

# Inside, Outside and the Space in-between: Territories and Boundaries in the Study of Religion

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## Abstract

Insider/outsider issues are of central importance for the definition of religion and for the identity of religious groups, for the subjectivity and relationships of their adherents, for methodological issues within the study of religions and for the relationship between non-theological and theological studies of religion. Conceptions of 'inside', 'outside' and 'boundary', the emotions surrounding them, their origins in the social relations of body, family and strangers, and the metaphors used to depict and manage them all provide important insights for thinking about religions, how they are studied and by whom. A discussion of socio-spatial and cognitive linguistic theories of categorisation, containment and boundary-making is followed by several case studies in which territories and boundaries are explored with reference to the relationship between 'religion' and 'magic' in medieval Europe, the Enlightenment construction of 'religion', 'religions' and 'non-religion', and, briefly, the disciplinary engagement of religious studies and theology. The application of the concept of the 'sacred' to these boundaries and the spaces they produce is considered.

*Keywords: insider, outsider, center, periphery, boundary, secular, non-religion, witchcraft*

Conceptions of 'inside', 'outside' and 'boundary', the emotions surrounding them, their rootedness in the socio-spatial relations of body, territory, family and strangers, and the metaphors and representations used to depict and manage them all provide important insights for thinking about religions, about the relationship between 'religion' and 'non-religion', and about how religion is studied and by whom.

Whether used in folk accounts – as *emic* terms – by religious people to refer to what goes on within a religious group and what constitutes the religion in terms of its conceptual, behavioural and moral contents, or in scholarly scientific accounts – as part of an *etic* construction – 'inside'/'outside', 'insider'/'outsider' and 'boundary' are commonly used concepts. At a time

when other metaphors – such as flows, nets, webs, crossing, interconnection<sup>1</sup> – are popular, when dualistic thinking is critiqued and often avoided in the academy,<sup>2</sup> when boundaries are frequently conceived as porous, and when the third space of the margin has been imagined as a site of both resistance and identity politics,<sup>3</sup> notions of containment, of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ nevertheless continue to be invoked. They are repeatedly uttered in everyday parlance. They are voiced by politicians and civic representatives in discourse about citizenship and belonging, and by religious leaders and interfaith exponents in discussions about religions and their private and public location within the nation state. Scholars of religion cannot avoid them either, drawing on such notions to demarcate their academic territories, to locate and contextualise the religious objects, texts and people about which they write, and to articulate their own standpoints *vis-à-vis* the religions they study.<sup>4</sup>

In this article I begin by considering why this is the case, with particular reference to body and spatial metaphors in cognitive linguistics. I then explore two cases in detail and refer to a third, focusing on boundaries and their role in the formation of various conceptual and disciplinary ‘containers’ in order to illustrate how container metaphors and notions of boundary – ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ as well as ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, ‘convergence’ and ‘divergence’ – have been invoked to express certain ideas about the location and relationship between ‘religion’ and other bodies of knowledge, between different religions, and between religious studies and theology.

Apart from being a cognitive-cultural tool for examining social and object positions and relations in the study of religion, our embodied spatial experience of containment, its place in our cognitive unconscious and its consequences for categorisation and ‘sacralisation’ have – I suggest – significantly contributed to the production of ‘religion’ (and its opposite, ‘non-religion’) and to the discipline of studying these categories and their contents.

### **Body, Mind and the Generation of Metaphors of Containment and Boundary For Making a Difference**

Metaphors such as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ and other spatial terms were brought to widespread scholarly attention in the 1980s through the cognitive linguistic studies of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, first in their joint

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<sup>1</sup> See Tweed (2006) for examples.

<sup>2</sup> In feminist scholarship, e.g. Christ (1997); Jantzen (1998).

<sup>3</sup> In postmodern scholarship, e.g. Rich (1986); Rose (1993) and Bhabha (1994).

<sup>4</sup> Examples include Ellwood (1993); McCutcheon (1999); Conroy (1999); Arweck and Stringer (2002); Knott (2005b); Streib (2007).

book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), and then in their independent studies: Lakoff's *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (1987) and Johnson's *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (1987). Their embodied realist agenda was revisited and developed in 1999 in their joint book *Philosophy in the Flesh*. Lakoff and Johnson link our human bodies and innate spatial experience with the metaphors we use and our attempts at categorisation by means of the cognitive unconscious.<sup>5</sup> We are 'evolved to categorize', they say, categorizing as we do 'because we have the brains and bodies we have and because we interact in the world the way we do' (1999, 18). We categorize on the basis of the body: up/down, front/back, left/right.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, we distinguish in and out, inside and outside on this basis. I was once 'inside', in the womb of my mother and was expelled to the 'outside' at the moment of birth. My body has an interior and exterior; I ingest and exhale. Others are 'outside' my body.

From this corporeal and physical experience of spatial boundedness our minds generate what Lakoff and Johnson refer to as a 'CONTAINER image schema',<sup>7</sup> 'consisting of a *boundary* distinguishing an *interior* from an *exterior*', the basic logic of which is 'everything is either inside a container or not – *P* or not *P*'. (Lakoff 1987, 272.) (See Fig. 1.)

In addition to having its own directly understood structure, this *image schema* is used metaphorically to structure other complex and often abstract concepts (p. 283). In the most developed account of this, Johnson notes that there are several 'important entailments or consequences [...] of image-schematic structures for *in-out* orientation' (Johnson 1987, 21):

- (i) The experience of containment typically involves protection from, or resistance to, external forces [...]
- (ii) Containment also limits and restricts forces within the container [...]
- (iii) Because of this restraint of forces, the contained object gets a relative fixity of location [...]
- (iv) This relative fixing of location within the container means that the contained object becomes either accessible or inaccessible to the view of some observer. It is either held so that it can be observed, or else the container itself blocks or hides the object from view.
- (v) Finally we experience transitivity of containment. If B is *in* A, then whatever is *in* B is also *in* A. (Johnson 1987, 21–2.)

Intrinsic to the image schemata of containment is the notion of force. 'Thus a CONTAINER will have a border that one must exert some force to overcome'

<sup>5</sup> For a recent criticism see Pinker (2007, 245–61).

<sup>6</sup> See my discussion of Kant's 1768 essay on this subject (Knott 2005a, 15–17).

<sup>7</sup> Lakoff's own capitalisation.

(Sørensen 2007, 42); authoritative insiders will resist or exclude those outside the border, and restrict the movement of those within it.<sup>8</sup> Fundamentally, the experience, and thus the representation, of containment necessarily involves separation and differentiation. These entailments will be witnessed as we consider the CONTAINER schema in relation to religion, religions and their study in the following examples. At this point, we should just take note of Lakoff's point that 'categories (in general) are understood in terms of CONTAINER schemas', with other structural aspects of categorisation, such as hierarchy and relations between parts, being understood in terms of other spatial schemas, including UP-DOWN, LINK and CENTRE-PERIPHERY (1987, 283). On the basis of this, it should come as no surprise to us that the categories 'religion', 'religions' and, by default, 'non-religion' are conceptualised with reference to the idea of containment and its attendant notions of interiority, exteriority and boundary, and that how we then study them is affected by the conditions of this type of representation.

Before moving on to consider several examples, I shall consider the work of Veikko Anttonen, another theorist who has used these ideas of interiority, exteriority, boundary and categorisation, but in his case in relation to the notion of the 'sacred'. In *Ihmisen ja maan rajat. 'Pyhä' kulttuurisena kategoriana* (1996a) and a number of articles in English, 'human body' and 'territory' are denoted as fundamental pre-conceptual structures for the generation of discourse and practice pertaining to the 'sacred' (1996b, 41). The value of 'body' and 'territory' for investing boundaries with 'sacred' significance derives from their inter-relationship, or what Anttonen calls their 'co-extensiveness as bounded entities' (p. 41). The human body has both an inside and an outside, the latter being co-extensive with the inside of the territory which it inhabits. The boundaries between body, territory and beyond – that separate both the inside of the body from the territory and that which is outside the territory from those within it – become culturally dependent cognitive markers for distinguishing between entities on the basis of their value and for establishing rules for their engagement and transformation:

Human beings have the dispositional property to invest the boundary-points of categories of for instance time, space and the human body with special referential value and inferential potential. This capacity is activated in places set apart as sacred. (Anttonen, 2002, 31.)

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<sup>8</sup> Sørensen explores the dynamic, force-relations associated with the categorisation of religion and magic, noting the logical possibilities of interaction between CONTAINER and TRAJECTORY image schemata as rejection, annexation, attraction, retention, expulsion and repulsion (2007, 167).

The 'sacred' as a category boundary separates different domains, such as body from territory, and person from animal, and yet binds them together. 'It is generated as a boundary in situations when the focus of a community or a person shifts from the inside to the outside' or vice versa (1996b, 43).

Having considered many vernacular uses and instances of the concept of the 'sacred' in a variety of ethnographic settings, Anttonen suggests that

[such] attributions of sacrality become more open to empirical verification when they are theorized on the basis of [the] actions, events and intentions of cultural agents in specific contexts as they make distinctions between spaces, mark them for specific uses, create visible and invisible boundaries, and establish cultural conventions of behaviour to deal with those boundaries (Anttonen 2005, 198).

The contexts may or may not be 'religious', but they are all locations of what Flood refers to as 'semantic density', as opposed to the mundane transactional practices of those areas not marked out as 'sacred' (Flood 2006, 52). It is just such spatial and cultural practices that we shall witness in the examples that follow.

According to these scholars, it is the boundary – not the interior space – that establishes the principle of containment and the attribution of sacrality. Lakoff characterises the CONTAINER schema as 'consisting of a boundary distinguishing an interior from an exterior' (1987, 271), the boundary being the distinguishing feature. According to Anttonen, '[i]t is the notion of a category boundary that establishes the "sacred" and the difference that it makes' (2005, 198). So, rather than examining the 'inside' or 'outside' of the objects of investigation *per se*, in what follows I will focus on the boundary. But, as I hope to show, it is boundaries – themselves constructed and invested with meaning – that define containers and position people and objects, that generate margins, and encourage, permit or prohibit crossings. Insides and outsides, I suggest, are themselves constituted by boundaries.

I argue that *religion* as a domain opposed to 'magic' or 'the secular', *religions*, as separate ideological and practical systems, and *religious groups* as collective entities are all differentiated and categorised according to the CONTAINER image schema. They are *conceived* – I use this word deliberately in order to stress the idea that 'religion', 'religions' and 'religious groups' are themselves discursively and practically constructed representations – as containers, as separate entities differentiated from others within the same genus.

In the following sections I focus on three boundaries: the boundary between religion and magic in medieval and early modern Europe; the Enlightenment boundaries that produced 'religion', 'religions' and 'non-religion'; and, briefly, the disciplinary boundary between theology and religious studies. I will use diagrams to illustrate the operation of the CONTAINER schema as it applies in these cases.

### **A Hidden Boundary: Constructing 'Religion' and 'Magic' Within a Single Epistemological Field**

Evidence from a number of scholars writing about religion, magic and witchcraft in late medieval and early modern Europe suggests that these aspects of culture and society were then inextricably interwoven (Thomas 1973; Duffy 1992; Kieckhefer 1994; Arditì 1998; cf. Sørensen 2007).<sup>9</sup> They partook of the same universe of meaning: 'Only one world and only one language is involved' (Clark 1997, 13). Jorge Arditì stresses that, despite appearing *within* a religious worldview to be contradictory and in opposition to one another, medieval religious and magical discourses were 'functions of the same epistemological field' (1998, 10), though each discursive camp contained various heterogeneous discourses. Together, they shared the same 'immense appetite for the divine', and 'although often representing opposite sides of the same coin, were, by the same token, congruent' (Arditì on Kieckhefer 1998, 31).<sup>10</sup> (See Fig. 2.)

Yet such antipathy and fear developed within religious circles against magic (or certain types of it) that religion and magic took on the appearance of ideological separation, indeed opposition. Arditì suggests that this was a function of the hegemony of the ecclesiastical authorities. Those practices that 'were perceived as disrupting the order of ecclesias [...] as violating its collective self' were condemned; those that affirmed that collective self were encouraged (1998, 32; see also Thomas 1973, 313–32):

The condoned practices were defined as curative, as divinely healing, as fomenting a restoration of the essence of Christianity, and were assimilated within the spaces of religion. The threatening ones were redefined as sorcery

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<sup>9</sup> An earlier and more detailed discussion of these issues appeared in Chapter 8 of *The Location of Religion* (Knott 2005a: 171–80).

<sup>10</sup> The congruity between beliefs informing both religious and magical practice has been illustrated by Duffy (1992, 279) and Kieckhefer (1997, Introduction). At the level of practice itself, Sørensen notes that magic is deeply embedded in most religious rituals and is a major force in the creation of new religious institutions (2007, 186). He argues that 'utilising very basic cognitive processes, magic is a permanent force in the historical development of institutionalised religion' (p. 191).

and witchcraft and consigned to the other side of the line, to a space of 'difference'. (Arditi 1998, 32.)

On the basis of cognitive principles of containment and categorisation, Sørensen notes similar strategies, differentiating three general types of reaction provoked in established religion by magic:

*Appropriation*, in which alternative magical rituals are incorporated into the established ritual structure and interpreted in relation to the existing system of belief. *Rejection*, in which the established religion rejects and combats unauthorised magical actions with a wide range of instruments. And *segregation*, in which the alternative ritual practice is either ignored or delegated a special social position at the margin of society among certain social groups, or as fulfilling certain ritual functions not addressed in the established ritual structure. (Sørensen 2007, 189.)<sup>11</sup>

We may also note that a similar process was evident in relation to the construction of 'witchcraft' in early modern Europe. Stuart Clark notes that it was 'construed dialectically in terms of what it was not [...] the witch – like Satan himself – could only be a contingent being, always a function of another' (Clark 1997, 9). Again, we see the emergence of difference within a single epistemological field arising on the basis of a conceived boundary separating some persons, ideas and practices from others.

In addition to the container and boundary metaphor, scholars writing about this period also make use of the CENTRE/PERIPHERY image schema. They note that values were attributed to differing positions within the field by those with knowledge-power at its 'centre', in this case the ecclesiastical authorities. Practices and beliefs which accorded with their aims were considered to be good, as moving people closer to the 'centre' and to God, as contributing to salvation, and thus deliverance from evil (Arditi 1998, 39; Bossy 1985, 72–3); those which did not were seen as counter-productive, evil and contributing to damnation ('periphery'). (See Fig. 3.)

Although the positions with which these practices and beliefs were associated were demarcated and identified by the official church, many lay people were confounded when it came to differentiating what lay close to the boundary, and confused by what constituted the precise job specifications of priest and magician (Thomas 1973, 303–4, 326; Bossy 1985, 139; Clark 1997, 458). From their perspective, the field was indeed a 'blurred' one (Arditi 1998, 32).

<sup>11</sup> Sørensen's italics. See Sørensen's own diagrams (2007, 167).

A further aspect of the emergence of difference within this field of religion, magic and witchcraft was the principle of inversion (Clark 1997, 11–30, 69–79). How could good, observant people recognise the very things they were supposed to fear if they were advised by their authorities on pain of their mortal lives and eternal souls to avoid them? As Clark asks of knowledge about witches and their activities, '[h]ow [...] did they "know" witchcraft; how did they "think" it?' (1997, 26.) They thought it 'in a world of meanings structured by opposition and inversion' (p. 80). The popular imagination was fuelled by the colourful accounts and 'scholarly pornography' of the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum* and later writers such as Jean Bodin and Martin del Río (Briggs 1996, 32). People were quick to pick up on these once they filtered down to a popular level, as was borne out by the testimonies of so-called witches and those who identified them (p. 33–4; Sharpe 1997, 78). These accounts made sense – they did not seem irrational or ridiculous – because they were recognisable within the familiar cognitive and cultural rules of inversion.

If the values and ends of religion and witchcraft were perceived to be in opposition, then so were the beliefs and practices themselves. As John Bossy suggests, '[t]o know how the Devil was worshipped, one needed only to know what true religion was, and turn it inside out [...] Through the looking-glass one passed [...] from sacraments to excrements' (1985, 137). In his account of the new, sixteenth century model of sorcery, he continues by identifying the activities and roles of the Devil and those who were held to be in thrall to him.

The behaviour of the new-model witch was the inverted image of a moral system founded on the Ten Commandments, and particularly of the first table. The Devil, who had been the mirror-image of Christ, the personified principle of the hatred of one's neighbour, became a mirror-image of the Father, the focus of idolatry, and hence of uncleanness and rebellion [...] The witch was one who worshipped the Devil, blasphemed the Lord and inverted the Sabbath, before inverting all the other commandments. (Bossy 1985, 138.)<sup>12</sup>

Thus it was that the cognitive patterns of 'interchangeability, hierarchy, and invertability' (Clark 1997, 40) provided the basis for imagining and knowing witches.

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<sup>12</sup> Illustrations from the time reflect this inversion: e.g., Guazzo *Compendium Maleficarum* (1609) in Baroja (1961, 147).

If further evidence were needed to support the argument that these apparently opposed beliefs and practices occupied a single epistemological field, it is that clerics, scholars and, later, magistrates of the period, in imagining the ritual world of those who challenged their hegemonic position, created it in the inverted image of that which they knew well, the ritual world of the Roman Catholic mass, with God at its centre and Christ at his right hand (Briggs 1996, 31–2; Clark 1997, 14–23).<sup>13</sup> (See Fig. 4.)

The left – especially the left hand – had an important symbolic function in this mythic, inverted world. Spatially, it denoted the territory, relations, and practices of the Devil, and often served to identify his servants (Knott 2005a, 175). In moral terms, it signified all that was evil, ‘other’ and dangerous. A ‘hidden boundary’ existed between the conceived world of righteousness and that of *maleficarum* and the Devil, all too easy for the unsuspecting person – not infrequently a woman – to cross (Briggs 1996, 105), a boundary that came more sharply into focus during periods of heightened activity directed against those identified as witches.

If we review this spatially, what these historians have suggested is a single epistemological field at the centre of which, at the beginning of the period in question, are the ecclesiastical authorities with the power to conceive the terms and values of the field at both centre and periphery. In this field, they are divided from those they perceive to be their enemies by a hidden and somewhat fuzzy boundary. Although the mythic and ritual world beyond the boundary – in the territory of the ‘other’ – was held to be inverted, close to the boundary the beliefs and practices of local healers and enchanter drew on the rituals, charms, and symbols of the centre not for religious ends but for the magical purposes of healing, protection, divining, propitiation, gaining favours, and exorcism. In this in-between space, left and right were deployed to signal – on the right hand – officially legitimated religious actions, such as making the sign of the cross, and – on the left – unofficial magical or divinatory ones, such as reading past events and identifying guilt.

In sum, then, in this period the apparently opposed knowledge worlds of religion and magic can be seen as products of a single epistemological field, in which different positions emerge as a means of marking social centrality or peripherality and as a way of protecting the centre from perceived outsiders. The values attributed to these different positions signal the extent to which they are endorsed and included or criticised and excluded, ‘consigned to

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<sup>13</sup> For twentieth century inversions see Sibley (1995, 40–5) and Knott (2005a, 173–80, 193–7).

the other side of the line' as Arditì suggests (1998). The force-relation strategies of appropriation, rejection and segregation are deployed to deal with unauthorised magical action (Sørensen 2007), and the excluded or 'other' world is generally conceived as an inversion of the known one. Left and right play a symbolic role in differentiating the two worlds, and in setting apart the beliefs, practices and values associated with them. They operate as helpful markers in the fuzzy territory around the boundary, where it is difficult to distinguish between religion and magic.

### **Enlightenment Boundaries and the Generation of 'Religion', 'Religions', 'Non-religion'**

In this second example I shall consider the rise of notions of 'religion' and 'religions' in Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Space does not permit a full rehearsal of the historical details; I therefore restrict myself to considering two operational boundaries which emerged during that period, both of which had consequences for the production and location of 'religion' and the nature of its study. The first is the boundary between 'public' and 'private', on the basis of which ideas of the secular state and the religious individual began to take shape (Bossy 1982; Taylor 1998). As Richard King summarises it, 'privatised religion becomes both clearly defined and securely contained by excluding it from the public realm of politics' (1999, 11) in order for an independent political arena to be established. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century this idea was expressed by both theologians and political philosophers (Calvin as well as Hobbes, Grotius and Locke). With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that there was nothing absolute or final about this boundary (except perhaps in the imaginations and desires of some secularist intellectuals and politicians), with public religious privileges remaining intact in a number of European countries, and with religious authorities unconvinced by the idea that they should retreat to the private realm and remain silent on affairs of state (Asad 2003, 181–201). Nevertheless, the private/public boundary has continued to be fundamental to controversies about the relationship of religion to state institutions, between religious and secularist exponents, and indeed among scholars debating the nature and process of secularisation.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See for example the adverse views of the British National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association about the place of religion in public life: <http://www.secularism.org.uk/about.html>; <http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentChapterView.asp?chapter=333>. For a recent example of the debate on secularisation see Casanova (1994, 2006) and Asad (2003, 2006).

The second boundary begins as an internal one (what I would call an 'in-field boundary'), used to distinguish true piety from rank superstition (W. C. Smith 1978, 37; Bossy 1982, 4–5; King 1999, 35–7; Ward 2006, 180–1) and to enable the co-existence of different Christian 'confessional persuasions' (Taylor 1998, 32). It then becomes the model for differentiating between types or species within the general category 'religion'.<sup>15</sup> In his examination of the emergence of the category 'religion', Bossy notes that Hooker and Parsons 'started off with the traditional sense of religion as worship or worshipfulness [and] ended up by talking about "religions": a plurality of objective entities erected around a set of doctrines or principles and therefore true or not true, but above all different' (Bossy 1982, 6). The notion of internal denominations and sects within European Christianity based on different theological formations, especially different protestantisms, subsequently becomes the ground on which to establish the idea of a plurality of different 'religions' (J. Z. Smith 2004, 186).<sup>16</sup> This boundary separates different commitments, practices, forms of organisation, social groups (ethnic and class-based) on the basis of the notion of *religio*, true piety. The boundary which first distinguishes between various Christian commitments then becomes the means by which all Christian commitments ('us') can be distinguished from other types of religious commitment found in the colonial world, in Islam and what would later become known as Hinduism and Buddhism ('them'). (J. Z. Smith 187.)

These two rather different boundary constructions, one separating the 'public' affairs of the nation state from other 'private' affairs, and the other repeatedly reproduced to differentiate plural religious commitments, proceeded to shape the spaces they separated. In the first case, this led to the idea of religion as a matter for individual conscience, and to the conception of a public arena of 'non-religion' in which laws, governance, education and so on are constituted as separate from religion. (See Fig. 5.)

Latterly, it may be said to have contributed to the generation of scholarly theories of secularisation centred around ideas either of the marginalisation of religion from public institutions or of the secularisation of religious belief and practice. José Casanova aptly uses the language of the boundary to represent and distinguish these two rather different trajectories (2006, 23), one being envisioned,

<sup>15</sup> On the formation of the notions of 'religion' and 'religions' see W. C. Smith (1978); Bossy (1982); Harrison (1990); Jackson (1997); J. Z. Smith (2004).

<sup>16</sup> In particular, J. Z. Smith cites Brerewood's *Enquiries Touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions* of 1614, which demarcates Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Idolatrous religions (2004, 186).

as the emancipation and expansion of the secular spheres at the expense of a much-diminished and confined religious sphere. Here the boundaries are well-kept, but they are relocated drastically, pushing religion into the margins. The other trajectory is one in which the monastery walls – that is, the symbolic boundaries between the secular and religious spheres – are shattered, allowing for a mutual penetration of religion by the secular and of the secular by religion. (Casanova 2006, 23.)

Casanova's use of the boundary metaphor draws on the CONTAINER image schema with its entailments of separation, force and – in the second of the two cases – dissolution, in order to illustrate the ambiguity of the 'secular' in its relationship to religion. (See Fig. 6.)

The discursive and practical boundary generated by political and moral philosophers to separate public affairs of state from the private beliefs and practices of individuals, I suggest, entailed the production of a theoretical container, with a non-religious public interior bounded off or set apart from the private domain in which religion continued to be afforded freedom to operate. As Casanova's observation suggests, however, we should resist the assumption that there is any necessary or clear-cut overlap between the 'religion'/'non-religion' boundary and the 'religious'/'secular' one. As scholars writing on secularization have been at pains to point out, the presence of the '*saeculum*' within medieval Christianity provided the seeds for the emergence of worldly time and space within a Christian context as well as the possibility of the differentiation of the religious and the secular as separate spheres. The 'religious' and the 'secular' are historically interwoven and mutually contingent. They also exceed the spaces to which in more recent times they have been formally allocated (Asad 2003; Knott 2005a; Pecora 2006). Nevertheless, I would suggest that, in order to police the public/private boundary and to keep religious organisations and individuals out of state affairs, agents of state and secularist commentators have contributed to the construction of the notion of the 'secular' as the domain of non-religion, as religion's 'other'.<sup>17</sup> An example of this can be found in the field of education. In the mid-nineteenth century, when the possibility of a national system of education was being discussed in Britain, the Utilitarian philosopher J. S. Mill posited the idea of a 'secular education' (Mill 1849), as an alternative to the religious education provided in denominational and

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<sup>17</sup> Simultaneously, they have also contributed to new conceptual formations of 'religion' (Asad 2003, 1–2, 193; Fitzgerald 2007, 99).

sectarian schools; his plea and use of the term 'secular' has been reiterated in recent decades by secularist lobbying groups speaking out against the presence of 'faith schools' within the state education sector.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of the second boundary, the one separating different types of commitment, the entailment is the formation of a plurality of 'religions', connected by family resemblance. The boundary may originally have set one type of commitment apart from another on the basis of piety and belief, distinctions which commentators and scholars of religions have subsequently instantiated and developed into multiple 'dimensions', and in relation to which the study of religions has developed its disciplinary pathway as distinct from theology (Fitzgerald 1990, 2000). 'World religions' as separate containers, amenable to description and comparison, have been produced; they have been co-located within the generic meta-container of 'religion'. (See Fig. 7.)

Furthermore, new religion-like structures and groups have been formed (following the model of what constitutes 'a religion' and based on the principle of differentiation), including what scholars have then referred to as 'quasi' or 'surrogate' religions.<sup>19</sup> These have included the Bahá'í movement, the Unification Church and other 'NRMs', humanist and atheist systems of belief and practice, and committed adherence to culture and sport. Our scholarly work in deconstructing the category 'religion', in demythologising the notion of 'world religions', in developing and challenging the secularisation thesis, and in reconnecting 'religious' beliefs, practices, forms of organisation, symbols and experience to other social, cultural, political and economic processes is a consequence of category formation based on the CONTAINER image schema of boundary, interior and exterior during the European Enlightenment.

What has this brief examination of the public/private boundary and the in-field boundary between different religions contributed to our thinking about containment and categorisation in relation to religion? A boundary formed to do one thing (i.e. mark off the 'public' affairs of the nation state from the 'private' affairs of individuals and classes) has resulted in other entailments: it has generated the notion of 'religion' as a private matter differentiated from the public sphere, its institutions and activities, thereby also marking the latter sphere as one of 'non-religion', often referred to as

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<sup>18</sup> And see Polly Toynbee, "Religion must be removed from all functions of state" (2001).

<sup>19</sup> See the journal *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Coles (1975), Budd (1977) and J. E. Smith (1994).

'secular' despite the ambiguous nature of its relationship to religion. The boundary which distinguished piety (*religio*) and superstition has been transformed and replicated repeatedly to differentiate various types of commitment (Protestant denominations, world religions, surrogate religions, including various kinds of secularism). I have suggested that the CONTAINER image schema has become the model for the development and positioning of the genus 'religion' and its various species, 'religions', which consequently have become visible and amenable to observation. In addition, we have witnessed the 'transitivity of containment': If B is in A then whatever is in B is also in A – the contents of 'Islam', 'Hindu dharma' and 'Bahá'í' are within the 'religion' category, alongside Christianity. Furthermore, other ideologies have, at times been modelled theoretically on 'religions' and placed within the genus 'religion', despite the 'non-religious' self-understanding of their exponents and their explicit criticism of 'religion'.

### **Boundaries, Religion and Disciplinary Formation**

Recently I have considered the language that scholars of theology and religious studies have used to delineate and characterise their fields of study and separate themselves from one another (Knott 2007, 2008). It is replete with spatial metaphors and concepts of war and struggle. Reference is frequently made to inside/outside, to inclusion/exclusion, to boundaries, incursions, incorporation, integration and embrace; particularly when scholars write about the encounter between theology and religious studies. Evidently, a variety of views are held about their interrelationship, an analysis of which suggests that one discipline can be portrayed as wholly containing the other; they can be seen as distinctive and separate disciplines with different objects, goals and motivations; they can be envisaged as largely separate but partially overlapping; they can both be contained within a larger meta-discipline (e.g. 'the study of religions'); one can be distinguished from the approach that pre-dated it; one can 'embrace' the other: or the embrace can be mutual.<sup>20</sup> These relationships can be depicted spatially on the basis of the CONTAINER model, as in the earlier examples (see diagrams in Knott 2007, 2008). As Johnson noted, containment entails force, limit, resistance and restriction (cf. Sørensen 2007, 167). In representing their disciplinary relationship, scholars of theology and religious studies have been seen to be involved in discursive struggles in which such strategies are employed.

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<sup>20</sup> The notion of the 'embrace' is used by David Ford to suggest the containment of religious studies within theology (2005, 66). See also Griffiths (2006, 69).

Following Becher (1989), I suggest that academic disciplines and the scholarly communities that form around them can be understood as tribes with their own territories, the stability of which involves investing the centre with power and meaning, marginalising dissidents, engaging and struggling with outsiders, and protecting the territory from incursion or annexation (Knott 2007, 2008). This summary, which might be thought to be excessively power-oriented, in fact draws on metaphors not infrequently utilised by theology and religious studies scholars in their representation of 'the disciplinary arena as a site of battle' (McCutcheon 2004, 161; cf. Ford 2005, 67–9).

What an analysis of the language of disciplinary containment and boundary-making has shown is that the territory of the study of 'religion' and of 'God' is contested, marked by continuous struggle and by strategies of limitation and resistance. The most commonly used knowledge-power strategy is that of containment, but we also see the image schemas of LINK and CENTRE/PERIPHERY in operation. The 'insides' of theology and religious studies are differently conceived in terms of the objects of their study, beliefs and practices, academic and methodological traditions, mission and purpose, with theology being the more tightly bounded and convergent of the two disciplines (Knott 2008). There are differing views about the nature of the boundary between them, about who and what can be accommodated on either side of it, who and what must be excluded, and about the scholarly possibilities generated by the maintenance and/or dissolution of the boundary.

Despite their very considerable substantive, methodological and ideological differences, I would suggest that – much like the Western symbolic order, with its religious and secular facets in which their relationship has been forged – theology and religious studies are interconnected and mutually conditioned. Arguably, they are part of the same body, bound to one another discursively as well as historically and genealogically, though they often strive to be free and to experience themselves as separate and distinctive. The space between them is a boundary of transition: when it is approached or transgressed the 'other' must be engaged, whether in play or discussion, in fight or embrace, or in an act of consumption.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper has been to examine the way in which boundaries have been formative in the production of interior and exterior conceptual and disciplinary spaces associated with religion and its study. I began by

looking at the work of Lakoff and Johnson on the role of embodied spatial metaphors (e.g. of containment and centre-periphery) in the development of abstract conceptions, particularly the formation of categories. I extended that discussion to include the insights of Anttonen on corporeal and territorial boundaries for establishing the grounds on which the 'sacred' is conceptualised. The three cases I then considered brought to the fore several key elements of discursive boundaries and their operation. For example: hidden and blurred boundaries, as well as clear, well-focused ones, can be used to distinguish opposing spaces within an epistemological field and to differentiate various value positions. A boundary created for one purpose can have unforeseen entailments and other uses.

To conclude, I return to the cognitive and socio-spatial ideas with which I began. As we have seen, boundaries differentiate: in the cases we have considered, they separate discursive spaces (magic and witchcraft from religion; false from true piety; the religious from the secular; religious studies from theology). In separating the inside and outside of concepts, categories and disciplines, they are invariably expressions of power which, as Johnson suggested, entail protection from or resistance to external forces but also limit and restrict that which is contained. Johnson also noted that boundedness results in the contained object becoming fixed and accessible to the view of observers, and this was certainly the case with the positioning of 'religion', the replication of 'religions' and the production of a sphere of 'non-religion' in the second example. Transitivity of containment (if B is *in* A, then whatever is *in* B is also *in* A) was also noted, not only in the relationship of different religions and their beliefs and practices to the generic category of 'religion', but, we might add, with regard to various conceptions of the relationship between theology and religious studies (if T is *in* RS, then whatever is *in* T is also *in* RS, and vice versa). The potential loss of identity and autonomy implied by the subsuming of the contents of one within the other may go some way to explaining why scholars on either side of this disciplinary boundary resist such discursive containment.

In so far as they mark categorical differences, Veikko Anttonen has suggested that boundaries are also attributed 'sacrality' in setting apart those things which are non-negotiable, pure and sacrosanct, as well as forbidden and taboo. In the cases we have examined, the boundaries in question have brought to the fore categorical issues such as the centrality and non-negotiability of God, true piety, the secular state, and the differing but nonetheless closely guarded values and practices associated with the disciplines of theology and religious studies. Transgressing the boundary – even when it

is somewhat blurred or porous – may be a dangerous business, marking as deviant the one who moves from the inside to the outside (e.g., as ‘witch’, ‘heretic’ or even ‘theologian’).

Conceiving of categorical concepts, such as ‘religion’ and ‘magic’, and disciplines, such as theology and religious studies, as containers forged in a sacralizing process of boundary formation may sound like a metaphorical step too far. But that is exactly the point. ‘Inside’, ‘outside’ and ‘boundary’ together constitute a ‘metaphor we live by’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). And, when that boundary represents for us a state, principle or value on which we cannot trade or negotiate, the proximity of which spells danger whilst also offering protection and identity, then it is that very threshold which becomes open to the attribution of ‘sacrality’ and that becomes amenable to scholarly theorization as the ‘sacred’.

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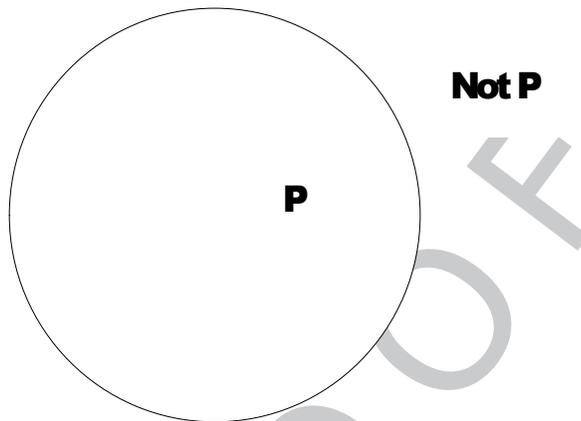
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**Appendix: Figures**

**Figure 1.** Everything is either inside a container or not – P or not P.



**Figure 2.** Medieval European 'religion' and 'magic': same epistemological field; blurred boundary.

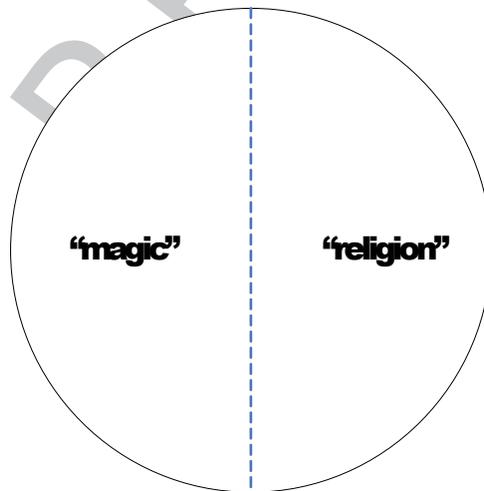


Figure 3. 'Religion' at the centre; 'magic' at the periphery.

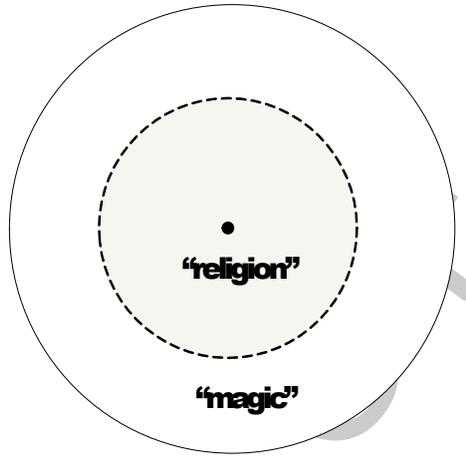
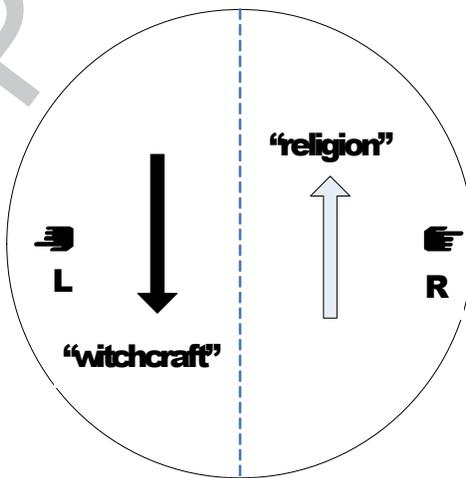
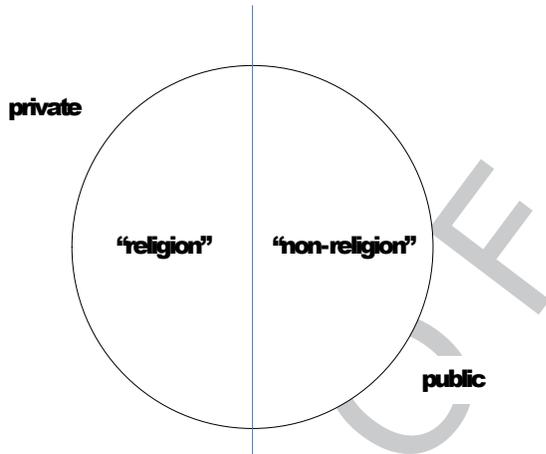


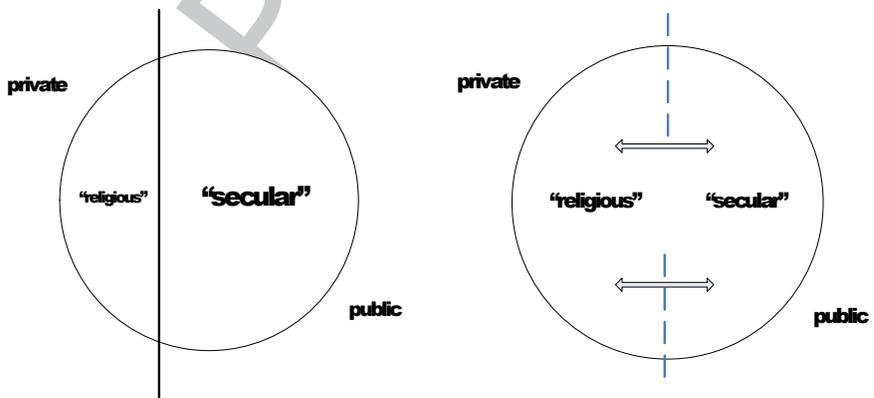
Figure 4. 'Witchcraft' as inverted 'religion'.



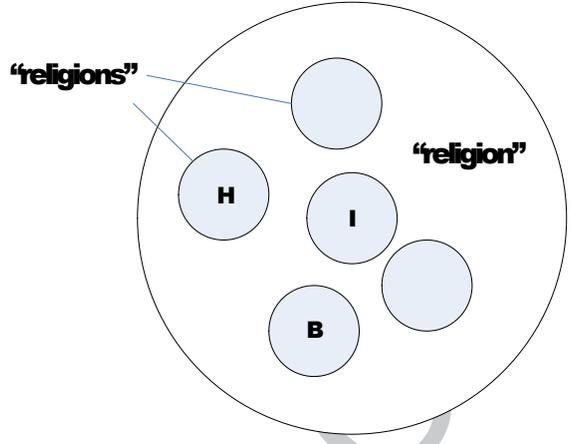
**Figure 5.** Public/private boundary and the construction of ‘religion’ and ‘non-religion’.



**Figure 6.** Two trajectories of secularisation: The boundary between the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’.



**Figure 7.** The production of 'religions' and their co-location within the category 'religion'.



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