritismo*) in different ways: broadly, any mediumistic practice including popular religious beliefs, Afro-Brazilian traditions, Umbanda, and Kardecism; more narrowly, Umbanda and Kardecism; and more narrowly still, limited to just Kardecism (Engler and Isaia 2016).

Umbanda is a Brazilian hybrid of Candomblé, Kardecism, and popular Catholicism, with romanticized indigenous elements (Engler 2012). In Umbanda, one incorporates spirits but not deities—although *orixás* frequently take attendance, represented by spirits belonging to a group (called *linha*, "line" or *falange*, "phalanx") that mediates contact between practitioners and deities. However, Umbanda varies greatly, to the point where one can safely say that there is not one Umbanda but many Umbandas, with a great diversity in

beliefs and rituals (Motta 2006). It varies along a spectrum going from more Africanized to more Europeanized forms. While Umbanda most often assimilates elements of Candomblé, its core doctrines are Kardecist: God created all spirits equal and undeveloped, and their purpose is to evolve spiritually through multiple incarnations; spirits develop at different rates: some are sufficiently advanced that they no longer need to incarnate, but they sometimes choose to, motivated by charity, to help less developed spirits who still live in this world—much like, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, bodhisattvas vow to remain in *saṃsāra* until every last sentient being is saved (Chödrön 2007, p. 358).

As Steven Engler (2021) explains, Umbanda has two main types of spirits: guides who perform acts of charity and guardians who protect from dangerous forces (particularly evil spirits). Mediums develop a deep, personal relationship with certain spirits of each type with which their community or house works. The most common guides are *caboclos* (kindly but magisterial Indigenous spirits; specialists in healing) and *pretos velhos* ("old black person"; wise, elderly, formerly enslaved people). Other spirits include *crianças* ("children"; innocent and playful), *malandros* (rogues, womanizers, drinkers, gamblers), *ciganos* ("gypsies"; happy, disorderly spirits), and *sereias* ("mermaids"). Two other essential types of spirits incorporate in some groups as guardian spirits: *exus*, powerful male tricksters, and *pombas giras*, female spirits with a sexualized moral ambivalence.

To speak of variegated, plural, and malleable traditions almost always involves a significant risk of overgeneralization. Even so, we cannot avoid some measure of generalization if we are to speak about them at all. Notably, we want to highlight four characteristics of these two traditions. First, they are orally transmitted, and there are no agreed-upon textual sources. Second, they are noninstitutionalized in that no central authority controls Candomblé or Umbanda, and practitioners organize in autonomous groups. Third, they are ritual-focused, and there is no centrality to the profession of faith. Fourth, they are significantly embodied in their ritual ceremonies that involve dancing, singing, and drumming. Regarding these last two points, we may say they are "not so much thought out as danced out" (Marett 1909, p. xxxi). Thus, these traditions deviate from the rarified academic Christian theism that still permeates the philosophy of religion.

We submit that attending to traditions such as Candomblé and Umbanda can offer the philosophy of religion a mirror through which to see its methodological limitations. Schilbrack points out that it has been practiced narrowly, ignoring a vast expanse of religious traditions outside Christianity and other major religious groups. He notes (Schilbrack 2014, p. 12) that almost no philosophers of religion are working on African traditions even though there may be 50 million people who practice Yoruba religion alone (Prothero 2010). There are also next to zero philosophers of religion working on the indigenous wisdom traditions of Australia, North America, or South America as well as New Religious Movements.

In ignoring so many traditions, the questions philosophers of religion ask (and the answers they offer) reveal a degree of religious illiteracy that throws doubt on its relevance to the academic study of religion and on whether it even deserves the name philosophy of *religion*. However, even within its narrow confines, the traditional philosophy of religion has been slow to move beyond a highly intellectualized and abstract "theism" that bears little resemblance to how religions are practiced and lived (Hewitt and Scrutton 2018). One sees this conspicuous intellectualism in the almost unswerving focus on belief and doctrine at the expense of all other practical aspects of religious life. Ritual practices that are not only endemic but central to Candomblé and Umbanda, such as offering and sacrifice, spirit possession, eating, drinking, dancing, and singing, have been investigated almost exclusively by other branches of the academic study of religion. In this, the philosophy of religion reveals its insularity, being practiced in near isolation from anthropology, psychology, and cognitive science, for instance, but also being slow to incorporate insights from fellow philosophical disciplines such as the philosophy of mind.

These traditions raise specific and compelling questions for the philosophy of religion, and the discipline needs to review and expand its methodology to deal with them. Thus, the contact between these hitherto isolated worlds can illuminate the study of both. Consider

the practice of sacrifice—with very few exceptions, it is altogether absent from discussions in the philosophy of religion (Burley 2020). In *Hearing the Mermaid's Song*, Lindsay Hale provides a vivid description of sacrifice in what he calls "Afro-Brazilian Umbanda" (in contrast with "White Umbanda"):

> It was quiet and cool and just about midnight when I heard Seu Silva singing about blood and Tranca Rua, his rough voice wafting in from the gate outside the House of Father John. The forty or so people who had come to consult the spirits that night had left, as had most of the mediums. Only a handful of the most senior mediums—along with Jorge, Fernando the drummer, and me—were left still inside, barefoot on the packed dirt floor of the *barracão* (the main ritual space), as the soft night breeze lifted Seu Silva's hymn to Tranca Rua. We followed the sound out to the gate. There on a low stool, his sanguine complexion even redder in the candlelight, sat Seu Silva, a large clay bowl of manioc flour stained reddish orange from *azeite de dendê* (red palm oil) at the feet of his thick short legs. Fernando handed Seu Silva a young live chicken. Seu Silva took a swig from his beer, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and picked up a sturdy knife. Holding the chicken above the bowl, he cut its throat, letting the blood spurt over the offering, and then on the gate, and, finally, with the last drops he sprinkled the street that runs by the gate in front of the House of Father John.
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> (Hale 2009, p. 134)

In both Candomblé and Umbanda, deities and spirits are active and immanent in our world, working for people on this side, being received by initiated practitioners, and communicating instructions and advice. The purpose of offering and sacrifice is to fortify and nourish deities and other spirits as well as appease them to act on the subject's behalf. When it is successfully performed, the deities feed on the energy (*axé*) of the sacrificial victim, and this energy returns to the devotee. What is the view of the afterlife held by these traditions? Do they postulate immortality? What ontological commitments are implicit in their ritual practices?

"Possession" is a broad term that refers to an integration of spirit and matter, force or power, and corporeal reality in a cosmos where the boundaries between an individual and her environment are recognized as permeable. How can mediumship be seen as evidence for their view of what happens to us after bodily death? What do these practices entail concerning the relationship between human beings, spirits, and deities? How can offerings and sacrifices be seen as evidence for the view of the nature of spirits and deities supported by Candomblé and Umbanda?

If the philosophy of religion will not ask such questions, how can it offer anything in the way of an answer? We argue that the discipline is unable, as it stands, to deal with ritual-based, embodied oral traditions with no central theological authority, such as Candomblé and Umbanda. Still, taking this direction would mean expanding and re-evaluating the discipline's methodology. We should raise questions that can be an antidote to narrowness, intellectualism, and insularity. For example, what does it mean to consider the religious person an embodied subject? How should the material and social aspects of religious rituals figure in an explanation of religious cognition? How can we develop a philosophy of religious practice?

The philosophy of religion must move beyond its current focus to become a global form of critical reflection on religions in all their varieties and dimensions in dialogue with other branches of philosophy and with other disciplines of the academic study of religions. Moreover, if one wants to philosophize about religion, then, as Timothy Knepper notes, "one needs to understand religion in all its messy cultural-historical diversity. Insofar as one considers only a limited set of traditions or reasons, one's philosophy of religion is limited" (Knepper 2013, p. 76). However, as soon as we try to bring new religious traditions into the fold of the philosophy of religion, especially ones that are ritual-focused and orally transmitted, we are faced with the question of how we should go about this task (De Cruz 2018b). The philosophy of religion has paid almost no attention to ritual, even

the ritual life of those religions that have received pride of place within it. Philosophers will not be able to rely on the same *sources* when thinking about religions that are not codified, text-based, institutionally centralized, and do not have a theological tradition as input. Thus, we argue that attention to cultural anthropology and ethnography is crucial to philosophizing in Afro-Brazilian contexts.

3. Body, Language, and Cognition

After diagnosing the traditional philosophy of religion, Schilbrack contends that we should adopt an embodiment paradigm to see religious practices as thoughtful (Schilbrack 2014, p. xiv). Such a paradigm would entail conceiving of a religious body not only as a passive object on which culture operates but also as the seat of subjectivity and religious being-in-the-world. Building on this, Schilbrack recommends two theoretical tools that assume an embodiment paradigm and that, he argues, help us understand how embodied, situated, and materially extended practices are properly cognitive.

The first is the theory of conceptual metaphor, first explored by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Schilbrack argues that it lets us see how abstract religious thought draws on embodied knowledge learned in the physical exploration of the world. The second is the theory of the extended mind, first stated by Andy Clark and David Chalmers in their seminal paper (Clark and Chalmers 1998). Schilbrack argues that it lets us approach the material aspects of religious practices as cognitive prosthetics that help practitioners remember and process information.

Schilbrack argues that the two theories complement each other in that the theory of conceptual metaphor focuses on embodied knowledge that is mainly prelinguistic and, to that extent, shared across cultures, while the approach of extended mind focuses on aspects of religious practices that are culturally particular. In this section, we will briefly expound on the ideas Schilbrack relies upon and recommends before we can offer some (hopefully constructive) criticism of his suggestions in the next section.

3.1. The Embodiment Paradigm

Schilbrack recognizes that the philosophical study of religious practices is a relatively unexplored field. The traditional division of labor in religious studies ascribes the study of religious beliefs to philosophy as if the mind was its proper object of concern. In contrast, it ascribes the study of the practical, material, and social aspects of religious phenomena to the social sciences: anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history. However, this division of labor does not do justice to the philosophical tools developed in the last decades.

The body became a significant source of philosophical attention in the phenomenological tradition. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty conceives the body as a non-dualistic, active, basic source of our relatedness to the world (Merleau-Ponty 1945). He criticizes the then-prevailing Cartesian dualism for conceiving of the soul and the body as two separate entities: the soul as immaterial, rational, and spontaneously active and the body as a passive entity in a perceptual relationship to the system of material objects. Schilbrack levels the same kind of criticism at the division of labor in the traditional philosophy of religion. It no longer needs to restrict itself to beliefs and doctrines, having theology and sacred texts as its only source, since it can now investigate the body as an actor in religious practices.

The anthropologist Thomas Csordas (1990) was responsible for bringing the embodiment paradigm to bear on religious studies. For Csordas, embodied cognition is more than a thesis that enables a new analysis of knowledge: it consists of a methodological perspective that takes the body as a condition for subjectivity and intersubjectivity, not a passive object determined by forms of social consciousness. That opens new paths to introduce different objects of study and renewed perspectives on religious practices, such as the role of the body in rituals. Nevertheless, despite a slow methodological shift in recent decades, the academic study of rituals still predominantly occupies itself with the study of symbols and abstract meanings referred to through semiotic analysis. However, we cannot

fully understand these practices with these methods alone. The way bodies interact during
rituals and the actions of agents involved in them elicit the reactions of others. Again, the
body is not simply a passive object on which cultures write their different meanings but is
also the source of one's engagement with the world. Therefore, the embodied paradigm is
not only instrumental but essential to understanding the body's active role in rituals.

Schilbrack distinguishes between the *pre-reflective* and the *reflective* body, which cor-
responds to what Merleau-Ponty calls the *lived* and the *objective* body. These are not two
distinct bodies we possess but the same body under different forms of consideration. The
lived body is pre-reflective because it is the body from the standpoint of our everyday
experience. It is a pre-reflective body because it is available but "absent": it does not make
itself conspicuous in a flowing action such as effortlessly running or playing an instrument.
In these contexts, the body is not the object of one's awareness; it is the ground from which
one perceives and acts in the world (Schilbrack 2014, p. 14). On the other hand, when one
thinks, considers, and observes one's own body, it becomes an object. That is the reflective
body. In this case, the body is a physiological entity, a spatiotemporally extended thing. We
cannot separate these two perspectives because they unfailingly interact: for instance, a
lesion in the brain's parietal lobe causes disturbances in the lived body.

The dialectics between these perspectives is intricate. On the one hand, the pre-
reflective body cannot be an object of one's attention at the cost of interrupting the flow
of action. On the other, as the reflective body seems to be the pure consciousness of an
owned body, it also paralyzes the agent in a state of absorbed attention that makes the body
unavailable to action. We can coordinate the pre-reflective and reflective perspectives on
the body by considering how the body can be owned or unowned, present or absent, and
available or unavailable.

Shaun Gallagher (1986) delineates three descriptions of the relationship between
consciousness and the body inspired by Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the lived and
objective body. The first description is *the presence of the body*: the body is present when a
particular tension arises and reveals it as part of the field of perceptions. In this case, the
body is thought of as owned, and the "I" who experiences it knows it to be one's own. An
example of this relationship to one's body would be the perception of a broken finger—the
pain and swelling one feels is a visually and perceptually conscious way of sensing the
presence of the body as one's own. In this case, the body is present to consciousness, owned,
but not necessarily available because it is objectified and cut off from action.

The second description is *the ambiguity of the body*. Merleau-Ponty dubs this a pre-
conscious knowledge of the body with no clear and articulate perception of it. In this case,
there is no explicit consciousness of the body but only implicit or tacit knowledge. No
reflective or objectifying conscious observation occurs, only the ownedness of an available
body. Gallagher explains it is "not a possessive owning" since "the body is not a thing
which 'I' own and which therefore makes me the subject and it the object" (Gallagher 1986,
p. 144). The ambiguity of this presence is related to the fact that the body assumes the
margins of our consciousness: the surrounding situation and the body's physiological state
determine how its potentialities appear to pre-consciousness. The body is not absent from
consciousness but is owned and available.

The third description is *the elusiveness of the body*. The body can escape consciousness
as if it were not even in the margins of one's awareness of the world: it is "repressed below
personal existence" (Gallagher 1986, p. 146). This is the body as experientially absent of
conscious experience, but it can indeed be owned and unowned by the subject. In this case,
the body may be absent and unowned, and its availability depends on other factors.

Concerning the concept of presence, Gallagher calls our attention to three possibilities.
First, there is the lived presence of the body as owned is possible because one consciously
feels pain or tiredness, for instance. That is the simplest case where the subject has the
body present to consciousness and owns a body that is one's own. Second, there is the
"unowned" presence of the body as a total otherness. That happens in the case of patients
who suffer from somatoparaphrenia, a monothematic delusion that involves the denial of

ownership of bodily parts (Sacks 1984). The body is present but not owned, as if belonging to another person. Some of these patients complain about having a strange limb attached to them and even try to excise their arms or legs. Third, there is the body as absently available and owned, which Gallagher believes is more fundamental since it is pre-reflective. This is the body when it is in tune with the environment during an action or absorbed perception. When there is a smooth connection between both the body and the relevant surroundings, we are not aware of our leg kicking the ball but instead are "lost in focused intensity" (Gumbrecht 2006, p. 51); we do not feel our hips moving to the side in relation to our body's center of gravity, only the delight of swinging to the music. In this case, the body is muted and flows with the elements involved in the action.

That raises the question of how one can experience the absently available body. Gallagher contends that the biological and psychological sciences have offered enough evidence to demonstrate that there is a *body image* and a *body schema* (Ataria et al. 2021). These two concepts help explain experiences of ownership, availability, and the presence of the body. The body image is the picture of our body that we form in our mind, that is, how the body appears to us (Schilder 1935). This picture is constituted in consciousness as the body incorporates habits related to the kinds of objects of the environment and how the perceptions, emotions, and actions of others affect the subject. Body image makes the body owned, present, and no longer anonymous. The arrangement and systematization of body images from different contexts enable the constitution of body schemas.

The body schema is the standard against which all subsequent changes in bodily posture are measured before they enter consciousness. These standards are unconscious and result from actively organizing bodily performance in given contexts without forming a general representation of the body. The body schema is not a perception of the body as one's own. Instead, it situates the body with respect to a particular context, allowing it to be in communion with the environment. In sum, the body image is a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs present to consciousness or its margins; and the body schema is a non-conscious system of processes that constantly regulate posture and movement (Schüler 2011). When the body acquires a style, any state can be regulated by insertions of conscious adjustments using body images.

As Boyer and Liénard (2020) observe, various distinct cognitive mechanisms are engaged in various combinations in the diverse interactions called "rituals". With the conceptual framework of the embodied paradigm, we can begin to criticize those approaches to studying religious practices that assume they are thoughtless, non-cognitive enterprises. As Schilbrack observes, religious practices are not only expressions of religious thought but also instances of that thought. They are opportunities for cognition and inquiry about health, love, duty, maturity, sovereignty, purpose, or, more abstractly, the nature of human existence and the entities embodied and honored (Schilbrack 2014, p. 44). The dialectics between body image and body schema allows us to learn to see the body as the means through which practitioners investigate and create meaning. In participating in embodied religious practices, one learns about oneself, those with whom one interacts, the world, and the superempirical resources that make the practice successful (Schilbrack 2014, p. 45). In other words, the embodied paradigm allows us to recognize that the religious subject is an active inquirer.

Building on this, Schilbrack suggests that philosophers of religion should employ tools from cognitive linguistics and the philosophy of mind to take seriously the embodied knowledge and material culture that bring about and result from religious practices. Whether participants in such practices are consciously aware of it or not, rituals are encoded with meanings or cognitive contents. They are there for the interpretations and explanations of what is going on, that is, to see religious practices as having a cognitive function because they frame how participants conceptualize abstract features of their lives.

3.2. Conceptual Metaphors

Cognitive linguistics sees human cognition as dependent on mappings between domains, with "mapping" understood as a correspondence between two sets that assigns to each element in the first a counterpart in the second. It asserts that human cognition is independent of language and that linguistic manifestations of cross-domain mappings are surface manifestations of deeper cognitive processes. These mappings take several forms. Perhaps the most significant is what Gilles Fauconnier refers to as "projection mappings" (Fauconnier 1997, p. 9). In these, part of the structure of a more concrete or organized *source* domain is used to understand and talk about another, usually more abstract or less structured *target* domain. Since our primary and most highly structured experience is with the physical realm, the patterns we encounter and develop through the interaction of our bodies with the physical environment serve as our most fundamental source domains (Slingerland 2004).

In this context, conceptual metaphor theory argues that the capacity for abstract thought is based upon the application of structures encountered in embodied experience and transferred to various other domains. Crucially, sensorimotor and image structures play a primary role in shaping our concepts and modes of reasoning. Humans subconsciously draw on embodied experience to form templates (or image schemas) that structure the comprehension of abstract concepts. For example, categories are conceptualized as "containers", purposes as "destinations", and so on. Lakoff and Johnson offer some representative primary metaphors such as AFFECTION IS WARMTH, IMPORTANT IS BIG, and MORE IS UP, specifying their sensorimotor source domains and the primary experience correlations that give rise to them:

(a) Purposes are Destinations

Subjective judgment: achieving a purpose;

Sensorimotor experience: reaching a destination;

Example: "He'll ultimately be successful, but he isn't there yet";

Primary experience: reaching a destination in everyday life and thereby achieving a purpose (e.g., if you want a drink, you need to go to the water cooler).

(b) Actions are Self-Propelled Motions

Subjective judgment: action;

Sensorimotor experience: moving one's body through space;

Example: "I'm moving right along on the project";

Primary experience: common action of moving oneself through space.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1999, pp. 52–53)

As Johnson explains, the label PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS should be seen as shorthand for the complex web of connections in our experience and understanding formed by this mapping across domains of experience rather than a propositional statement: "the metaphor itself is not reducible to the proposition we use to name it" (Johnson 1987, p. 7). In short, conceptual metaphor theory claims that we draw on our basic bodily experiences and spatial perceptions to form models that allow us to grasp and manipulate abstract concepts.

Edward Slingerland (2004) argues for the usefulness of the analysis of conceptual metaphors for the study of comparative religion, and Schilbrack follows him in saying that structured religious activities participate in both the physical experiences that generate patterns of understanding and the conceptual metaphors that deploy those patterns to reason about the world. In this way, they provide the patterns of experience on which religious teachings draw and can also deploy them to develop and teach ways of life. Schilbrack suggests mortality as an example of a target domain:

> Religious communities practice rituals that frame this feature of human existence according to different metaphors. A given funeral ritual might frame the experience of death as if it is a departure for a journey. This conceptualization would be

conveyed by how the body is handled, what is buried with it, and the physical markers that are used. If one sees death as a departure for a journey, then ritual participants will think of the deceased as a kind of traveler, they will feel that he needs to be equipped with the accessories needed for the journey, and the question of his final destination will become central. A different funeral ritual might teach that death is a release from pain and bondage, and this metaphor will entail a different set of activities. Another might teach that death is going to a permanent sleep, another that death is a return to one's proper home, or another that death it is simply the end of life and that nothing comes after.

(Schilbrack 2014, pp. 39–40)

Schilbrack's point is that the practice's gestures, architecture, implements, and words can teach metaphorical frames that shape the affective and cognitive responses to the phenomenon. Thus, conceptual metaphor theory reminds philosophers of religion that human subjects' engagements with the world are far more complex than the computations of disembodied minds processing raw data. Because abstract religious knowledge draws on embodied knowledge learned in the physical exploration of the world, we agree that conceptual metaphor theory provides an elegant framework for taking religious practices seriously as cognitive enterprises.

Schilbrack illustrates conceptual metaphor theory by citing the example of the Chinese Buddhist story *Journey to the West.* It describes the allegorical quest of the Tang dynasty monk Xuanzang and his "piggish and monkeyish" pilgrim companions as they overcome hazards on a journey to India to secure Buddhist scriptures (Schilbrack 2014, p. 48). Schilbrack highlights that this fictional narrative deploys the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. However, as Mikel Burley (2015, p. 238) notes, since *Journey to the West* is a text, analyzing its allegorical structure does little to reorient philosophy away from texts and toward responsiveness to embodied practices. Burley argues that we should acknowledge that an analysis of actual pilgrimages could and should accompany the analysis of textual accounts. He advocates for philosophers' real-life engagement with ritual practices—in this case, observing a Buddhist pilgrimage could help us consider how it embodies the belief in karma and the conviction that the voluntary taking on of hardship is spiritually purifying (Burley 2015, p. 238).

3.3. The Extended Mind

The extended mind thesis was formulated by Clark and Chalmers (1998) and elaborated by Clark (2008), Richard Menary (2010), and others. Clark and Chalmers' best-known example involves Otto, who carries a notebook in which he writes important information he would otherwise forget and consults it whenever necessary. The argument for the extended mind starts from the observation that the functional role of Otto's notebook and that of the internal neural memory system of someone who can access the relevant information without the notebook is the same. The information in Otto's notebook is easily and directly accessed and is generally not doubted or questioned, just like the information in a neural memory system. If internal brain processes are constitutive of memory, we should also view Otto's notebook as part of his memory. Clark calls this the parity principle (Clark 2008, p. 77). In short, the material vehicles that realize the mind sometimes encompass not just neural or bodily activity but also the material environment. Since we can offload cognitive work onto physical media through extracranial tools, the extended mind thesis states that "mental states (such as believing) can be realized, in part, by structures outside the human head" (Schilbrack 2014, pp. 42–43).

In applying extended cognition to the study of religion, Schilbrack draws on work by Matthew Day (2004), who argues that we should reconsider the possible roles and significance of material culture in religious cognition. In Day's words, rituals, music, relics, scriptures, statues, and buildings associated with religious traditions are more than quaint "ethnographic window dressing" (Day 2004, p. 101). As Schilbrack notes, just as notebooks, computers, and smartphones, the material aspects of religious practices can serve as

cognitive "prosthetics". To clarify this, Schilbrack offers a helpful example of extended cognition that involves looking to one's environment for help with memory or with the provisional steps in problem-solving and manipulating the external tools themselves:

> In Scrabble, as in many games and other intellectual puzzles, one's ability to reach a solution does not emerge solely from inner cogitation. Instead, one arranges and rearranges the Scrabble tiles in order to create a variety of fragmentary inputs that will prompt the recall of whole words from one's ability to see and complete patterns. There is a sustained and iterated process of interactions between one's brain and the external physical props. . . . [T]he example of the Scrabble pieces illustrates how thinking may use cognitive prosthetics not solely as an aid to memory, but in some cases involves their manipulation to find the best solution, a solution that does not merely help one recall what one already knows but rather fits one's situation best. Thus, when one finds the best arrangement in games like Scrabble, one does not say: "Ah, now I remember," but rather: "Ah, there you go."

> (Schilbrack 2014, p. 41)

In this way, cognitive prosthetics introduce tangible features of the world that can be physically manipulated and tracked in real time. Material culture thus transforms the computational assignment. In religious contexts, implements, artworks, offerings, and other physical media can serve as cognitive prosthetics and allow people to exchange intricate offline problems in dealing with counterintuitive, invisible, and supernatural agents for online cognitive tasks at which humans are proficient (Day 2004). These will be perceptual rather than imaginative tasks, including recognizing patterns, modeling worldly dynamics, and manipulating objects.

Some material artifacts involved in religious practices, such as the rosary for Catholics, the misbaha for Muslims, or the japamala for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists, resemble memory prompts similar to notes left on one's fridge. However, how religious practitioners interact cognitively with their ritual environment is sometimes like moving around Scrabble tiles. Consider first one of Schilbrack's illustrations, the Stations of the Cross: fourteen images that depict the events in the crucifixion and burial of Jesus to foster contemplation and devotion. He quotes a treatment for children of the fifth station, in which Simon the Cyrene helps Jesus (Mark 15:21):

> *Fifth Station: Look at Jesus.* Jesus is so tired that the soldiers know he cannot carry the heavy cross by himself. So they look around and see someone who looks strong enough to help Jesus carry this cross. This person's name is Simon. Jesus just looks at Simon and quietly whispers, "Thank you" to Simon. Then they continue on the long road, carrying the cross together.

> *Look at Your Heart.* Sometimes helping someone can be difficult, for so many different reasons. Maybe you haven't finished something that you like to do, when someone asks you for help. Or maybe you just don't feel like helping that person. Can you think of a time when you were asked to help someone and did not want to help? Show Jesus what it was like when that happened, and picture Jesus loving you as you show him your heart. Maybe you can even hear Jesus whisper, "Thank you for helping." When you are ready, you can ask Jesus to help you to have a helping heart.

> (Schilbrack 2014, p. 46)

Schilbrack comments that these ritual devices use a series of images as memory pumps to remind participants of their dramatic narrative contexts. However, the practitioner must decide which images with which to identify, which actions to emulate, and how those actions can fit her own life. There may be one best answer about which scene is most fitting to one's life or what interpretation of that scene to draw. Still, participants are relatively free to apply the norms represented in images to their situations. Like the tiles in Scrabble, the physical representations provide incomplete prompts to engage participants to think in

a certain way—about themselves, others, and the world. Schilbrack notes that the material environment provides the conditions for making progress on normative problems like paper and pencil for solving math problems.

Now, consider the practice of spirit possession as it occurs in Umbanda. Spirits incorporate in mediums during rituals, in which they offer one-on-one consultations, advice, consolation, and ritual healing services—a practice it shares with Kardecism but not Candomblé, in which only the deities incorporate. Engler (2021) observes that a dozen to several hundred clients might attend a ceremony, each being seen and spoken to by a spirit who has incorporated in one of the half-dozen to fifty or more mediums. The spirits' needs (organizing clients, spreading incense, providing liquor, lighting a cigar, or fetching herbs for healing smoke) are often catered to by mediums in training. What is remarkable here is that spirits, otherwise invisible, are believed to *take attendance*. By coming down and incorporating in mediums, spirits talk, laugh, joke around, admonish, smoke, and drink. In an Umbanda ceremony attended on 2 July 2022 in Salvador, a *caboclo* incorporated in a young female medium hugged one of the authors of this paper, almost lifting him off the ground. Another, incorporated in the "father" (*pai*) of the *terreiro*, singled him out, called him forth, and asked him to dance along with the *caboclo*.

However, we agree with Schilbrack that religious cognition goes well beyond interacting with supernatural beings, such that the religious use of cognitive prosthetics exceeds helping participants deal with them. In terms of what James Gibson called *affordances*, humans see their environment as providing opportunities for action, not merely receiving sense data but perceiving value-laden properties of things in the world. That gives us a way to speak of religious affordances: religious practices are not just mechanical actions but modes of subject formation that train people to see the world as providing opportunities for proper action. The values that participants believe they see and respond to may well be values in the world. Thus, religious practices are materially afforded and cognitively extended opportunities for inquiry, and for this, if not for many other reasons, they merit attention from philosophers of religion.

4. Objections

4.1. Language as Linear

In his use of conceptual metaphor theory, Schilbrack assumes that patterns of sensorimotor activity are the "sources" of linguistic metaphors (Schilbrack 2014, p. 41). For example, movements such as standing are the basis for understanding the sense of verticality in space. Furthermore, more abstract ideas, such as "life is a journey", are grasped from the time-linearity of movements such as a ball rolling. Humans observe how movement works in nature by manipulating objects; afterward, they compare it to the patterns of their bodily movements. We then use these movements and relationships to build up concepts that will finally compose sets of categories and hierarchical relationships. This model is tacitly committed to a linear understanding of the relationship between body and language:

- Sensorimotor activity is the source;
- Processing organizes information;
- Language as behavior constitutes the target.

While we agree that the body is a source of powerful metaphors that enable understanding the world and ourselves, the assumption of linearity in describing how sensorimotor activity grounds language is problematic. Instead, we argue that language is not constituted by linear causation, where we can distinguish a source and a target, but by circular processes carried out by continuous co-determination loops. If the process were linear, as Schilbrack describes it, we would not be able to understand how religious concepts and abstractions can also conversely shape organic and sensorimotor processes.

Consider what Susan Hurley (2001) calls the *sandwich model of cognition*. This once-mainstream model has three central tenets. First, perception and action are separate from each other and peripheral. Second, thought and cognition are the central core of the mind: the mind decomposes vertically in modules where cognition interfaces between

perception and action such that, in this "sandwich", cognition is the filling between two bodily positions, the input (perception) and the output (action). Third, cognitions are processes involving symbols and syntactic structures.

Schilbrack's implicit commitment to linearity chimes with Slingerland's idea that our primary experiences are with the physical domain. In other words, the primary input to build language comes from the physical world, including the body. However, Schilbrack himself contends that the physical world is neither as naïve realists nor as anti-realists understand it. Still, if it is not the "independent" physical world that offers a primary input, we are left without a clue as to which world this is. We no longer know the origins of the sensory experiences that should ground our capacity to grasp and manipulate abstract concepts.

We can solve this puzzle by adopting an *enactive* conception of the relationship between the body and the world. This conception can solve problems entailed by linear conceptions of language development and enable an understanding of how abstract thought can also shape bodily experiences. That is important for our concerns because we agree with Schilbrack that embodied religious practices are cognitive but not only in enabling abstract linguistic knowledge. Religious practices constitute ways of being in the world in which we find different bodily postures, styles, feelings, emotions, and practical perspectives on existence.

According to enactivism, there is no pre-given world that provides information for our processing. Instead, organisms and the environment are co-constitutive (Stewart et al. 2010). Through each organism's contingent interactions with the environment, a world of experiences emerges for that organism, which implies existence is an active process. Enactivism conceives life and mind as emerging together from dynamic processes and life as essentially *autopoietic*. That means that life is a self-organizing phenomenon since it produces the conditions of its existence. In that sense, every living being is an autonomous adaptive unit trying to remain a system identical to itself and dynamically related to the environment. However, to reach this goal, living beings must select, modify, and construct the frames with which they make sense of the world (Di Paolo et al. 2018). Therefore, living beings are also *sense-makers*. Sense-making explains how experience arises, for it is the means through which a system acknowledges what is relevant to its maintenance. Living beings *enact* their bodies and the world since the reality of their bodies and the physical world is dynamic: it depends on the sensorimotor contingencies that bind perception and action to "bring forth a world" (Varela et al. 1991, p. xxxix). In a nutshell, without action, there is no world and no perception.

Human sense-making is social and linguistic. Through language, humans monitor, evaluate, regulate, and organize their existence by employing a form of sense-making that Humberto Maturana (2000) calls *languaging*: a form of social agency involving a double regulation of self and interaction that integrates the tensions inherent in dialogical organization and participation genres. Thus, human sense-making is verbal and assumes different forms of expression because, for humans, meaning is conveyed not only in concepts and propositional thought but also in ways of enacting the world and the body. Accordingly, here, we part ways with Schilbrack since he does not offer a conception of the body in interaction with the physical world (nor of the world involved with action and perception). Acknowledging mutual constitution allows us to avoid problems concerning the priority of the body over the physical world or the physical world over the body. Consequently, we also avoid linear conceptions of relatedness.

The different layers of embodied existence are continuous. Recognizing this is vital if we wish to explain how religious linguistic metaphors enact forms of bodily existence that causally influence all levels of living existence, from micro-organic processes to the health of individuals. As Thomas Fuchs (2017) observes, different layers of integral causality connect basic metabolic and conscious linguistic existence. Integral causality connects causal relationships within a domain with new layers of phenomena with its non-reducible causal laws emerging from more basic ones. Because language arises out of more basic autopoietic

activities, it does not originate only from the topography of bodily movement, as Schilbrack intimates. It arises in connection with the different layers of interconnected living activity, such as social interactions, patterns of sensorimotor activity, affect, sensation, values, and metabolism that build up the experience of being embodied. To generate linguistic phenomena such as metaphors, many layers of emergent properties must connect in bottom-up causation. Conversely, the upper layers of embodied phenomena constrain these layers by top-down causation. They reciprocally reorganize emotions, affect, sensation, metabolism, and embodied patterns of sensorimotor activity (Merleau-Ponty 1942).

In her study of Afro-Brazilian religious practices, Rebecca Seligman (2014) notes an excellent example of how linguistic metaphors affect the body. She notes that spirit possession is a privileged context in which to investigate the effects of meaning on the body. Ideas, beliefs, and discourses transform people's bodies, resulting in healthier conditions and well-being. Religious practices modify dietary habits, bodily posture, movement style, social interactions, and anxiety levels, affecting general mental health and well-being.

In sum, we submit that the enactivist framework can enrich the study of religious practices because it sees the human body not only as a structure for action but as a living entity that acts in conformity with its biological, psychological, social, and even historical needs. Enactivism has the virtue of looking at religious practices both holistically and in segmented, partial ways. It connects different domains of existence in bottom-up and top-down causation, enabling a broad understanding of the possible effects of religious practices in human life.

4.2. The "Standard" Body

Schilbrack's arguments reveal a tension between his theory of embodied realism and his description of the spatial logic of the world, leading him to a problematic conception of the body. He describes a child manipulating objects and moving her body to constitute an image schema of how the world works and responds to action, affirming that these image schemas are unreflective and nonpropositional: "templates for engagement with the world, they are not static but carry expectations and entailments" (Schilbrack 2014, p. 41). However, it is unclear what these templates are. Matylda Ciołkosz describes them as "the minimum content mediating between basic and scaffolded cognition. They are pre-conceptual representations of varieties of motion and sensation out of which fully fledged concepts may be built" (Ciołkosz 2017, p. 138).

On the one hand, if image schemas are pre-conceptual representations, this is consistent with Schilbrack's embodied realism, which claims that there is no single objective and independent spatial logic of the world. However, adopting a representationalist framework brings on difficulties in explaining how the congruence of representations is possible since they entail some degree of private ownership. That is why Schilbrack is committed to a universal pre-reflective body that grasps the same spatial logic everywhere in action. Otherwise, he would be unable to explain cultural congruence unless he were to consider it a mere coincidence. As he observes, conceptual metaphor theory explains divergent cultures in terms of shared experiences by showing how diverse ways of conceiving the world share metaphors and how those metaphors arise in universal or near-universal patterns of embodied activity (Schilbrack 2014, p. 49).

Robin Zebrowski (2009) dubs the received view of the body in cognitive science and conceptual metaphor theory *the standard body*. This conception results from projecting a standard body constructed by anatomical, neurological, and physiological similarities. It envisages the body doing the same sorts of things, having the same types of environmental stimuli, and reacting in the same way everywhere, resulting in a basic bodily structure that leads to the same kinds of patterns of embodied activity. However, while embodied experience grounds language and thought, it is problematic to project the same embodied pattern of experience universally.

First, it creates a dichotomy between the universally biological and the culturally specific in our embodied dealings with the world. If what is knowable is only the shared

and universal aspect of our experience, then actual living bodies with their idiosyncrasies and historical, geographical, and socio-cultural practices would be lost to the darkness of their intentions. Furthermore, differences in body structure, physiology, skin color, hair texture, weight, and ability would not be considered relevant to the meanings experienced and generated by living human bodies.

Second, it splits individual cognition and social cognition. Individual embodied cognition would be a private, internal, and particular result of deep biological structures. At the same time, language and culture would be social, public, and outer manifestations of thought belonging to a separate human world. This rift casts material culture and social meanings as otherworldly entities and biology into a rigid and deterministic structure.

Third, it deleteriously affects our understanding of the cognitive nature of religious practices. The standard body leaves aside the plastic acquisition of "particular histories, idiosyncratic in-the-world perspectives and styles, and intercorporeal openness of embodied being" (Cuffari et al. 2015, p. 1118). It blinds us to how individuals live out embodied religious practices in their context and culture, losing sight of the perspective of lived experience in which agents often struggle with their different bodies interacting in particular and multilayered ways.

Consequently, we should adopt a different understanding of the relationship between body and meaning to deal with these problems. It is not an abstract notion of the body that grounds the possibility of shared meanings: meaning is present from the start. Again, sense-making is central to understanding how bodies coupled with other bodies and the environment create and compose meanings and evaluate the world through action and perception. The body is never in isolation, and cognition is the proper way of relating to this world. Against the standard body, we hold that the body is always idiosyncratic since differences and particularities are essential to how meaning is generated and transformed in the interplay between the unfolding interaction process and the individuals engaged in it (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007).

In addition, the body is indissociably coupled with the social world. The biological interpenetrates the social, and the social interpenetrates the biological. Hence, the body's uniqueness is expressed in its style, ways of acting and reacting, personal experiences of pleasure and pain, and so on. It is in constant dialogue with others and the world in co-created conversations, altering its style, reframing its actions and reactions, and learning from experience. In sum, autopoietic systems show *adaptivity*, an operational property that allows an organism to regulate its coupling with the environment according to its conditions of viability (Di Paolo 2005). Adaptivity entails the interrelationship between bodies and environmental structures that comprise an extended ecology. The ecological perspective takes bodies and the environment as co-determined, mutually adapting to each other.

If adaptivity is a characteristic of living beings, it must carry consequences to studying religious practices. We hold that religious practice is a human form of sense-making. Embodied religious practices result from the dialectics of past, embodied, singular experiences that compose the processes of current embodiment and the manifestations of life in autopoietic sense-making existence. We can thus investigate how meanings are embedded, rituals adapted, and practices taken up or abandoned. Meaning is shared not because of a universal pattern of bodily experience but because of engagement with particular environments and persons. It unfolds across multiple timescales in an ongoing process of joint achievements through various interactions with shared symbols and emergent interactive dynamics.

4.3. Levels of Cognition

We agree with Schilbrack when he declares that we should not "exaggerate the idea that religious practices are a source of novel thinking" (Schilbrack 2014, p. 44). Indeed, many religious practices are repetitive or mechanical. In various contexts, practitioners are indubitably passive in the face of traditions and authorities, some subject to indoctrination

or even brainwashing. Nevertheless, even practices that can seem automated or thoughtless, be them memorizing scriptures, reciting mantras, or undertaking pilgrimages, can serve as *opportunities for inquiry.*

Still, when Schilbrack says that "the theory of conceptual metaphor . . . lets us see ways in which abstract religious thought *draws on* embodied knowledge learned in the physical exploration of the world" (Schilbrack 2014, p. xiii, our emphasis), we insist that this is only half the story since in this scenario the individual cognizer is not necessarily in constant co-constitutive relationship with her environment. Conversely, when Schilbrack concludes that conceptual metaphor theory and extended mind together give philosophers of religion the tools to see that "insofar as a religious practice houses metaphors about a 'target' domain . . . then participating in the practice is *itself an exercise in abstract thought*" (Schilbrack 2014, p. 39, our emphasis), he is opening himself to the criticism that this constitutes a gross conflation of basic and higher-level as well as online and offline cognition.

That we can and should see religious practices as ways of imaginatively and effectively interrogating one's environment is something we enthusiastically support. As we saw in Section 3.2, mortality is an example of a target domain in conceptual metaphor theory to which we can metaphorically apply knowledge drawn from other domains. That, in turn, generates hypotheses about the nature of mortality by positing specific similarities to other domains. Again, this means that abstract thought draws on embodied knowledge, a judgment Schilbrack is theoretically well-equipped to make. However, he cannot be justified in declaring that religious practices are in and of themselves exercises in abstract thought while escaping from the double accusation that he is at once conflating the operational conditions of cognitive processes and assuming a disembodied, computational-functionalist model of cognition.

A solution to this problem is to abandon the idea of a Cartesian split between basic and higher-level as well as online and offline mental functions, relegating it to the status of a metaphor about levels of description—a sometimes helpful but misleading heuristic tool. In other words, we should abide by a broad notion of sense-making that does not forget the involvement of the whole organism and forsake the idea of decoupling by placing the cognizer in constant co-constitutive relationship with her environment. For instance, Roberto Motta (2005) shows that trance is a characteristic of Afro-Brazilian religions in which we can speak of social cognition through embodied practices such as dancing, drumming, and singing. In these practices, individual and collective participation interpenetrate without the Cartesian split. In this way, the motivation behind Schilbrack's need to say that religious practices are exercises in abstract thought—namely, to justify their philosophical relevance—becomes redundant. Cuffari et al. (2015, p. 1093) observe that the commitment to a fundamental principle of continuity means that we can apply coupling and autonomy not only to "low-level" sense-making. We must rely on them to explain all linguistic sense-making—including religious practices, which, in agreement with Schilbrack, we are convinced to be properly cognitive enterprises.

5. Concluding Remarks

We have offered the Afro-Brazilian traditions of Candomblé and Umbanda as examples of the lack of reach of the philosophy of religion not only because the philosophy of religion has, by and large, ignored these traditions but, most importantly, because it does not possess an appropriate framework for philosophically investigating them. Again, this is because the philosophy of religion has focused on text-based and institutionalized traditions and the doxastic aspects of such traditions while, for the most part, ignoring the practical and embodied aspects involved in liturgical performances. For this reason, it is necessarily at a loss regarding what to say about the central phenomena of Candomblé and Umbanda, namely mediumship through spirit possession, dancing, singing, and the preparation, consumption, and offering of ritual foods.

While these traditions are not text-based, have not developed systematic theologies, and do not offer philosophers the usual sources they usually rely on, cultural anthropol-

ogists and ethnographers have attended to them for nearly a century. When it comes to these traditions, it is thus not a matter of choice but of necessity to do *ethnographically informed* philosophy of religion—especially but not exclusively if one does not or cannot engage in participant observation for oneself. As Burley (2020) forcefully argues, relying on thicker modes of description and fostering interdisciplinary methods helps promote a global–critical philosophy of religion that can tackle phenomena routinely neglected by the mainstream philosophy of religion. Significantly, it can aid in pursuing a philosophy of religious practice that does not sanitize or homogenize and that embraces these practices in their messy cultural-historical diversity: "What's ragged should be left ragged" (Wittgenstein 1984, p. 45).

In terms of avenues for future research, we suggest enactivism will shed light on orality through the notion of participatory sense-making—the capacity of two or more agents to evaluate and cognize the environment and themselves in normative and collaborative ways. Cuffari et al. (2015) discuss languaging as a special kind of social agency that emerges from participatory sense-making. Languaging is a way to deal with the tensions that social beings experience, which involves the capacity to generate culturally shared horizons of normativity. Moreover, it is how social beings individuate themselves out of intersubjective processes that incorporate sensitivities and powers. We learn how to live in a language and to build and maintain linguistic practices. In Afro-Brazilian religions, orality is one of many participatory sense-making practices, but it is undoubtedly the most crucial form of languaging. Through spoken words, secrecy is transmitted, power is managed, and survival strategies are traced (Johnson 2002). We can thus understand orality as an adaptive practice.

Afro-Brazilian religions do not possess a central authority, so this demands a different understanding of how they organize their identity. Every *terreiro* has its idiosyncrasies, particular practices, and ways of conducting rituals, but there is also a tradition transmitted by learning with the elders. Thus, there is a degree of self-regulation and freedom where the practitioners must adapt to the reality at hand. Still, some mimicking of the past regulates the possibilities of the present. We can likewise understand non-institutionality with the notion of participatory sense-making, through which we can access how collaborative networks of practitioners enrich and share meanings, practices, and cognition. Enactivism also takes into account the embedded historical and social influences that make up the context in which a meaningful practice arises. This is a fundamental tool that helps us not to discard possibilities of practices still connected to Afro-Brazilian religions but in somewhat different fashions.

Many Afro-Brazilian priestesses (*mães de santo*, lit. "mothers of [the] saint[s]") say that theirs is a "religion of the hand" that consists less in believing than in doing. One has to go through the rituals themselves to learn to see anew. Enactivism proposes that cognition emerges from the dialectic between the cognitive agent and the environment. The agent actively explores the environment to constitute cognition and a set of abilities necessary for its development, and yet, at the same time, their actions also constitute the environment. It is through the constant interaction between world and subject that the world becomes something for the subject and the subject something for the world. Hence, if Afro-Brazilian religions are focused on doing, enactivism helps us understand how they bring forth a world with a different objecthood for their practitioners. Significantly, Afro-Brazilian religions reframe the ordinary world of the practitioner as it *heals* them (Montero 1985). Healing encompasses enacting various forms of relationships to food, sex, social circles, work, and so on. In this sense, enactivism facilitates the comprehension of changing relations and the constitution of processes.

Finally, embodied practices such as dancing, drumming, and singing in rituals are fundamental to elicit the invocation or "coming down" of deities, semi-divine ancestors, and other spirits. Here, enactivism can clarify the relationship between normativity and embodied practices. Dancing steps, musical rhythms, and chanting are all normative practices that regulate the rituals in embodied ways. The agent perceives what the environment

solicits and offers, while the environment affords the agent interaction possibilities so that the environment is valued and assessed in the very act of perception (Gibson 1979). Accordingly, sets of abilities are constituted as the practitioner becomes involved in Candomblé, Umbanda, or related traditions. Those abilities are the means through which the practitioner relates to what the *terreiro* affords to their perception. For instance, perceiving the spatial organization of the *terreiro* affords where and how one dances; learning to feel the music and the drumming affords the production of trance; and the different rituals of the *terreiro's* calendar afford the rhythm of one's life, including work, conjugal, and social life.

Schilbrack has undoubtedly made great strides in remedying narrowness, intellectualism, and insularity in the philosophy of religion. By pointing to the need for an embodied paradigm and suggesting tools such as conceptual metaphors and extended cognition, he has made us more aware of the importance of the way abstract thought draws on embodied knowledge and of the significance of material culture for religious cognition. We have stood on his shoulders in an attempt to look further, motivated by the impression that he came close to adopting the enactive approach and the conviction that it can mend extant issues in his methodology. These are the first (and admittedly rudimentary) steps in adopting enactivism as a framework for studying religious practices. There is still much work ahead, which is especially true regarding aspects Schilbrack overlooks, such as the religious significance of social cognition and the affective scaffolding (Colombetti and Krueger 2014) afforded by shared rituals and religious material culture. We hope that we have shown that enactivism is a viable framework to pursue a philosophy of religious practice that will encompass traditions that we may say are prototypical in their orality, non-institutionality, focus on rituals, and embodiment.

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