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The power of definitions: a genealogy of the idea of 'the mystical'; The problem with definitions; Origins of the term 'mysticism'; Medieval notions of the mystical; Modern definitions of mysticism; The 'mystical' versus the 'rational'; 'Mysticism' and the construction of modern philosophy; Silencing the Orient: the absence of 'the mystical' in histories of philosophy; 2 Disciplining religion; Christian theology and the category of 'religion'

Secularism and the 'iatrogenic' effect of studying religionThe Enlightenment roots of religious studies; Modelling religious studies: theology or 'cultural studies'; 3 Sacred texts, hermeneutics and world religions; Textualism and the modern concept of 'world religions'; Gadamer and hermeneutics: exploding the myth of objectivity; Hermeneutics and cultural isolationism; Self-reflexivity and ideology; 4 Orientalism and Indian religions; Orientalism and the quest for a postcolonial discourse; Orientalism and Indology; The inevitability of 'Orientalism'?; 5 The modern myth of 'Hinduism'

The myth of homogeneity and the modern myth of 'Hinduism'Christianity, textualism and the construction of 'Hinduism'; The status of the term 'Hinduism'; The relevance of feminism to the Orientalist debate; 6 'Mystic Hinduism': Vedanta and the politics of representation; The 'discovery' of Vedanta as the central theology of Hinduism; Romanticism and the debate about pantheism; Orientalist interest in Vedanta; Neo-Vedanta and the perennial philosophy; 7 Orientalism and the discovery of 'Buddhism'; The European discovery of 'Buddhism'; Intercultural mimesis and the local production of meaning 8 The politics of privatization: Indian religion and the study of mysticismThe comparative study of mysticism; The constructivist response to perennialism; The social location of social constructivism; Indian constructivisms: the epistemology of enlightenment; 9 Beyond Orientalism? Religion and comparativism in a postcolonial era; Postcolonialism and the 'Subaltern Studies' project; Mimesis, hybridity and the ambivalence of colonial discourse; The mutual imbrication of religion, culture and power; Notes; Bibliography; Index

Sommario/riassunto

Orientalism and Religion offers us a timely discussion of the implications of contemporary post-colonial theory for the study of religion. Richard King examines the way in which notions such as mysticism, religion, Hinduism and Buddhism are taken for granted. He shows us how religion needs to be reinterpreted along the lines of cultural studies. Drawing on a variety of post-structuralist and post-colonial thinkers, such as Foucault, Gadamer, Said, and Spivak, King provides us with a challenging series of reflections on the nature of Religious Studies and Indology.