

their concentric orientation to the master, such groups usually have a low degree of organization. Besides the care of the master, the disciples' task frequently consists in winning more disciples, through their preaching and reports of their religious experiences.

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Literature

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→ *Apostle, Ashram, Group, Master/Pupil*

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Discourse

'Discourse' is not a religious term; it is used in attempts to describe, interpret, or explain religious phenomena. The term refers to linguistic phenomena beyond the basic units of word and sentence, but the extent of this 'beyond' can vary widely, from larger linguistic units to the widest possible historical, social, and cultural contexts. Although often used in writing about religion, the term is seldom defined, and the theoretical allegiances that frame its use are rarely made explicit.

Defining 'Discourse'

Like 'religion,' 'discourse' is a term whose definition presupposes a theoretical perspective. It is useful to think of meanings of discourse ranged along a spectrum: from a naïve view that interpretation is a matter of straightforward textual analysis; through a more nuanced hermeneutical recognition that interpretation must always take account of the contexts of author and reader; to a radical constructionism which holds that human lives take shape within a web of language that literally constitutes self and world, a web with nowhere outside of it. In the first of these cases, 'discourse' is generally synonymous with 'a characteristic way of speaking.' In the latter cases, it points to, but can never completely capture, the fundamental role that language plays in constituting the historical, social, cultural, and personal networks within which all communication takes place.

From the sixteenth century, the word 'discourse' referred in English to spatial movement, to the act or faculty of conversation, to the movement of reason from premise to conclusion, and to a formal treatment of a subject at length. In the late twentieth century, the concept was developed in two fields: cultural studies, examining the historical, social, and cultural conditions that make possible specific statements and their effects; and linguistics, aiming primarily at an empirical analysis of texts.

In *cultural studies*, discourse refers to a body of text structured by rules outside the control of, and often the awareness of, an author or speaker. On this view, discourse shapes or constitutes the subject, in opposition to the view that language is simply a tool used by autonomous subjects. Several threads converge here. Mikhail Bakhtin's work on genre, polyphony, and the 'dialogic principle' argued that literature both reflects and shapes its social conditions. Drawing on Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva later developed the concept of 'intertextuality' to suggest that every text is in essence a complex network of relations to other texts (e.g., reference and influence). Linguists Ferdinand de Saussure and Émile Benveniste analyzed the systematic aspects of language in ways that laid the foundations for structuralism and for the extension of the concept of discourse to non-linguistic realms. Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser developed Karl Marx's concepts of ideology and hegemony, holding that illusory forms of thought come to be accepted as objective fact, thus perpetuating existing modes of domination and hierarchical social relations. Michel Foucault's early works analyzed 'discursive formations' in history, i.e. systems of thought that define the basic categories through which the world is seen and understood. Foucault defined discourse as a set of rules or constraints that make certain statements possible—and others not—in specific historical, social, and institutional contexts.

Critical or cultural views of discourse have had more effect than linguistic approaches on the study of religion. This is especially so in areas where critical analyses of texts reveal systems of domination, e.g., post-colonialist and feminist studies. Drawing on Foucault, Edward Said argued in *Orientalism* (1978) that academic works on Islam were examples of imperialist as well as scholarly discourse. Said made two distinct claims: one about the content of a specific discourse, i.e. that → Orientalism presents a racist, hegemonic portrayal of Islam as the inauthentic, backward Other of Christianity and the West; and one about the function of discourse in general, i.e. that it helps create the reality it appears to describe, thus entrenching long-lasting biased representations of others. Scholars of religion are often quick to make the first sort of claim without adequately theorizing the second.

The presence of the term 'discourse' is no guarantee that one is reading a critical analysis of relations between language and power, such as Said's; nor does its absence imply that one is not. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in her feminist analysis of early Christianity, *In Memory of Her* (1983), speaks of androcentric language, texts, translation, interpretation, transmission, redaction, theology, and historiography where, as her later work attests, 'discourse' might be used. The fact that discourse can stand for all these terms and others has the advantage of reminding us that all uses of language are potentially implicated in relations of power. It has the disadvantage of vagueness.

The most prominent discourse of 'discourse' in the recent study of religion is the debate over 'the discourse of sui generis religion.' Russell McCutcheon argues that this 'regnant discourse'—with the work of Mircea → Eliade as its prototype—functions to draw four sorts of boundaries: between religious and non-religious phenomena (religion is unique and irreducible); between religious studies and other disciplines (a unique phenomenon

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demands a unique methodology and institutional location); between the interior, private, belief-oriented domain of religion and public, practical spheres like that of politics; and between tradition and modernity (authentic human life is rooted in traditional relations to the sacred). McCutcheon's 'oppositional discourse,' echoing the work of Talal Asad, Timothy Fitzgerald and others, critiques these distinctions. Again, the fact that discourse serves as an umbrella term to cover such a wide variety of issues has both advantages and disadvantages. Richard Terdiman has introduced the concept of 'counter-discourse' to suggest that all discourses come into being against a background of competing, contrasting utterances. In this light, McCutcheon's explicitly polemical stance is an example of the construction of a discourse as well as an analysis of the construction of 'religion' through discourse.

Linguistic Discourse Analysis

In linguistics, discourse refers most simply to a unit of analysis larger than the sentence and more generally to the set of utterances constituting a speech event. Linguistic discourse analysis developed into a bewildering variety of forms in the 1970s and 1980s. In general, these approaches relate three domains that are often kept separate: *semantics* (how language conveys meaning), *syntax* (how linguistic elements are organized), and *pragmatics* (how meaning relates to use in specific contexts).

Since the early 1990s a number of scholars have developed the application of discourse analysis to the study of the New Testament, as pioneered by J. P. Louw and K. Callow in the 1970s. Four distinct approaches have contributed to this work. The South African school analyzes relations between the smallest units of meanings of texts, i.e., individual nominative-predicate structures. The American Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) school has made important contributions to biblical translation studies through close sentence-level analysis. The Continental school explores relations between the micro- and macro-structures of texts. The English/Australian, or functional, school proposes a more developed theory of types of discourse and their relations to grammatical forms in specific linguistic contexts. However, apart from the narrow field of biblical studies, linguistic approaches have had little impact on the study of religion.

There are dozens of distinct approaches to linguistic discourse analysis. Although scholars of religion rarely use them, a few examples might indicate their potential value. (1) Drawing on poststructuralist discourse theory and critical linguistics, *critical discourse analysis* (Teun van Dijk) analyzes texts as forms of social action that occur in social contexts shaped by ideology and by differences in cultural capital. It has developed a complex set of techniques for analyzing broad text structures, as well as sentence structure and word-choice, as expressions of 'cultural logics.' (2) Rooted in phenomenology (Alfred Schütz) and ethnomethodology (Harold Garfinkel), *Conversation Analysis* (Harvey Sacks) empirically describes formal organizational details of ordinary conversation (e.g., turn-taking and sequencing), on the view that discursive practices mediate social actions and social settings. (3) Drawing on Marxism, feminism, and ethnomethodology, *institutional ethnography* (Dorothy Smith) grounds research in the texts produced by, and in the self-knowledge of, research subjects examined in their institutional contexts. It begins by analyzing everyday social relations rather than a 'given discourse,' holding that

the latter approach necessarily imposes ruling ideologies on the social scientist's own discourse. (4) William F. Hanks has modeled an analysis of the components of ritual in terms of 'participation frames' and 'discourse genres.' (5) Taking issue with Clifford Geertz's view of culture-as-text, the *natural history of discourse* (Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban) analyzes relations between strategies of 'entextualization' and processes of 'contextualization.' This approach views the distinction between shifting discursive practices and established texts as one that is constructed in specific social and historical situations.

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→ *Academic Study of Religion, Colonialism, Gender Stereotypes, Knowledge, Language, Literature, Religion, Science*

Steven Engler

Disenchantment / Re-enchantment of the World

1. The concept *disenchantment of the world* (Ger., "Entzauberung der Welt") reflects experiences of the nineteenth century. Industrialism and the triumph of science, together with the art of engineering, fostered the belief that, in principle, everything can be experienced and then conquered by calculation. Max → Weber, with whose work the concept of disenchantment is especially connected, traced this conviction back to Western intellectualization and rationalization, which, he thought, is reflected in an endless process of the dismissal of incalculable powers through technological knowledge. The disenchantment of the universe makes it possible to see the latter as a causal mechanism, and thus leads to the suppression of the ethical postulate that the world is a cosmos ordered by God and directed toward a goal (→ Teleology). Further, Weber thought, after a phase of the unitary rationalism of a manner of life in keeping with Christian ethics, the disenchantment of the modern world has led to the 'battle of the disenchanted gods'¹—to the appearance of a multiplicity of conflicting values and spheres of value. This conflict, Weber held, is signalled by the fact that there is no longer any supreme instance that might be able to posit ultimate normativity. At the same time, Weber was aware of the fact that disenchantment created certain deficits that were to be