Between Faith and Doubt: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Agnosticism in Karen Armstrong's *The Case for God* and A.C. Grayling's *The God Argument*

Asst. Prof. Ameer Ali Hussein

University of Kufa -College of Arts

ameera.almajtoomy@uokufa.edu.iq

Abstract

Agnosticism has been studied before in the field of theology and religion, but to the best of the researcher's knowledge, it is not studied in linguistics especially in critical discourse analysis. The problem of the study is that how the authors Karen Armstrong and A.C. Grayling convey the ideology of agnosticism in their respective books, *The case of God and The God Argument.* The study tries to answer the following questions: 1. How do the two authors Karen Armstrong and A.C. Grayling linguistically structure the concept of agnosticism in their respective book? 2. What ideological stances are involved in the discourse of *The Case for God* and *The God Argument* regarding faith, doubt, and knowledge? 3. How does Van Dijk's three-level CDA model reveal the power relations and ideological struggles between religious and secular worldviews in these texts? 4. What rhetorical and linguistic strategies do Armstrong and Grayling employ to convince their respective audiences about the validity of their stance on agnosticism? 5. In what ways do these texts contribute to the broader discourse on the relationship between reason and belief in contemporary society? Van Dijk's model has been used to analyse the data and reach answer for the previous questions. As this model consisted of three level: Micro , Macro and meso. The analysis has been through all the three level. After analyzing the selected excerpts, the researcher has reached to the conclusion that Armstrong's work emphasizes a spiritual and humble approach to the divine, positioning agnosticism as a respectful acknowledgment of mystery. In contrast, Grayling's work emphasizes the rational need for evidence and the intellectual honesty of rejecting religious belief due to lack of proof. The micro-level of discourse analysis reveals how language and semantic choices are used to convey these positions, the meso-level situates these discourses within particular social and intellectual contexts, and the macro-level highlights the broader ideological and power structures at play. Ultimately, both authors use language to advance their respective worldviews, with Armstrong positioning agnosticism as a bridge between faith and reason, while Grayling critiques it as a lack of commitment in the face of intellectual uncertainty.

Keywords: agnosticism, Critical discourse analysis, reason, religion, belief, knowledge.

بين الايمان والشك: دراسة تحليل خطاب نقدي للشكية في كتاب كارين ارمسترونغ " قضية الاله" وكتاب أي سي كرايلنك " جدل الاله"

الأستاذ المساعد الدكتور امير علي حسين

جامعة الكوفة ـكلية الآداب

المستخلص

لقد تم دراسة الشكية في مجالي العلوم الدينية واللاهوتية، لكن حسب علم الباحث فانه لم يتم دراسته لغويا و بالأخص كدراسة نقدية. تكمن مشكلة البحث في الطريقة التي قدم بها الكاتبان كارين ارمسترونغ وأي سي كرايلنك أيديولوجية الشكية في كتبهم "قضية الاله" و "جدل الاله" على التوالي. حاولت الدراسة ان تجيب على الأسئلة التالية: 1. كيف ركب الكاتبان لغويا مفهوم الشكية في كتبهما؟ 2. ما هي مواقفهم الايديلوجية التي حاولوا دسها في كتابهما بما يخص الايمان والشك والمعرفة؟ كيف كشفت طريقة فان دايك النقدية ذات الثلاث مستويات صراع الأيديولوجيات بين وجهات النظر العالمية حول الدين والعلمانية من خلال نصوص الكاتبين؟ ما هي الوسائل البلاغية واللغوية التي استخدما الكاتبين لكي يقنعوا قرائهم حول صحة موقفهما من الشكية؟ كيف ساهمت نصوص الكتاب بتشكيل السياق للعلاقة بين السببية والاعتقاد في المجتمع المعاصر؟ لقد استخدمت نظرية فان دايك النقدية لتحليل بيانات ونصوص البحث كم اجل تحصيل الإجابة لأسئلة البحث. بما ان النظرية تتكون من ثلاثة مستويات: دقيق وعام ومتوسط، فان التحليل قد تم من خلال هذه المستويات الثلاثة. بعد تحليل النصوص المختارة، توصل الباحث الى الخلاصة ان كتاب ارمسترونغ أكد على الجانب الروحي والتواضع للإله واضعا الشكية كإدراك معتبر للغموض. على النقيض من ذلك، عمل كرايلنك أكد على الاحتياج العقلاني للدليل والأمانة الفكرية لرفض الاعتقاد الديني الذي يعود الى غياب الدليل. المستوى الأول النقدي لنظرية فان دايك بين اللغة المستخدمة والاختيارات الدلالية لإيصال تلك الافتراضات. المستوى المتوسط وضع تلك الخطابات في في سياق ففكري اجتماعي، وأخيرا المستوى العام يبين التركيب الأيديولوجي والسلطوي في نصوص كتابه. بالنتيجة، كلا الكاتبين استخدموا اللغة بطريقة معينة لتقديم وتطوير وجهات نظرهم، بالنسبة لارمسترونغ فقد وضع الشكية كحلقة وصل بين الايمان والسببية، اما كرايلنك قد نقد غياب الالتزام لمواجهة الشكية الفكرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشكية، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، السببية، الدين، الاعتقاد، المعرفة**.**

1- Introduction

The debate surrounding the existence of God has been a central theme in philosophy, theology, and literature for centuries. In recent decades, scholars like Karen Armstrong and A.C. Grayling have contributed to this discourse with significant works: *The Case for God* (2009) by Armstrong and *The God Argument* (2013) by Grayling. While Armstrong argues for the necessity of faith and spirituality, Grayling advocates for a secular approach grounded in reason. Both works explore the intersection between faith and doubt, but from different perspectives. This paper conducts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of agnosticism in both texts, utilizing Teun A. van Dijk's approach to CDA to investigate how language reflects, constructs, and challenges the agnostic stance on religious belief. The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How do the two authors Karen Armstrong and A.C. Grayling linguistically structure the concept of agnosticism in their respective book?

2. What ideological stances are involved in the discourse of *The Case for God* and *The God Argument* regarding faith, doubt, and knowledge?

3. How does Van Dijk's three-level CDA model reveal the power relations and ideological struggles between religious and secular worldviews in these texts?

4. What rhetorical and linguistic strategies do Armstrong and Grayling employ to convince their respective audiences about the validity of their stance on agnosticism?

5. In what ways do these texts contribute to the broader discourse on the relationship between reason and belief in contemporary society?

By answering the above questions, the study tries to achieve the following aims:

1. To analyze the linguistic choices used by Armstrong and Grayling in representing agnosticism.

2. To uncover the ideological assumptions underlying the discourse of both authors on faith and doubt.

3. To apply Van Dijk's CDA model in examining the micro, meso, and macro-level discourses in both texts.

4. To compare the argumentative strategies used by Armstrong and Grayling in framing agnosticism.

5. To assess the broader impact of these works on the ongoing debate between religious belief and secular humanism.

2- Agnosticism

The term "agnosticism" is coined for the first time in 1869 by Thomas Huxley. It represents a philosophical stance that neither affirms nor denies the existence of God or the divine power. Unlike theism that strongly believes in God's existence and atheism that rejects God's existence, agnosticism stresses that this matter is inherently unknowable (Huxley, 1889). This new trend has a great influence on the delimiting line between faith, reason, and skepticism, that influences both religious and and secular thought.

2.1 The Foundations of Agnosticism

Agnosticism is founded in the discipline of epistemology, the study of knowledge and its limits. Huxley defines an agnostic as "the person who does nor claim to know or believe that which they have no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe" (Huxley, 1889, p. 50).

There are other philosophers who contribute to emerge the thought of agnosticism such as Immanuel Kant. He stated that human reasoning is not capable of comprehending metaphysical realities, involving God's existence, saying that "we can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God through pure reason" (Kant, 1781). Kant's thoughts greatly influenced the approach of later thinkers who adopts agnosticism as mid area between dogmatic belief and outright rejection.

2.2 Agnosticism in Contemporary Thought

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In recent discourse, the concept of agnosticism is divided into weak and strong aspects. The weak aspect means that agnosticism suggests that there is no sufficient knowledge to determine the existence of God, but this knowledge might be attained in the future. On the other hand, strong agnosticism asserts that God's existence and deities cannot be proved and permanently unknown (Flew, 1976).

In the recent time, prominent philosophical thinkers such as Bertrand Russell and Richard Dawkins have engaged with agnosticism by criticizing religious belief. Russell (1953) argued that in the process of engaging towards atheism, he is actually agnostic because ultimate certainty about God's existence is unattainable. Dawkins (2006) presented the concepts of "spectrum of theistic probability", situating agnosticism between firm belief and outright atheism.

3- Theoretical Framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA has come to existence as a reaction to the traditional objective approaches to language studies which focus mainly on the formal semantic and semantic levels. CDA on the contrary deals with the social and political dimensions of discourse (Fairclough, 1995). CDA deals mainly with the ways texts (written and spoken) that reproduce power structures, social inequalities and societal ideologies. The main supposition of CDA is that language choices reflect power dominance, social identities and inherent ideologies, that is to say language is a social practice that interconnected with social power (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The most integral tenet of CDA is that cognitive structures and societal power relations construct or shape discourse. This tenet means that texts do not reflect reality, those texts construct social realities and illustrate the ideologies of the authors and writers. This is why CDA could be regarded as descriptive and critical as it searches not only to analyse the structural and communicative form of discourse but also to critique the ideologies that are hidden beneath it and the power relations that it reproduces (Van Dijk, 2001).

In CDA, the analysis of discourse always includes diagnosing ideological formations, comprehending how specific social identities and groups are depicted, and identifying the mechanisms of social control (Fowler, 1991). This theoretical review will be beneficial in analyzing how both Karen Armstrong and A.C. Grayling represent agnosticism, faith, and doubt, with an emphasis on how these representations reflect broader ideological positions related to religion and secularism.

3.1 Van Dijk's Three-Level Model of CDA

Teun Van Dijk proposed a three-level model which is broadly used in discourse analysis. His model presented a systematic approach to analyse how discourse works on various levels, from the micro to the macro levels. Each level of those three levels affects and interacts with the other level which make that level able to

grip the complexity of discourse, particularly when analyzing ideological representations. Van Dijk (2001) states that the micro level of discourse includes the linguistic and cognitive elements of a text such as words, phrases, sentences, in addition to that how these elements are structured to convey meaning. The next level is the meso level which focuses a broader aspect of text which the social contexts and discursive strategies. This level involves the produces of the text as writer or speaker, the audience, and the institutional and social settings in which discourse happens.

Finally, at the **macro-level**, the broader **ideological structures** that underlie discourse is examined by CDA, especially the role of discourse in maintaining or challenging **power relations** within society (Van Dijk, 2001).

3.1.1 Micro-Level: Discourse Structures

The micro level according to Van Dijk's model investigates the linguistic aspects of discourse in terms of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The main aim of this level is to unveil the language choices that illustrate the representation of ideologies. According to Van Dijk (2001) and Wodak (2009), language is basically ideological because it is structured by social ideologies. The micro level considers the authors' choices of words, syntactic structures, frames, arguments to shape particular ideological positions.

For instance, the use of words like "faith" and "belief", and "evidence" and "proof", can reveal hidden ideology about an aspect of knowledge, divine or secular worldview. On the one hand, Armstrong's use of words like "awe" and "mystery" supposes a spiritual perspective on the unknown. On the other hand, Grayling's use of "evidence" and "skepticism" focuses on a rational approach to question God's existence.

3.1.2 Meso-Level: Social Context and Discursive Practices

At the meso-level, the emphasis shifts from the individual linguistic elements of the text to the **social context** in which the discourse is produced and consumed. This level includes and investigation of discursive strategies which are the various practices of speaking and writing which are structured by the societal norms, institutions, and expectations. Van Dijk (2001) states that the social context includes different settings such as political, cultural, and ideological, through which discourse occurs. It also focuses on the relationships between participants in a specific discourse, including author (writer or speaker), audience, and the wider social context in which the text exists.

This level focuses on the importance of the communicative events that are structured by the role and expectations of the author (speaker or writer) and the audience.   These communicative events involve media publications, public speeches, and academic works. The texts of both writers in this research

Armstrong and Grayling are cited in a particular intellectual and social context: Armstrong, who is a former nun turned into a religious scholar, writes with a claim of the authority of a spiritual and intellectual leader. Whereas Grayling, who is a secular philosopher, writes from a critic of religious belief viewpoint. Both authors want to target reader who are interested in the intersection between faith and doubt but according to different ideological perspectives (Fairclough, 2010).

3.1.3 Macro-Level: Ideological Structures and Power Relations

The third final level of Van Dik's model is the macro level which deals with the ideological triggers of discourse. ideology in this sense refers to a set of values, beliefs, and norms that guide the social action and power relations. Van Dijk (2001) attributes the concept of ideology into two perspectives, the first one is that ideology is cognitive, which means that it is a mental representation of individual or groups, the other one is discursive, which means that ideology is communicated through language. So at the macro level, discourse is regarded as a social practice that reflects and maintains power relations is society (Gee, 2011).

 Concerning this study, Both Armstrong and Grayling's works reflect wider range of ideology that is categorized into theism, atheism, and agnosticism. Armstrong's advocacy for religious humanism and Grayling's critique of religious belief reflects distinct ideological positions. Armstrong's work structures agnosticism as a spiritual stance that acknowledges the limits of human knowledge, whereas Grayling's work, its discourse portraits agnosticism as a rationalist approach grounded in the absence of empirical evidence. The two works are engaged with the ideological struggle between religious faith and secularism, and both of them manipulate with language to either support or criticize the existing power structures related to religious authority and scientific rationality. Here are two excerpts from each book as examples of agnosticism ideology.

Excerpts from *The Case for God* (Armstrong, 2009):

1. "Religious faith is not about believing in literal truths, but about a deep sense of awe and mystery that transcends ordinary experience."

2. "Agnosticism, rather than skepticism, represents a more appropriate stance toward the divine, acknowledging that God is beyond human comprehension."

Excerpts from *The God Argument* (Grayling, 2013):

3. "Agnosticism is not a solution but a postponement of the question of God's existence, a stance that avoids making a commitment due to lack of evidence."

4. "The real challenge to belief in God is not atheism, but the demand for evidence and reasoned argument."

4- Data Description and Analysis

The data of the study consists of excerpts from two books: Karen Armstrong's *The Case for God* and A.C. Grayling's *The God Argument.* Both books express the ideological stance of agnosticism but indifferent perspectives.

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As Detailed above, the analysis of the data will be according to the model of Teun Van Gijk. the data is a extracted from the two books Karen Armstrong's *The Case for God* and A.C. Grayling's *The God Argument*, This model involves the analysis of discourse at three interrelated levels: the **micro-level**, the **meso-level**, and the **macro-level**. Analyzing some excerpts across these levels will give the readers a better understanding of how language can utilize to construct and reflect ideologies, particularly those related to agnosticism, faith and doubt.

4.1 Micro-Level Analysis: Discourse Structures

The model of Van Dijk at the micro level focuses on the linguistic structural aspects of discourse such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. This level addresses how the authors use linguistic individual linguistic elements as (vocabulary, metaphor, sentence structure) to convey specific ideology or particular meaning. The following sections we will see how Armstrong and Grayling in their respective books use specific linguistic choices to frame their views on agnosticism.

4.1.1 Karen Armstrong's The Case for God

The discourse of Armstrong is rich with religious and spiritual language that pictures agnosticism as respectful acknowledgement of the limits of human knowledge. Armstrong uses words like "mystery", "awe", "humanity", and "transcendence" to refer to emotional associative understanding of faith. Those term do not only propose a theological position, but also promote perspective of reverence toward the unknowable.

For example, Armstrong writes:

5. "Religious faith is not about believing in literal truths, but about a deep sense of awe and mystery that transcends ordinary experience."

In the above extract, the words "awe," "mystery," and "transcendence" function as essential semantic markers, intensifying the ineffability of God and the human incapacity to fully understand the divine. The use of "deep sense" implies an emotional, internal experience, suggesting that agnosticism is an acknowledgment of the limits of reason and knowledge. the concept "deep sense" is used to imply an emotional and internal experience, proposing that agnosticism is a recognition of the boundaries of reason and knowledge.

In the same manner, when Armstrong considers the role of agnosticism, she frames it an intellectual and spiritual aspect of humanity:

6. "Agnosticism, rather than skepticism, represents a more appropriate stance toward the divine, acknowledging that God is beyond human comprehension."

In the above excerpt, the comparison between "agnosticism" and "skepticism" is important. Armstrong uses the term humanity in two different perspectives, the first one positive that refers to agnosticism, proposing that it is a respectful acceptance of divine mystery. On the contrary, it refers to a negative perspective as

a dismissive or confrontational toward the unknown. This accurate use of sematic choices frames a favorable view of agnosticism as a moderate balanced approach to religious knowledge.

4.1.2 A.C. Grayling's The God Argument

Grayling, on the other hand, utilizes a more analytical and empirical approach to reflect his choice of words like "evidence" "reason" "empirical", and "commitment". Those vocabularies are integral to his critique of religious belief.

In the following passage, Grayling explains his view of agnosticism:

7. "Agnosticism is not a solution but a postponement of the question of God's existence, a stance that avoids making a commitment due to lack of evidence."

In the above excerpt, the phrase "postponement of the question" proposes that agnosticism is a reluctance of not engaging in issue of God's existence in a conclusive manner. The words "avoid" and "lack of evidence" constitute agnosticism as a position stemmed in the intellectual indecision rather than spiritual reflection. Those linguistic chosen vocabularies contrast with Armstrong's spiritual framing of agnosticism, positioning it as an intellectual stance that abstain form belief because of the lack of the empirical support.

Similarly, Grayling criticizes the religious beliefs by focusing on the necessity of evidence:

8. "The real challenge to belief in God is not atheism, but the demand for evidence and reasoned argument."

In the above excerpt, the phrase "demand for evidence and reasoned argument" depicts Grayling's belief that agnosticism is not an assertive stance but a position that is highlighted from the absence of verified evidence. His use of " reasoned argument" and "challenge" constitute agnosticism as a rational method that questiones religious belief depending on intellectual inquiry.

4.2 Meso-Level Analysis: Social Context and Discursive Practices

According to Van Dijk, the meso level refers to the social context in which the discourse of an ideology takes place, including the social and ideological practices that frame the discourse. This level deals with how discourse situates itself within particular social or institutional setting and for the intended audience.

4.2.1Karen Armstrong's Context

The work of Armstrong is mainly positioned within the tradition of religious humanism, where the focus is on the lived experience of faith and the role of religion in human life. Armstrong's audience involves readers who may be disillusioned with institutional religion or secularism but they are still searching for spiritual meaning. The religious background of Armstrong and her former position as a nun set her a spokesperson for a more mystical and open-ended approach to faith. The discourse of Armstrong's work reflects an effort to reconsider the

transcendent aspect of religion, taking in consideration fundamental and secular atheism.

Armstrong's framing of agnosticism as a respectful and modest position exists within this religious humanist framework. Armstrong proposes a vision of agnosticism that doubt and faith are not opponents but as coexisting beliefs within a spiritual journey. The discursive strategies that are used here serves the ideological purpose of redirecting readers toward an understanding of God as an ineffable mystery, behind the limits of doctrinal truth or empirical evidence.

4.2.2 A.C. Grayling's Context

As a secular humanist and philosopher, Grayling writes mainly for the audience whose perspective is critical of religious claims and advocates for a rational, evidence-based worldview. His critique of agnosticism and theism evolves from his commitment to the ideals of Enlightenment, especially the emphasis on the scientific enquiry. His discourse puts agnosticism as a failure to create a definitive decision about the existence of God, while he presents atheism as a more intellectually honest alternative. Grayling uses a specific discourse to highlight his broader ideological commitment to humanism and rationalism. his criticism of agnosticism, and his emphasis on the significance of evidence, goes along with his secular humanist stance, situating his audience to reject religious belief due the prior rejection of agnosticism, because of the lack of evidence for both of them.

4.3 Macro-Level Analysis: Ideology and Power Structures

The final macro level of Van Dijk's model analyzes the ideological aspects of discourse and how they support the power structures in the society. In this study, ideology means the beliefs, world views and cognitive perception that illustrate the way the world is understood, presented, and acted upon in discourse. The macro level also handles the power dynamic challenges within society, especially about religious and knowledge themes.

4.3.1 Karen Armstrong's Ideology

Armstrong's discourse in the macro level is intrinsically rooted in the idea of pluralistic, spiritual worldview that override the traditional dogmatic beliefs. She adopts the stance of agnosticism as honest and humble that stratify with the transcendent mystical aspects of religion. Armstrong's work can be regarded as a criticism of both scientific atheism and religious fundamentalism, situating agnosticism in the mid area between those two poles.

Armstrong's ideological stance struggles the control of literal, doctrinal religion, and militant atheism by calling for more inclusive, less divisive method to spirituality. Her agnosticism is shaped against faith as a rejection but it embraces the uncertainty and the recognition of limitations of human understanding. This ideological positioning illustrates an tendency to tolerance and spiritual inclusivity,

to reframe the public discourse on religion in such a specific way that permits ambiguity and complexity.

4.3.2 A.C. Grayling's Ideology

On the other hand, Grayling's discourse criticizes the dominance of religious ideologies in public life as it is situated in a secular, rational framework. At the macro level, Grayling defends through his work defends the power of reason and empirical evidence to steer human understanding, situating religious belief-particularly theism- as intellectually untenable. Agnosticism according to Grayling is structured within this context as a temporary position, one that is deduced because of lack of evidence rather than a permanent state of intellectual uncertainty.

The power structure in the discourse of Grayling's works reflects the ideological struggle between secularism and theism beliefs. Grayling defends for humanistic worldview by criticizing atheism and theism. He claims that reason and evidence in humanistic worldview are paramount, leading to challenging the influence of religious ideologies in framing the social institutions and individual belief systems.

Results and discussions

The application of Teun A. Van Dijk's three-level Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Karen Armstrong's *The Case for God* and A.C. Grayling's *The God Argument* reveals significant differences in how agnosticism is represented within these texts. The analysis at the micro, meso, and macro levels demonstrates how linguistic choices, social context, and ideological positioning contribute to constructing divergent perspectives on agnosticism.

Micro-Level Analysis: Discourse Structures

The micro-level analysis highlights the distinct linguistic choices employed by Armstrong and Grayling in their respective treatments of agnosticism. Armstrong's discourse is characterized by spiritual and religiously imbued language, using terms like "mystery," "awe," "humility," and "transcendence" to frame agnosticism as a reverential acknowledgment of the limits of human knowledge. Her use of metaphors and emotionally charged language positions agnosticism as a spiritual posture rather than a skeptical or indecisive stance.

Conversely, Grayling's language is rooted in rationalism and empiricism, favoring terms such as "evidence," "reason," "empirical," and "commitment." His linguistic framing constructs agnosticism as an intellectual hesitation, critiquing it as an avoidance of definitive conclusions. His use of terms like "postponement of the question" and "lack of evidence" suggests that agnosticism is an inadequate response to the debate on God's existence, positioning atheism as a more decisive and rational alternative.

Meso-Level Analysis: Social Context and Discursive Practices

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At the meso-level, the analysis highlights how both authors tailor their discourse to their respective audiences. Armstrong's discourse operates within the framework of religious humanism, appealing to readers who may be disillusioned with organized religion but still seek spiritual depth. Her positioning of agnosticism as a humble, open-ended stance aligns with her broader argument that faith should be about experience and mystery rather than rigid doctrine.

Grayling, on the other hand, addresses an audience inclined toward secular humanism and rationalist philosophy. His discourse aligns with Enlightenment ideals, emphasizing reason and empirical validation as the foundations of belief. By framing agnosticism as an intellectually weak position, he strengthens the argument for atheism as a more logically sound conclusion. His critique of agnosticism functions as part of his broader project of promoting secular humanism over religious or ambiguous spiritual positions.

Macro-Level Analysis: Ideology and Power Structures

At the macro level, the ideological underpinnings of each text become evident. Armstrong's discourse seeks to challenge both religious fundamentalism and militant atheism by advocating for an approach to faith that embraces uncertainty and transcends dogma. Her representation of agnosticism as an act of humility reinforces her broader ideological stance that religious belief should be non-literal and experience-based rather than doctrinal or evidential.

In contrast, Grayling's discourse operates within a secular rationalist framework, where knowledge must be grounded in reason and empirical evidence. His ideological positioning challenges the influence of religious belief in public and intellectual discourse, reinforcing the power of scientific inquiry and logical reasoning over faith-based perspectives. By portraying agnosticism as a temporary or inadequate stance, he strengthens the case for a more decisive commitment to atheism.

The findings of this study underscore the ways in which discourse shapes perceptions of agnosticism. Armstrong's use of spiritual language and her emphasis on humility present agnosticism as an integral part of a faith journey, whereas Grayling's rationalist framing constructs it as an intellectually unresolved position, implicitly advocating for atheism as a superior alternative.

This contrast highlights the role of discourse in reinforcing broader ideological divides between religious pluralism and secular humanism. Armstrong's text contributes to a vision of faith that accommodates doubt and mystery, whereas Grayling's work positions doubt as a stepping stone toward definitive non-belief.

These findings also demonstrate how CDA can uncover the ideological functions of language, revealing how authors position their audiences within specific interpretative frameworks. Armstrong's discourse encourages readers to view

agnosticism as a meaningful spiritual stance, while Grayling directs his audience toward a more resolute rejection of religious claims based on evidential reasoning. In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the representation of agnosticism is deeply embedded in broader ideological and epistemological debates. Future research could further explore how these discursive strategies influence public perceptions of faith, doubt, and secularism, as well as how different cultural contexts shape the reception of such discourse.

Conclusion

Using Van Dijk's three-level model of CDA, we can see how Karen Armstrong and A.C. Grayling construct and present agnosticism in different ideological contexts. Armstrong's work emphasizes a spiritual and humble approach to the divine, positioning agnosticism as a respectful acknowledgment of mystery. In contrast, Grayling's work emphasizes the rational need for evidence and the intellectual honesty of rejecting religious belief due to lack of proof. The micro-level of discourse analysis reveals how language and semantic choices are used to convey these positions, the meso-level situates these discourses within particular social and intellectual contexts, and the macro-level highlights the broader ideological and power structures at play. Ultimately, both authors use language to advance their respective worldviews, with Armstrong positioning agnosticism as a bridge between faith and reason, while Grayling critiques it as a lack of commitment in the face of intellectual uncertainty.

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