

CHALLENGES TO RELIGIOUS BELIEF PART A REVISION

(PART A s)

Make a list below of everything that you know you need to learn for part A questions on 'Challenge to Religious Belief'

A) Explain Freud's view on religious belief. (20)

Draft Mark scheme:

On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about answering a question on this topic?

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Draft Mark scheme:

Religion as a collective Neurosis

- *'Obsessive actions & practices'* - *obsessional neurosis had similar actions to religious people (provide eg)*
- *Neurosis caused by unconscious motives derived from past events/repressed sexual urges.*
- *Religion was simply a way to turn away from this guilt, displacing thoughts to God*

Primal Horde & Oedipus Complex

- *'Totem and Taboo' -Primal Horde replacement of the Totem for the Alpha-male = beginning of religion 'God is nothing more than an exalted Father'*
- *The yearly commemoration with sacrificial killings explains the Christian ritual of Holy communion*
- *Oedipus Complex - central & demonstrates that every male has the desire to kill their father to have sex with their mother—if unresolved, neurotic behaviour results*

Religion as an Illusion

- *'Future of an illusion' - based on wish-fulfilment*
- *God is a projection of the human mind*
- *Religion lay in our deepest wishes—the desire for justice, escaping death, heaven etc*

Religion as a reaction against helplessness

- *humanity turns to religion as a source of security—aggression is deterred when religious believers promote peace instead of war 'Love thy enemy'*
- *Sexual drive can be addressed through strict religious law*
- *God mentors adults, as parents mentor children, providing protection & stability*

Freud said you must leave all religious practices behind, and turn to a scientific view of reality—that way you will achieve maturity!!

Explain how Freud's theory of religious belief could be supported. (20)

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Redirection of Guilt Complexes

- Freud was convinced the workings of the mind could be rationally explained through observation & analysis
- Freud saw clear evidence in his patients through psychoanalysis, of suffering from Neurosis and a repressed Oedipus complex & so concluded sexual feelings were at the root of all illnesses

- Daniel Schreber - the belief that God was turning him into a woman, was interpreted as his desire for his father being transferred onto an acceptable object of desire i.e. God.

- Little Hans - Hans phobia of being bitten by a horse was interpreted by Freud as a fear of castration. Freud interpreted this as an unconscious reminder to Hans of his death wish against his father, which made him feel guilty and afraid. The treatment was 'successful'

- The Wolf Man - Dream in fear of being eaten by wolves was interpreted by Freud as repressed trauma of witnessing his parent have sex. He claimed he was successful again in identifying the trauma.

- Freud's interpretations of these dreams has linked obsessions, phobias and anxieties to repressed memories and guilt.

Instinctive desires deriving from evolutionary basis

- Freud accepted Darwin's theory as a basis
- All behaviour is a result of a few basic animal drives, produced by natural selection to facilitate survival. The survival genes that were passed on included those for a high sexual drive—so, sex became central in Freud's theory of human behaviour

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Lack of anthropological evidence for Primal Horde

- Theory of the horde was based on Darwin's theories, that were mere speculation by Darwin - it is thought there was a much greater variety in the way people were grouped
- The primal horde had never been observed
- Darwin's words might have been taken out of context and exaggerated—Darwin doesn't recognise it
- No evidence that all societies have totem poles they worship/totem meals
- There is no evidence guilt can be transferred—tests have failed to prove this

No firm psychological evidence for Universal Oedipus Complex

- Bronislaw Malinowski Polish anthropologist, found no evidence of the Oedipus complex when studying the Trobriand race off the eastern coast of New Guinea, even though the race had a religion
- In Trobriand culture, children were disciplined by their paternal uncles, so the role of sexual rival (the father) and the disciplinarian (the uncle) were separated—so, sex has nothing to do with religion.
- The mother is dominant in some cultures
- No male God figure/No God figure at all in some cultures

Evidence base is too narrow

- Freud failed to consider religions with female deities eg Egyptian Isis Cult
- Freud failed to consider religions with no God—Buddhism
- Popper - his theory cannot be falsified, so isn't scientific even though Freud claimed it to be
- Adolf Grünbaum - Freud's theories evaded any kind of empirical testing.
- Freud is accused of fabrication
- Freud doubted the truth from patients that they had been sexually abused by other male relatives—he replaced them with certainty that it was descriptions of childhood fantasies

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Jung's overall view on Religion

-Necessary for personal growth and to achieve individuation

The collective unconscious

- as well as repressed material in personal unconscious, we also have a collective unconscious
- Collective unconscious has primordial images—archetypes, known to all humanity

The archetypes

- Not accessible and only become individually conscious of them when they are projected outwards in the forms of myths and symbols, including religious stories, symbolism and rituals, as well as dreams
- The persona—father trait of discipline
- The shadow—Devil
- The anima/animus - Virgin Mary
- The self—Buddha/Christ

Individuation

- We must integrate the archetypes & balance them into our consciousness to realise our true inner self—individuation. E.g. need to unite good and evil so we see ourselves as capable of both—Lotus Flower.
- Christ - his death symbolises those who sacrifice the selfish part of the ego, results in the self being transformed

The God within

- Individuation is the quest to find god within—and the symbol of the 'self'
- God is a deep 'inner reality'
- The self archetype is the 'God within'

Religion is helpful for individuation /maturity and balances mental health!

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Recognition of religion as a source of comfort

- Jung's concepts were constructed from evidence derived from his personal experience and clinical observations—myths and religions did contain similar themes that were also found in dreams of his patients
- Jung viewed religion as positive, which supports many views on religion today—it was a positive error and provided humankind with strength and assurance. God and religious phenomena as symbols help draw people towards psychic wholeness
- After the horrors of WW1, many became disillusioned with religion, and became focused on science and technology. As the religious symbols that projected the archetypes were absent, this led to psychoneurosis.

Recognition of religion as promotion of personal and social mind-sets arising from religious belief

- Human beings do have collective ideas and common ethics that could be found in all religions
- Religious belief has been seen to lead to wholeness of the individual
- Jung's views work with western and Asian minds—eg Buddhist virtues from meditation such as compassion is similar to the God archetype that involves development of positive wholesome images for reflection.
- Symbols in organised religion have lost their meaning and become objects—they have lost the power to actualise God.
- Surveys on mental health happiness etc show a positive rating for those who are religious - so religion does aid wholeness
- Surveys suggest social cohesion and social support is found among church members

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Lack of empirical evidence

- It has not been possible to devise any method of research that could fully verify Jung's claims concerning archetypes
- No empirical evidence of a collective unconscious
- Gordon Allport—the images might result from a conformity to culture
- Jung does not provide us with any criteria of how to distinguish one archetypal image from another
- Hall and Lindsey—Jung relied on clinical and armchair techniques of research, rather than on experimentation and quantification

Reductionist views regarding religious belief

- An experience which stems from the mind, cannot be termed religious—Christ is more than just a symbol for something else
- Fromm - 'Jung was seemingly indifferent to the striving truth that lies at the heart of religious aspirations'
- Jung did not believe in the existence of God in a traditional sense—he thought he could never know if God exists
- Jung ignores the existence of atheists and non-theistic faiths
- Jung argues both good and evil are aspects of God—this is controversial

A) Explain the difference between agnosticism and atheism. (20)

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Intro to atheism:

- Definition of atheism has changed through the centuries
- Allister McGrath define atheism *'the religion of the autonomous and rational human being, who believes that reason is able to uncover and express the deepest truths of the universe'*

Negative & Positive Atheism

- Antony flew *'The presumption of atheism'* - atheism should be the default position
- **Negative** - the atheist does not make the positive claim that god does not exist—*'I don't believe that God exists, but tell me why you do believe in God?'*
- **Positive** - believes that both the atheist and theist have to give reasons to defend their belief - *'I know God does not exist, and here are my reasons'*

Protest atheism & new atheism

- **Protest** - A revolt against God on moral grounds - *'Even if God did exist, I could not accept God on moral grounds'*
- **New Atheism** - Religion is a threat to the survival of the human race - *'I don't believe God exists, and neither must you'*

Intro to agnosticism:

- A suspension of the decision to accept or reject belief in God
- First used by Thomas Huxley
- Greek meaning—*'Without knowledge'*
- Existence of God is unknowable, as our knowledge is limited
- Agnosticism is a 'middle way' between atheism and theism
- It is not about belief in God, but about knowledge

Strong & Weak

- **Strong** - Impossible to know whether God is real - *'I don't know whether God exists'*
- **Weak** - existence of God is currently unknown, but is not necessarily unknowable - *'I don't know whether God exists or not, but maybe you do'.*

Agnosticism has changed in recent years - **Nicholas Everitt** (2004) - *God's existence and his non-existence are equally probable*

A) Explain the rise of New Atheism and how it criticises religion. (20)

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Rise of New Atheism

- 11 September 2001—four coordinated terror attacks by Islamic extremists in United States began a powerful attack on religion - deemed religion dangerous and deluded
- Sam Harris 'the end of faith' first expressed this view in 2004
- 2006—Dawkins and Dennett wrote the 'god delusion' and 'breaking the spell' and the term 'New Atheism' came into being
- New Atheism - 'Religion is a threat to the survival of the human race'

Non-Thinking

Dawkins:

- All faith is blind trust, in the absence of evidence
- Intellectually irresponsible
- Faith = 'Great cop out'
- God delusion – Faith of their birth is the one true faith
- Faith is like believing in Santa Claus
- Faith is dangerous and leads to fanaticism

Infantile World View

-Religious views of reality are deficient and impoverished

Dawkins – universe as organised religion is 'a poky little medieval universe, & extremely limited'

- Natural science is sufficient to explain the universe
- God delusion – faults of God – 'petty, unjust, homophobic, malevolent bully'

Impedes scientific progress

- Religion runs away from evidence and subverts science
- Religion teaches us not to change our minds – it saps intellect
- The holy book should be thrown out, if evidence contradicts it. In science books are corrected – in religion they aren't

A) Explain the rise of New Atheism and how religions have responded to its challenges. (20)

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Incompatibility of Science & Religion

- Polkinghorne – no competition between science and religion a process involving divine intervention
- Alistair McGrath – both involve showing that there are good reasons for thinking something is right, without having total confirmation
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Increase in fundamental religious activity relating to morality and community

- Upsurge in Islamic and Christian fundamentalism – groups become more active rather than moving away from religion
- Christian Right USA
- Christian Institute

Increase in religious apologists in the media

- New Atheism has given a platform for Christian apologists to reaffirm Christianity in public
- Alistair McGrath – argument does not create conviction, but the lack of it destroys belief
- William Lane Craig debated with Christopher Hitchens – its opened the debate to a wider audience

A) Explain how the rejection of belief in deities has changed overtime. (20)

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