On the Construction, Operations, and Analysis of Borders in Science and Across South Asian Religious Traditions

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Introduction

In *Converting Words,* anthropologist William Hanks reflects on his initial conviction that the cultural and spiritual premises of his primary fieldwork interlocutor, a *hmèen* 'shaman (roughly)' known as Don Chabo, could only be understood, "in the light of colonial history, especially the missionizing process. [Don Chabo's] ways of fusing apparently old forms of both Catholicism and Maya were simply too subtle and too deep to fit the models of syncretism or *mestizaje.*"[1] That conviction compelled Hanks to identify and analyze the specific patterns and transformations in language, built space, and practice that occurred during and after the evangelization of the Maya in Yucatán. Hanks offers an extensive and cogent account of these transformations by carefully examining how language and practice operate across the borders of religious discursive traditions and asymmetries of power. The persistence of the past as well as the emergence and endurance of new forms is part of what scholars must account for—without unnecessarily reifying the boundaries of religious difference—by crafting what anthropologist Charles Hirschkind calls "new perceptual habits"[2] capable of rendering the richness,

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[1] William Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), xiii.

[2] Charles Hirschkind, *The Feeling of History: Islam, Romanticism, and Andalusia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 2.

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ambivalence, and complexity of devotional lives that are not merely those of the vocal devout or elite.

In this paper, I will present theoretical frameworks and heuristics drawn from Science and Technology Studies (STS), including boundary work, boundary objects, and trading zones. I will demonstrate the affordances of such theoretical tools for understanding the practices of my interlocutors, men in recovery from addiction in northern India, whose religiosity is neither naive nor orthodox but is instead pragmatic and experimental, *irreducible to and yet related to* religious differentiation.

Like Gilberto Cavazos-González, I am a trained Latinx spiritualogian who studies and writes about spirituality not only from my reflexive rootedness in Latinx Catholic perspective and context but also from my rootedness in other traditions, including 12-Step recovery and South Asian religious traditions including Punjabi Catholicism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam. I, however, do not limit the "socio-spiritual" method[3] espoused by Cavazos-González to the "classics of Western spirituality" or the exhausted, racist, and anemic canons of White and whitewashed Christianity. I write from a willingness to risk engaging the divine across denominational borders in a manner that unsettles my identity and reflects my training, commitments, and practice. My spirituality is formed and informed by friendships, memories, research, interviews, and indebtedness with people whose relation to spirituality cannot be captured or divided neatly into "world religions."[4] In contrast to theologians such as Peter C. Phan or Jacques Dupuis, I am not interested in contributing to a theology of religious pluralism

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[3] Gilberto Cavazos-González, "The Study of Spirituality," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín (New York: Wiley, 2015), 421-438.

[4] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

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so much as developing a Latinx spirituality of *multiple religious belonging*. Developing such a spirituality requires, I argue, the consignment of the term *idolatry* to that which can and must be left behind.

Inspired by the theology of Ruben Alves, for whom theology and biography are intertwined, and in an important argument for inter-religious dialogue from a distinctly Latina/o perspective, Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi reflects on the affordances of inter-religious dialogue, mutual communication, and engagement with otherness that enriches a Christian sense of the universal Gospel message and call to stewardship of creation and peace.[5] And while Cardoza-Orlandi's work is fundamental for understanding the conjunction of (academic and grassroots) *conjuntos,* his essay fails to address people who refuse the notion of "religious alternatives" and instead work out spiritual practice and religious reflection in ways that would please no missionary or census taker. Additionally, recent work by Ross Kane takes up the notion of syncretism in light of interpretative problems related to race, revelation, and purity. Kane's work traces the usage and deployment of the term syncretism and shows both how "religious studies and theology have both participated in a racialized imagination still suffering the legacies of European domination" and how the term is also used to "protect the category of divine revelation from perceived human interference."[6] Borders and boundaries from immunology to immigration policy are entangled in insidious ways with the legacies of racialization and purity.

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[5] Carlo F. Cardoza-Orlandi, "Inter-Religious Dialogue: Why Should It Matter to Our Academic and Grassroots Communities?" in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín (New York: Wiley, 2015), 475-492.

[6] Ross Kane, *Syncretism and Christian Tradition: Race and Revelation in the Study of Religious Mixture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

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Drawing from Muthuraj Swamy's work on the "multiple identities and everyday relations" of a multireligious milieu and the elitist and essentializing inadequacy of "dialogue" as a framework for understanding mediation and multiplicity in religious traditions, I will instead present a *therapeutics of intercession* as emerging from *la cotidianidad* of spiritual practice in northern India, a border region like the US-Mexico border with a different but resonant colonial history of dispossession, desire, and hope.[7]

Borders in Science

Borders and boundaries are powerful fictions that consist of narratives, protocols, practices, and materials. Painstakingly and laboriously maintained by many actors with varied interests, borders can capture much more than the imagination. The real and urgent challenges of crossing or transgressing borders, however, may often lead people to neglect their construction and take them for granted. Denaturalizing borders and boundaries, which is to say, resocializing or historicizing them, is of paramount importance. Nature may contain skin, cell walls, scabs, oceans, mountains, and deserts—but there are never borders in nature.

Nonetheless, STS scholars have long drawn on border concepts in developing theoretical frameworks and heuristics for understanding the protocols and practices of scientific inquiry and to provide concrete and specific ways of understanding differentiation, specialization, and negotiation among constituencies and stakeholders. I have drawn on these concepts in my own nonsecular medical anthropology of addiction and recovery in South Asia. In this paper, I focus

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[7] Swamy Muthuraj, *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue: Plurality, Conflict and Elitism in Hindu–Christian–Muslim Relations* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016). The hope I gesture towards is a *radical hope*, not developed to preserve a heritage but which takes root in the impossible possibility of futurity in the absence of any reason to hope. See Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

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on analytics that help me think through the construction and operations of disciplinary and discursive boundaries in science and South Asian religious traditions. This strange conjunction is the fortuitous result of my own biography and plural identity that is not captured by census or survey categories that too often diminish and reduce the lived complexity of contemporary forms of life, whether collectively held or individually discerned.

Over the past forty years, scholarship in STS, which emerges from the sociology of scientific knowledge of the mid-twentieth century, emphasizes the importance of attending to the labor inherent in distinguishing sciences from each other and from nonscience. Previously philosophers of science understood this problem as one of *a priori* logical demarcation, meaning that science consisted of an intrinsically distinct form of inquiry different from other forms of knowledge.[8] More recently sociologists instead examined how knowledge, experimentation, and instrumentation developed in connected and entangled ways that did not always have predictable results or resolve incoherences and inconsistencies.[9] Rather than attempting to identify what makes science different from other discursive traditions, social scientists instead looked at how scientists distinguished themselves, their objects and methods.

In STS, border concepts have helped focus key interventions in the sociological engagement with science; rather than taking divisions for granted or naively trusting scientists' accounts of what makes sense in science, scholars have attended to scientific practice. STS scholars have developed a series of heuristics and conceptual tools adequate for making sense of

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[8] Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[9] See Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) and Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

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the materializations, protocols, norms, and institutions that can also, I argue, help us rethink and unlearn the artificial constraints of the largely colonial taxonomies of contemporary religious forms of life. I briefly reflect on the affordances of three such heuristics for rethinking religious difference: trading zones, boundary work, and boundary objects.

Trading Zones

For historian of science Peter Galison, the "*dis*unification of science… underpins its strength and stability."[10] Neither unified nor fragmented, the multicultural history of physics in twentieth century United States and Europe is what Galison calls *intercalated*, layered between distinct levels that influence but are irreducible to a unity. "Different finite traditions of theorizing, experimenting, instrument making, and engineering meet—even transform one another—but for all that they do not lose their separate identities and practices."[11] Illustrating the continuing importance of coordination without consensus among engineers and physicists in the late 1940s investigations of quantum electrodynamics at Princeton and MIT, Galison begins by presenting the familiar narrative in the history of quantum electrodynamics.

In this story, physicists in the United States and Europe during the 1920s and 1930s did not make much progress in understanding how the quantum theory of the electron could be integrated with special relativity. Compelled by other interests during the war in the first years of the 1940s, these physicists focused on engineering work (deemed "irrelevant" for their research in "pure physics") and then returned with new insights to their work after the war. Yet, as both

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[10] See Peter Galison, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Excerpted and cited here as Peter Galison, "Trading Zone: Coordinating Action and Belief (1998 abridgment)" in *The Science Studies Reader*, ed. Mario Biagioli (New York: Routledge, 1999), 137.

[11] Galison, "Trading Zone," 137.

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Galison and Silvan Schweber have pointed out, precision theoretical measurements were made possible by the application of microwave technology (developed during the war) to theoretical problems. More importantly, however, physicist Julian Schwinger's approach to physical problems was reconfigured during the war by the habits developed by working on the development of radar technologies. Assimilating the engineering culture prevalent at the Rad Lab at MIT, Schwinger abandoned the "abstract scattering theory of electromagnetism" in favor of more practical representations: "simple 'equivalent circuits' that imitated just the relevant aspects of the components." Galison writes:

> It was an old technique among electrical engineers, who were used to treating certain systems, such as loudspeakers, not by their real electrical, mechanical, or electromechanical properties, but as if the loudspeaker were a circuit of purely electrical components. In other words they (symbolically) put the complicated physics of the loudspeaker's electromechanically generated noise into a "black box," and replaced it in their calculations with "equivalent" electrical components. Similarly the conducting hollow pipes and cavities of microwave circuits could be replaced (symbolically) by ordinary electrical components, and so make the cavities amenable to algebraic manipulation-without entering each time into the details of complex boundary-value problems for Maxwell's equations.[12]

For Schwinger, the adoption of a positivist attitude towards theorizing was the outcome of specific shared spaces that facilitated interactions and appropriations across disciplinary boundaries that did not dissolve or disappear. Galison writes:

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[12] Galison, "Trading Zone," 151.

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In short, the war forced theoretical physicists—such as Schwinger—to spend day after day calculating things about devices and, through these material objects, linking their own prior language of field theory to the language and algebra of electrical engineering. Modifying the theory, creating equivalent circuits for microwave radiation, solving new kinds of problems was not—and this is the crucial point—a form of translation … Boundaries are substantial, translation is absent, and Gestalt shifts are nowhere in sight.[13]

Rather than accept the standard narrative of interruption or the production of a synthesizing metalanguage, Galison invites scholars to attend "to practice, not results." Practice required the development and adoption of intermediate and mediating forms of symbolic representation and communicative practice that did not synthesize differences between theory, experiment, and instrumentation. Rather, advances in theory, experimentation, and instrumentation lead scientists to develop their own temporary and contingent forms of communication in collaboration and competition with each other, particularly when experts were forced to work together without consensus. Galison writes:

Experimenters—and one could make a similar statement about theorists or instrumentalists—do not march in lockstep with theory. For example, the practice of experimental physics in the quantum mechanical revolution of 1926-27 was not violently dislocated despite the startling realignment of theory: spectroscopy continued unabated, as did measurements of specific heat and blackbody radiation. And practitioners of these experimental arts continued undaunted their dialogue with theorists on both sides of the great theoretical divide. Each subculture has its own rhythms of change, each has its own

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[13] Galison, "Trading Zone," 151.

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standards of demonstration, and each is embedded differently in the wider culture of institutions, practices, inventions, and ideas.[14]

When examining the robustness of experimentation, theorization, or instrumentation in physics, for instance, what is immediately apparent is the impossibility of reducing any of the domains to a coherent framework that reconciles the findings of any of the other domains. "Local coordination" of beliefs and practices, in Galison's terms a "trading zone" names the provisional nature of specific engagements and exchanges that can occur despite profound ontological disagreements. Commensurability is not a precondition of exchange, as Galison argues here:

> What is crucial is that in the highly local context of the trading zone, *despite* the differences in classification, significance, and standards of demonstration, the two groups can collaborate. They can come to a consensus about the procedure of exchange, about the mechanisms to determine when the goods are "equal" to one another. They can even both understand that the continuation of exchange is a prerequisite to the survival of the larger culture of which they are part. I intend the term trading zone to be taken seriously, as a social and intellectual mortar binding together the disunified traditions of experimenting, theorizing, and instrument building.[15]

Trading zones are not sites of reconciliation but are instead sites of exchange and bracketing of specific content and concerns for the sake of shared practical goals. Drawing upon Michael Taussig's work on the "baptism of money," Galison argues that radically different commitments about what occurs fundamentally in an exchange need not be resolved necessarily for trading to

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[14] Galison, "Trading Zone," 143.

[15] Galison, "Trading Zone," 146.

continue in a certain area.[16] Such discrepancies are only noticed by outsiders who can understand the miscommunication. Taussig writes:

> In a busy supermarket in the nearby large city, a shop detective was startled to hear a woman standing near a cash register chanting under her breath: "*Guillermo! ¿Te vas o te quedas? ¿Te vas o te quedas? ¿Te vas o te quedas?*" He promptly surmised that she had passed a baptized bill and was waiting for it to return to her with the contents of the register, and he immediately arrested her. She was taken away and nobody knows what happened thereafter.[17]

In the case of physics, theorists and experimentalists disagree profoundly on what they are observing and the rules involved. Galison writes:

> In our case, theorists trade experimental predictions for experimentalists' results. Two things are noteworthy about the exchange. First, the two subcultures may altogether disagree about the implications of the information exchanged or its epistemic status. For example, as we have seen, theorists may predict the existence of an entity with profound conviction because it is inextricably tied to central tenets of their practice—for example, group symmetry, naturalness, renormalizability, covariance, or unitarity. The experimentalist may receive the prediction as something quite different, perhaps as no more than another curious hypothesis to try out on the next run of the data-analysis program… It is here that we find the classic encounters of experiment with theory: particle decays, fission, fusion, pulsars, magnetostriction, the creep effect, second sound, lasing,

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[16] Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 1980).

[17] Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, 127.

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magnetic deflection, and so on. It is the existence of such trading zones, and the highly constrained negotiations that proceed within them, that bind the otherwise disparate subcultures together.[18]

Trading zones thus require scholars to rethink the notion of paradigm shifts prevalent in the history of science since Thomas Kuhn. In these zones, Galison argues, sociological, symbolic, and material systems interact in ways that scholars in anthropological linguistics refer to as "pidginization" and "creolization," contact languages meant to facilitate the practical needs of collective forms of life and exchange. Pidgins emerge as contingent and unstable formations through simplification of linguistic structures, in the case of physicists in the 1940s this meant "black-boxing" more complex equations. Over time, as the need arises for a pidgin to respond to more needs, a more robust creole emerges and stabilizes, as in the case of postwar Rad Lab "Waveguide Handbook" that enables physicists to think with engineering calculations.

As anthropologist Annemarie Mol argues in the process of diagnosing atherosclerosis, scientific knowledge can be made about a certain object by both clinicians and pathologists but need not be reconciled in order to enact a certain kind of provisional and practical agreement that allows medical action to proceed.[19] The constraint of pragmatic concern is part of what enables discourse and practice to coalesce if not cohere. Trading zones, and corollary pidginization and creolization, are a form of binding and braiding that occur at the borders and boundaries of different collectives.

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[18] Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, 146.

[19] Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

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Boundary Work

The other kind of activity that occurs at a border in science is that of differentiation, articulating how and why forms of inquiry are different. Focusing on the intensive labor of differentiation between disciplines is important for understanding how ontologies, methods, and epistemologies shift at different scales for different reasons. For sociologist Thomas Gieryn, boundary work names the ideological style of scientists working to compete for resources and prestige with other specialists by a variety of rhetorical tactics and strategies. Gieryn defines boundary work as

> the attribution of selected characteristics to the institution of science (i.e., to its practitioners, methods, stock of knowledge, values and work organization) for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes some intellectual activities as "non-science." Boundary-work is analyzed as a rhetorical style common in "public science" (Turner, 1980:589; cf. Mendelsohn, 1977:6), in which scientists describe science for the public and its political authorities, sometimes hoping to enlarge the material and symbolic resources of scientists or to defend professional autonomy.[20]

Rather than taking objects in the world or disciplines for granted, attending to the kinds of boundary work operative in the competition for resources and definition of discursive traditions in relation to truth reorients scholars to the constructed nature of difference in science. What is true for the boundary between science and nonscience, though, remains true when practitioners and experts struggle to legitimate their authority regarding matters that lie in more than one domain. Thus for Sheila Jasanoff, boundary work refers to the adjudication of authority in

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[20] Thomas F. Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (1983): 782.

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science or public controversies that involve science in some way.[21] Boundary work by its very nature, then, lends to a kind of mutual transformation, akin to what Steven Epstein calls the coincidence of the "scientization of politics," which might be understood as the means by which political disputes are adjudicated by policy makers with some pretense of scientific literacy, and "politicization of science," which Epstein characterizes by saying that "the fact that political disputes tend to become technical disputes means that different parties rally their own experts to support them in a controversy, much like lawyers offering to the jury a parade of expert witnesses."[22] Boundary work is key to understanding the *coproduction* of subjects and objects in science, whereby professionalization, reification, and process produce dynamic interrelations.

Boundary Objects

The last STS analytic I use in my work is the boundary object, developed by Star, Griesemer, and Bowker and most often discussed in light of interpretative flexibility that is fundamental for enabling cooperation despite the lack of consensus. Star writes:

> Many models, in the late 1980s and continuing today, of cooperation often began conceptually, with the idea that first consensus must be reached, and the cooperation could begin. From my own field work among scientists and others cooperating across disciplinary borders, and two historical analyses of heterogeneous groups who did cooperate and did not agree at the local level, it seemed to me that the consensus model

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[21] Sheila Jasanoff, *States of Knowledge: The Co-production of Science and the Social Order* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

[22] Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 6.

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was untrue. Consensus was rarely reached, and fragile when it was, but cooperation

continued, often unproblematically. How might this be explained?[23]

Abandoning the notion that consensus is necessary for cooperation is as important for

understanding scientific inquiry as it is for organizing politically. [24] The consensus model, like

other flawed theories of change,[25] operates to fix theory as a precursor to action rather than

emerging dynamically and simultaneously with action.

Like any object, boundary objects can be interpreted in multiple ways given their form and

the requirements of actors who encounter or employ them. The example that Star and Griesemer

gave is as follows:

> a road map may point the way to a campground for one group, a place for recreation. For
>
> another group, this ''same'' map may follow a series of geological sites of importance, or
>
> animal habitats, for scientists. Such maps may resemble each other, overlap, and even seem
>
> indistinguishable to an outsider's eye. Their difference depends on the use and
>
> interpretation of the object. One group's pleasant camping spot is another's source of data
>
> about speciation.[26]

Yet to fully grasp the affordances of the term, it is important to define precisely what both

"boundary" and "object" mean. Star writes:

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[23] Susan Leigh Star, "This Is Not a Boundary Object: Reflections on the Origin of a Concept," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 35, no. 5 (2010): 604.

[24] For more on the importance of simultaneity of action, not consensus, see Sarah Schulman, *Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP New York, 1987-1993* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), 28.

[25] For more on rethinking theories of change, see Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 409-427.

[26] Star, "This Is Not a Boundary Object," 602.

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Often, boundary implies something like edge or periphery, as in the boundary of a state or a tumor. Here, however, it is used to mean a shared space, where exactly that sense of here and there are confounded. These common objects form the boundaries between groups through flexibility and shared structure—they are the stuff of action.[27]

Some key features stand out from these definition: the composition of the boundary and its nature as shared space as well as the ways that objects are defined in terms of action. The differentiation of communities occurs by means of action and engagement with objects shared in common, such as specimens in a museum of natural history,[28] with other communities or members of "the same" community with different interests, such as research scientists, lab techs, office managers, grant writers, graduate student researchers, and interns.

Certain texts can be boundary objects, defined and appropriated by different communities for different ends and which exist in some sense as the criterion of differentiation.[29] As anthropologist Mara Dicenta writes regarding the pro-abortion green headscarves of Latin America:

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[27] Star, "This Is Not a Boundary Object," 602.

[28] The classic text on boundary objects is Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39," *Social Studies of Science* 19 (1989): 387-420.

[29] Naomi Seidman examines certain passages, such as Isaiah 7:14, as can be considered boundary objects between Christian and Jewish exegetical communities. Seidman writes, "In the arguments over this passage [Matthew 1:23], no less is at issue than the legitimacy of Jesus, the virginity of Mary, the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and, ultimately, between Judaism and Christianity. To rephrase this complex hermeneutic knot in terms of Chamberlain's feminist analysis, the difference between the Hebrew *'almah* and the Greek *parthenos* simultaneously throws religious authority, textual reliability, and the paternal line into anxious question." In Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

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Boundary objects serve to bring different social worlds together into cooperation without consensus (Star 2010; Star and Griesemer 1989). They do this only if vaguely defined and ill-structured. When different groups and disciplines get together, they can collaborate with others by renouncing their specific understandings and claims. Hence, boundary objects are not just any word or item that is subject to different interpretations, they also need to enable the formation of communities of knowledge. Generally, this means that groups move between loose definitions when working together and their specific frames when not collaborating…Green scarves are more than a mere icon to symbolize the movement for decriminalizing abortion. They are also a device enabling very different communities to cooperate without needing either understanding or agreement (from prostitution abolitionists, indigenous feminists, some Peronists, anarchists, black feminists, trans groups, health activists, Catholics for the right to decide, scientists, policy makers, mothers, experts, poor classes, and so on) … It works because it achieves the articulation of different levels of knowledge and vindication, from very deep and heated debates within communities to more vague conversations and the activation of sorority, intimacy, and complicity rather than agreement within bigger marches and celebrations.[30]

While sacred texts like the Pentateuch, places like Jerusalem, and practices like ritual sacrifice can be boundary objects for members of different communities who approach, adopt, adapt, or disparage them—defining themselves by means of them, the notions of *scope* and *scale* are key for grasping the utility and affordances of this heuristic. Rather than examining how a Bible is a

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[30] Mara Dicenta, "The Green Tide as a Boundary Object: Feminism Beyond the Curse of the Left," *Somatosphere*, March 13, 2019. http://somatosphere.net/2019/the-abortion-green-scarf-as-a-boundary-object-beyond-the-curse-of-the-left.html/.

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boundary object, it is far more useful, Star reminds us, to think about how work arrangements are affected by the sharing of a specific object held in common, as when archaeologists, classics scholars, digital humanities scholars, and designers work together on the digitization of epigraphy or when publishers, translators, and biblical scholars collaborate on new translations of biblical texts.[31] Collaboration has corollary effects for the practitioners of disciplines involved who understand the affordances of their own specific training when coming together. Differences are not erased but are instead foregrounded for the sake of the cooperative enterprise.

Contemporary sciences are not systems but are instead discursive traditions[32] that consist today of complex interactions between commentarial, experimental, and instrumental or technological dimensions. Yet the different layers of "Western" science have not always existed in this intercalated manner. Prior to the early modern period in Europe, for instance, mechanical and astronomical sciences were purely commentarial and scientific expertise consisted of exegesis and interpretation, not experimentality. With the rise of workshops during the early modern period, experimentalism and new forms of collectively held authority grew alongside communities of textual interpretation.

Communities of interpretation—both textual and experimental—condition possible encounters with difference and mediate the practices, expectations, and experimental sensibilities with which groups and individuals encounter other traditions. The context of this encounter consists of strategies of differentiation enacted primarily by the elite and privileged who assert authority over interpretation of self and other as well as the definitions of objects and priorities,

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[31] Star, "This Is Not a Boundary Object," 613.

[32] The notion of a discursive tradition, which includes practices, can be found in Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam" (Occasional Paper Series, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986).

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in relation to truth. This is boundary work that distinguishes one form of inquiry from another, whether religious or scientific in terms of method or scale. Emergent trading zones create the possibility for languages that render one register of discourse or practice into another. When the encounter is experimental, for instance, such an encounter can be documented discursively, as in the case of Jewish-Christian difference in Europe and the emergence of mysticism as the adjudication of different kinds of authority. As de Certeau writes:

> Just as the massive adoption of German culture by the Jews in the nineteenth century made possible theoretic innovations and an exceptional intellectual productivity, the upsurge of mystics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was often the effect of the Jewish difference in the usage of a Catholic idiom.[33]

In a sense, spirituality is the *experimentality* of religious traditions. Adopting and adapting habits developed by one community and deployed in another means recognizing certain boundary objects held in common by both, through which different groups define themselves.

Borders in South Asian Religious Traditions

Years ago, I had used my foot to move one of the dumbbells away from the weight bench at a local gym in Chandigarh, India. "Don't do that," Raj said to me. "Haryanvi body builders take blessings from the weights." I bent down to pick up the weight and put it back on a stand that, like most of the equipment in gym and my own friend's wrist, had a small red string tied around it. "For protection and blessing," he said. Distinct from the muscular image of the monkey god Hanuman[34] at the entrance of the gym or the trident and *ik onkar* tattoos of my

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[33] De Certeau, 23.

[34] For more on Hanuman in general, see Philip Lutgendorf, *Hanuman's Tale: The Messages of a Divine Monkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For images of Hanuman specifically in relation to muscular Hinduism, see, Mrinalini Mitra, "Keeping Up with Hanuman:

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friends, the red string was a simple sign of religiosity and piety that I encountered in many places, around many things.

I understood that despite not sharing his beliefs, I could respect him and the others at the gym. But I then asked myself what it would mean for me to take blessing myself. It was not very different from what I already did, when accompanying friends to temples or gurdwaras. At Harmandir Sahib, known as the Golden Temple, in Amritsar—the holiest site of the Sikhs and built to welcome all visitors regardless of religion, gender, or caste—I too washed my hands and feet. I covered my head, walked barefoot around the *sarovar*, a pool of holy water where pilgrims would ritually bathe. I heard *gurbani* as it echoed across the complex from the loudspeakers. I accepted *prasad*, ate at the langar hall next to Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, and others. I could engage in these practices without questioning who I was or what I believed because the more I lived with others and accompanied them at weddings and funerals—to temples *goshalas* (cow shelters) in the mornings and during festivals—the more being in relation with them changed my sense of what their piety meant for them, and mine for me, and the less I could call what I saw idolatry despite the fact that many of my friends called the statues of marble and stone idols. It is important to note here, however, that the term *idol* here translates the term *murti* in various Indic languages—an image, icon, manifestation or figure.

Latinx theologians tend to speak in a prophetic and denunciatory mode, assuming that their claims are at once legitimate and impactful. I contend that the term "idolatry" emerges as a wound, from the legacy of a specific kind of disavowal forced upon converts to Christianity within the violent and uprooting context of Christendom. The term is often used as a kind of

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Reimagining the Myth of Hanuman through Animation," *Denison Journal of Religion* 18 (2019): 1-20, https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol18/iss1/7.

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forgotten metaphor to signal a harmful affective investment and attachment. Because contemporary Catholicisms, replete with iconoclastic Protestant forms of engagement, distance themselves from what precedes or differs from a version of "orthodox" Catholicism, either Pentecostal effervescence or animist indigenous sensibilities get relegated to otherness. To use the term *idol* to talk about harmful attachments animates a history of social critique and differentiation that different forms of unorthodox Catholicisms need not distance themselves from.

The faith of my friends is that of the forgiven; they are not devout. Fathers and grandfathers, mothers and aunts are often the devout ones. My friends are, they believe, the beneficiaries of others' prayers. Daily prayers at different times of the day, but especially in the early morning, as well as food proscriptions, served as the foundation of devotional practice for their relatives. But not for the men and boys I knew best. While others assiduously avoided meat and tobacco, my friends smoked, shared dip, and ate mutton and pork at every opportunity. Spirituality was a constant concern, but most often articulated in the idiom of participation in the group and prayer.

Regular participation in relatively anarchic mutual aid groups such as Narcotics Anonymous provides "recovering addicts (*sudharde hoe amli*)" opportunities to cultivate networks of social, material, and emotional support. Among participants in such networks, loans, suggestions, advice, recommendations (*sifarash*), and introductions circulate in ways that reinforce broader caste and class-based affiliations of violence and care. "People help their own," as one member told me, describing his situation as an advocate trying to attract business and failing until he reached out specifically to contacts of the same caste. Such exchange and relationality were never contained within domains of the secular and the demythologized.

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Deities, martyrs (*shaheed*), spirits (*jinn*), and ghosts (*bhoot-pret*) offered protection, care, and punishment in ways that never resolved neatly across lines of religious difference or denomination.[35] People engaged in a *therapeutics of intercession* asking friends, mentors (*spansars*), teachers (*gurus*), uncles (*mamas*), and others to help. People were indebted to those who helped and expected something in return. Spirituality, for my interlocutors, was relationship and relationships were real because they were practical.[36] When asked about religious identity, most would talk casually about their personal faith in God, as well as deep respect for their family, especially their parents. It is this respect that suffers the most damage because of substance use disorders and the problems that arise among friends and families.

The composition of any street drug is known by the user by means of the effects, in comparison with other drugs which may or may not have been sold by the same peddler. Each administration of a drug—licit or illicit—is an experiment. And while indeterminacy abounds when it comes to informal pharmaceutical markets, it is important to remember that even in clinical trials there is often not a clear way to deduce actions from reifications of static chemical structures. Emilie Gomart's work on the clinical trials of methadone in both France and the United States clearly demonstrates that neither research team in either country successfully isolated a substance from the conditions of its administration, in other words, from its *dispositif.* Gomart writes:

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[35] The literature on multireligious engagements in South Asia is vast. Two recent key texts include Anand Vivek Taneja, *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2018) and Veena Das, *Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2,015).

[36] This arrangement is reminiscent of what is described in Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

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> Methadone in Paris and in New York is intricately tied to the *dispositif*, and cannot be described without referring to the specific concrete details of the setting. If we ignored these particulars, we would take methadone to be an a-temporal, a-historical essence. When sociologists of substance erase them, they see 'just methadone', an a-temporal, a-historical form. An epistemological moat is dug around the substance and it is constituted as an entity separate from other entities in the world (that is, from the subject, ideas, context, and so on).[37]

What a substance is, at any given moment, is defined what it is not. Not as strong as last week's bag or much stronger than before, adulterated or relatively pure, full of "ice"—amphetamines produced and sold throughout India—or not. Composition varies just as much as individual biochemistry, acquired or inherent tolerance, chemical exposures, and environmental residues that all condition the reception and metabolism of the drug, which is introduced to Punjab— according to many of my interlocutors—at the Indo-Pak border.

Contemporary addiction medicine—both formal and informal—functions as a trading zone, wherein a variety of actors with radically different motivations come together to collaborate on projects while forging mutually intelligible yet provisional pidgin languages that bring together insights, concepts, and models from pharmacology, neuroscience, behavioral psychology, criminology, journalism, and religious discursive traditions. The body—and in particular, the brain—of the addict is thus fashioned into a boundary object at once plastic and robust enough to bear the burden of making various scientific, economic, and religious discourses coherent. Yet what journalists call the "opioid menace" in Punjab requires a careful,

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[37] Emilie Gomart, "Methadone: Six Effects in Search of a Substance," *Social Studies of Science* 32, no. 1 (2002): 119.

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critical, and speculative analysis of the ways that other kinds narratives and chemicals *converge upon* and *construct* the bodies of addicts, the diagnostic categories of dependence and addiction, and the pharmacokinetics of licit, illicit, and pervasive chemical exposures.

In my qualitative research on substance use disorder and recovery practices, I focus on chemistry for two reasons. First, in the history of chemistry too often molecules and compounds are treated as transhistorical and decontextualized objects rather than contingent and highly reactive relations. This fiction is the product of a specific historical trajectory stemming from the ascendency of industrial production and applied chemistry that abstracts, isolates, and values reductionist perspectives over the messiness of complex interactions.[38] Second, focusing on the reactivity of chemicals enables me to think through longer trajectories of chemical supplements, from pesticides to sugar, caffeine, and nicotine, that constitute the diffuse and pervasive chemical surroundings.[39]

Religion, as Marx reminds his readers in the introduction to his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, is the opium of the people.[40] And opium, like methadone, heroin, or religion, is not a transhistorical essence. Objects, as STS scholars remind us, are sites of action not entities in the world. There is relation, exchange, and complicity. To take the diversity of practices, devotions, texts, institutions, and norms and reify them as a single complex object is to

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[38] For more on the history of chemistry, see Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Isabelle Stengers, *A History of Chemistry*, trans. Deborah van Dam (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[39] For more on chemo-ethnography, see Nicholas Shapiro and Eben Kirksey, "Chemo-Ethnography: An Introduction." *Cultural Anthropology* 32, no. 4 (2017): 481–493. doi.org/10.14506/ca32.4.01.

[40] For more on the context of this statement, see Esther Oluffa Pedersen, "Religion Is the Opium of the People: An Investigation into the Intellectual Context of Marx's Critique of Religion," *History of Political Thought* 36, no. 2 (2015): 354-387.

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subscribe to a single perspective about religiosity that carries implicit hierarchies, particularly about the divisions between religion proper and popular practice. No pluralism (medical, religious, or political) is innocent of implicit hierarchy.[41] And part of what allows such fictions to persist is their logical coherence, the principle of noncontradiction.

Thus, the belief that someone can only identify as an adherent of a single religious tradition, or must convert change that identity, has a history. This belief is the product of boundary work, of labor. This persistent and often unexamined belief, that religious identities are mutually exclusive, is the product of a delusion imposed and reproduced with great effort across generations having profound effects everywhere, but most particularly in the postcolonial world.

Taxonomies and classifications of gender, language, age, class, caste, sexuality, race, and religion in South Asia are coproduced with texts, technologies, protocols, and material infrastructures in complex and subtle ways.[42] As in most places, the categories and processes people use to define or differentiate themselves and others are both inherited and constructed. At the boundaries of these categories, it is possible to identify trading zones, boundary work, and boundary objects that shape, refine, and deform subjectivities, collectivities, and histories.

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[41] This is particularly true of political secularity, as argued by Saba Mahmood in *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[42] The literature on gender and caste in South Asia is vast. An important selection of readings includes Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Rupa Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Reading Dalit Women's Testimonios* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 1999); and Uma Chakravarti, *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* (New York: Sage, 2003).

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Contemporary politics in India is shaped by what Anustup Basu calls the "political monotheism" of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism.[43] Religion becomes a mode of articulating the aspirations of a majoritarian state, which is itself produced in complex ways by histories of conquest, dispossession, and displacement. In his seminal study of religion and society, Harjot Oberoi observes that while scholars and others may "think, speak, and write about Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism… they rarely pause to consider if such clear-cut categories actually found expression in the consciousness, actions, and cultural performances of the human actors they describe."[44] In various discursive genres, such as historical accounts, archival material, or ethnographic reports of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Oberoi was repeatedly struck by the "brittleness" of such "textbook classifications." These classifications operated primarily as prototypical, rather than Aristotelian, classifications, meaning that proximity to a given prototype was used to differentiate and hierarchically order items in a given set. Thus, part of the problem was the use of Christianity as a paradigmatic case for understanding and categorizing forms of religious difference and identification. Oberoi argues, "By importing a Judeo-Christian and Islamic understanding of texts and scriptures into discussion of Indian religions, we could end up establishing religious identities that do not exist beyond the scholar's imagination."[45] Arvind-Pal S. Mandair develops this argument further, demonstrating the paradox inherent in the articulation of identity on the grounds provided by the colonizer, an insidious participation in the logics of self-oppression. Mandair writes:

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[43] Anustup Basu, *Hindutva as Political Monotheism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

[44] Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 1.

[45] Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 8.

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This paradox revolves around a scenario in which postcolonials in India and the Western diaspora have repeatedly engaged the question of the political through the enunciation of an identity that once did not exist (an identifiable mother tongue, and the ability to respond affirmatively to the word "religion," a term that is foreign to Indic cultures) but that was brought into existence during the colonial period and continues to survive through a process that is simultaneously linguistic and religious, particular and universal, whose dominant form manifests itself as a national identity (Hindu/Hindi) and a global religion (Hinduism). The paradox consists in the fact that, on the one hand, the manifestation of a national religion invokes its freedom from the ex-colonizer, but on the other hand, and through its expression as a global religion, continues to be haunted by repeated subjection to the conceptual categories of the excolonizer [sic]. However, the process can work only by repressing any memory of a precolonial state of radical linguistic and "religious" heterogeneity.[46]

Neither traditions nor languages in precolonial South Asia "belonged" in a strict sense to a single community. A shared sense of heritage in the Persian Islamicate or Buddhist spheres of influence or what Sheldon Pollock calls the Sanskrit cosmopolis meant that no discursive tradition resolved neatly into an identity.[47] Flexibility and multiplicity were key to understanding shifts in identification and practice prior to the rigid category designations of later periods.

Reading and engaging such texts "outside" of one's own tradition but in a manner shaped by one's own training and expectations is an example of what is articulated in the Islamic

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[46] Arvind-Pal Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality and the Politics of Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 418.

[47] Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

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tradition by Shahab Ahmed as "exploratory authority," the freedom to take risks, adopt new spiritual practices, and participate in new forms of community.[48] As opposed to the "prescriptive authority" of the Islamic tradition, articulated and promulgated by scholars, religious elites, and the self-consciously devout, "exploratory authority" is the inherent license of the believer to practice faith in ways drawn from diverse sources and experiences.

Identification, intersectionality, and positionality, along with a sober assessment of relative privilege and complicity with structures of oppression, help orient thinkers attempting to reckon with the inadequacies of the current dispensation in popular as well as academic discourse on religious difference and pluralism. Such a framework conceives of religious traditions as distinct, bounded, and exclusive wherein the only grammar of religious change is that of a Protestant-inflected conversion narratives. It is important to begin with the naive narrative because its power persists despite disavowals and rigorous historical scholarship on the ethnocentrism and contingency inherent in the taxonomies of "world religions" and the professionalization of religious scholarship predicated on hierarchical pluralism and discursive disciplinary constructions of the 19th century.

A Latinx spirituality of multiple religious belonging must begin by examining the historical roots of this unexamined belief in the conquest, brutal evangelizations, and forced conversions characteristic of Christian expansionism in the global South. Social epidemiologist Jaime Breilh writes:

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[48] Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). A recent example of such work in conversation with Christian theology is Francis Clooney, *His Hiding Place Is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

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In colonial society, the violent expropriation of gold and land and the feudal exploitation of the labor force in agricultural fiefs and mines formed the basis of society. However, the golden rule was not only greed and the concentration of material goods but also political and cultural subordination. Cultural unilateral dominance and *epistemicide* [original italics] resulted in a loss of many forms of sophisticated native knowledge, including the health knowledge of the time.[49]

The context of epistemicide and the destruction of civic festivals and collective devotional practices[50] is vital for understanding the persistence of pastoral anxiety, that of surveillance and governance.

If, as James Scott argues,[51] projects of rendering legibility through simplification and abstraction allowed for the consolidation of the power of the centralized state throughout the nineteenth century, earlier projects enacted by large ecclesial administrations enabled resonant reductive and enumerative obsessions, justifications for the continued management of indigenous populations through baptismal, marriage, and burial records. The church, like the state, has its own distinctive way of seeing, objectifying, counting, and reducing the richness of devotional life to categories of institutional religion, folk religion, superstition, and idolatry. Centuries before the centralized administrative state, the institutional church taught people what it felt like to be a number.

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[49] Jaime Breilh, *Critical Epidemiology and the People's Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[50] This context is elaborated in relation to theological reflection, particularly in relation to suffering, in Orlando Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997).

[51] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

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To identify as more than one thing would frustrate such efforts, as if being more than one thing or negotiating more than one commitment implies a lack of seriousness on the part of the agent. As recent research and everyday experience amply demonstrates, people can identify as many different things at the same time, can love more than one person, can be attracted to different genders, and have more than one career. Non-binary identifications, as Som Pourfarzaneh argues, are fundamental to religious lives today, whether scholars or practitioners are taking about multi-religious households formed through marriage or friendship or individuals whose spiritual lives are developed in conversation with different intersecting religious traditions.[52]

A Latinx spirituality of multiple religious belonging takes as a point of departure a term of identification that is more performative and aspirational than descriptive. In linguistic terms, the label Latinx strategically and politically designates a segment of the population but does not connote, that is, does not possess a "corpus of identical secondary meanings." Like other labels, the term of identification engenders what Ian Hacking calls "looping effects,"[53] complex interactions between affective attachments, subjectivities, and classifications. People can either strive to become something more fully or reject the label, using the term to define themselves in negative ways. If these classifications change, the effects can be harmful for the people

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[52] Som Pourfarzaneh, "The Miracle of Compassion: An Essay on Multi-Religiosity by a Buddhist Muslim," *Journal of Interreligious Studies* 33 (2021): 50-70. For more on the theoretical framework of *religious individualization* relevant here, see Martin Fuchs, Antje Linkenbach, Martin Mulsow, Bernd-Christian Otto, Rahul Bjørn Parson, and Jörg Rüpke, eds., *Religious Individualisation: Historical Dimensions and Comparative Perspectives* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2020).

[53] Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

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involved.[54] Latinx, like the term "brown,"[55] indicates a mode of difference grounded historically in colonialism, dispossession, and survival. To begin with *Latinx* is to ask the following question: how and when did people learn that "religious difference" operates in specific ways and that people must either be one thing or another, but never both at the same time.

It is possible to trace the origin of such beliefs at various points in history but attending to the protocols and technologies of coerced conversion is particularly useful when identifying a particularly Latinx spirituality of multiple religious belonging, an experimentality that seeks to unlearn habits transmitted generationally. Like others who have thought through the multicultural history of religious discursive traditions in relation to technology,[56] I believe it is best to being with the politics of an artifact. A knotted cord, for instance, is described by the seventeenth-century fray Diego López de Cogolludo, living in working in Yucatán, as a means of monitoring attendance at Mass and punishing those who were absent. Absenteeism among the forced converts, it should be noted, often exceeded 50 percent at that time.

Names would be recorded on *tablas*, or tables, and those absent were brought before a *doctrinero*, a Maya of social standing. Absentees could be flogged, if the gobernador determined that was appropriate. Maya children were especially vulnerable to the efforts of missionaries,

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[54] See, for instance, Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, "The Case of Race Classification and Reclassification under Apartheid," in *Sorting Things Out*: *Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

[55] José Esteban Muñoz describes a shared sense of *brownness* as a "copresence with other modes of difference, a choreography of singularities that touch and contact but do not meld … [and which] is coexistent, affiliates, and intermeshes with blackness, Asianness, indigenousness, and other terms that manifest descriptive force to render the particularities of various modes of striving in the world" in José Esteban Muñoz, *The Sense of Brown* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

[56] See, for instance, Jeremy Stolow, ed., *Deus in Machina: Religion, Technology, and the Things in Between* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

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who would gather boys under fourteen and girls under twelve for Mass and catechism class daily and make them sing while walking to the local church. Hanks writes:

> Once in church, kneeling and separated by gender, [the children] continued to sing. The *tupiles* [constables] then counted them by their *cuerdecitas* 'little ropes,' which bore names, and recorded the count on tablas. Those absent were sought out and given a few lashes. Again a pattern is repeated at a different level: for the adults the enforcers were *principales*, *alguaciles*, and the *gobernador*; for the children, they were *tupiles* working with *alguaciles*; for both, the knotted ropes were the instrument of monitoring attendance … Cogolludo notes that, with all this pedagogical care, failure to learn the doctrine must be an indicator of maliciousness, bad nature, or distraction.[57]

The callous and condescending ignorant cruelty of the friars, conquerors, and settlers bears fruit across generations, and while some find Mass today spiritually fulfilling, many do not. For some, not attending Mass is a way to honor the ancestors who risked floggings rather than abandon the idols that they served, loved, and served them. Reducing prayer to practice or habit enacts a certain violence on its relationship to other dimensions of religious discursive traditions. People pray because it works, and this prayer often consists of supplication, gratitude, and indebtedness—in other words: relation.

Structuralists such as Lévi-Strauss have helped scholars such as Donna Haraway and Marilyn Strathern realize that the *relation* is the most fundamental unit of analysis. No object can be abstracted from the dynamic relations that sustain it. Thus, the single religion is not a satisfying unit of analysis. An ecological approach that looks at agonistic and antagonistic

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[57] Hanks, *Converting Words*, 72.

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currents in the negotiation of boundary work and trading zones is key for understanding how boundary objects constitute differences.

I also suggest that disarticulating an unwieldy concept such as religion (which other disciplines have done with the concepts of the social and culture) to identify (if not isolate) a discursive, experimental, and technological aspect, enables perhaps a more subtle understanding of how people negotiate practices and shifts in thinking, acting, and acting upon the world. The theological aspect of religious life is primarily discursive even as shifts (not progress) in the experimental or technological aspects influence discursive theological articulations. Whether scholars such as Panofsky or Bourdieu are discussing shared intellectual and architectural elements of the Gothic cathedral, or Sarah Coakley is discussing the relevance of prayer as spiritual crucible for the development of Trinitarian and Christological Patristic thought and writing,[58] religious discursive traditions contain the irreducible multiplicity of other "cultures," and result from the mutual influences of experiment, technology, and discourse in a manner much like Galison describes in the history of physics in twentieth-century United States, Europe, and elsewhere.

Conclusion

This paper serves as an offering: a *testimonio*[59] of resolutely non-evangelizing pilgrimage across borders and oceans, driven by careful discernment and enabled by the privilege of a powerful passport and vaccination record. Such a privilege, which in area studies is often only

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[58] See Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Latrobe: Archabbey Press, 1951) and Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[59] The genre of *testimonio* is especially important in the study of Dalit women's writings and lives in India. See Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's* Testimonios (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2013).

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the prerogative of putative Whiteness, responds to a call from elsewhere to think both history and the divine with others, recognizing the voice of the Beloved speaking not only in another language, but in forms that do not belong to and are not addressed to the Christian communities. Neither decolonization nor the divine can be encountered fully by merely tracing strands of a single trajectory in the Americas.

Latinx theologians have tended to engage liberation theologies of various kinds, but not addiction recovery. When anthropologists have engaged religious dimensions of recovery work, their focus has been almost exclusively on forms of Christianities and the afterlives of confessional practices drawing almost exclusively on French theorists.[60] In my own work, Latinx spirituality is not the object of study but is instead the engine, methodological framework, and repertoire of theory that drives my engagement with other domains. To learn how people (including myself) work out their own freedom in devotion and prayer outside Christianity, but in relation to it and drawing from it, is important.

Christopher Tirres argues that "a turn to aesthetics and culture, when done carefully and critically, may re-inform and reinvigorate both the theory and practice of faith-in-action," demonstrating the philosophical underpinnings of such a move and articulating the relation of ritual to a pedagogy of the soul.[61] If addiction recovery is a liberation theology with its own particular parsing of the grammar of temporal experience ("One day at a time") in relation to the

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[60] See Angela Garcia, *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession Along the Rio Grande* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). See also Helena Hansen, *Addicted to Christ: Remaking Men in Puerto Rican Pentecostal Drug Ministries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018). Whereas Garcia draws primarily on Foucault, Hansen develops her engagement with nonsecular therapeutics via Durkheim.

[61] Christopher Tirres, *The Aesthetics and Ethics of Faith: A Dialogue Between Liberationist and Pragmatic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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eternal (*Akaal Purukh* in Punjabi) and is not merely the secular articulation of "endurance,"[62]

then perhaps tracing how such liberation occurs practically, drawing in specific ways from a

number of discursive traditions, can provide new ways of approaching worn and familiar

theological terms.

In a 2016 blog post, Francis Clooney, a prominent Catholic theologian and scholar of

Hinduism, reflects on what it means for a Catholic to mark the anniversary year of a "great

theistic Hindu theologian," Ramanuja (1017-1137). Clooney writes,

> We must be careful, but we must also be bold. In an age of divisions and forgetting and
>
> denial, we must insist on learning from the lives and ideas and prayers of saints and
>
> theologians of all traditions, as we move back and forth across borders where no walls
>
> can be built. Are not all the saints witnesses to the glory of God?[63]

The spiritual lives of people cannot be captured in the naive dialogues of elites reflecting on

correspondences in scriptures and commentarial traditions, however erudite these may be.

Instead, something more must be risked and then reflected upon. We are called to learn from the

bemused indifference to the anxious insistence and prescriptions promulgated by elites and their

surrogates that we can only ever be one thing or love one way.

My paper is an attempt to begin from a position of *missionary refusal*, a referendum on the

evangelization of the Americas as well as a way to be in solidarity with people born of different

partitions and forms of ongoing state violence. The 12-Step meetings I attend in Chandigarh,

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[62] Angela Garcia, "The Rainy Season: Toward a Cinematic Ethnography of Crisis and Endurance in Mexico City," *Social Text* 35, no. 1 (130) (2017), DOI 10.1215/01642472-3728020.

[63] https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/francisclooney/blog/what-catholics-can-learn-hindu-saint-his-1000th-anniversary.

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both at Christ the King Cathedral and St. Stephen's School, are sites of resurrection for the men who identify as Hindu, Sikh, Christian. And however much the priests and bishops dislike the men I work with, these clergy allow them access to the spaces of the parish, and that matters.

A final story: on a cold and bright winter afternoon, I rode on the back of a scooter to my friend's mother's home in Chandigarh, India. She made tea for us as her grandson played video games in the small apartment she shares with her son, his girlfriend, and her grandson. I had come to pick up recovery birthday cards and my friend's medallion, which he did not take with him when he left India to seek asylum in the United States. Tears in her eyes, she said to me in a broken voice, "*Unko dhyan rakhna* (Take care of him)." The cold medal of the coin and cards are the materialization of *lo cotidiano* for someone in recovery: time made matter. I carry these things, sacraments of a sort, for a son she will not see again for at least 10 years—if ever. Like so many others who leave their country and cannot return to their families, Punjabis who cross the US-Mexico border know what it means, what is sacrificed, to leave home in search of new opportunities. They are often imprisoned alongside other refugees whose stories—translated— are no different. In 2018, the Calexico Detention Center in El Centro, CA held 600 detainees, "at least 300 are from Punjab, with 99 percent of them belonging to the Sikh faith . . . a few of them are Hindus." Representatives of the American Sikh Council led a group of volunteers into the detention center and "arranged to have a *divan* [religious gathering], with several detainees participating passionately in *kirtan* [performance of Sikh devotional music]. The volunteers conducted *paath* [recitation], *kirtan*, and *ardas* [prayer], in which they were joined by not just the Sikh detainees but many other detainees."[64]

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[64] https://www.indiawest.com/news/global_indian/american-sikh-council-representatives-volunteer-at-calexico-detention-center-in-el-centro/article_a83115cc-f8ed-11e8-8c47-5350feffe21c.html.

Boundaries are sites of knowledge production and material exchange. My work is an attempt to think through borders, drug wars, and the violence of the state enacted on brown bodies that speak different languages and find common ground together, leaving behind languages that no longer serve us and looking ahead at the new names and grammars of devotion, transformation, and complicit care.

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