

CHALLENGES TO RELIGIOUS BELIEF PART B REVISION

(PART Bs)

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

B) Assess the extent to which religious belief can be considered a neurosis. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

B) Assess the extent to which religious belief can be considered a neurosis. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

High Extent - Strengths of Freud

- Supporting evidence of redirection of guilt complexes—Examples of case studies such as Daniel Schreber, Little Hans etc (page 11 of the text book)
- Supporting evidence of instinctive desires from evolution
- Religious activity really does mirror aspects of a compulsive neurosis, such as OCD
- There has been a rise of atheism and people moving away from religion in the 21st century, therefore perhaps Freud is correct in saying that religion would die out and be replaced by science?

Low Extent— Weaknesses of Freud

- Lack of evidence for primal horde—there is a more greater variety in the way people were grouped
- Primal horde has never been observed
- The primal horde is Freud's construction—not recognised by Darwin
- The idea that guilt can be transmitted has no evidence for it
- No firm psychological evidence for Universal Oedipus complex
- Evidence base is much too narrow—what about female deities? Or, religions with no God?
- Freud's evidence isn't really scientific—Freud can be seen as being 'selective', and therefore some see his evidence as questionable.
- Research suggests most people base their idea of God on their mother, rather than their father
E.G: Hindu expressions of the feminine divine
- Freud's views about religion were simplistic and theologically naïve, unsophisticated and ignorant
- Freud's hypothesis was impossible to verify - there is no solid physical proof to support his conclusions
- Freud was prone to ignore information unsuited to what he wanted to prove—many say Freud simply discovered what he was looking for in the first place
- Freud misunderstands the essence of religion—he saw it merely in terms of sacred acts & rituals, rather than a set of beliefs/doctrines—he showed a lack of respect and humility.
- Surely anything could be explained through Neurosis, if you applied Freud's interpretations of behaviour to a school system or an office—surely you would see similar patterns of power, obsession and personal sense of duties too?

B) Freud's explanation of religious belief is
adequate. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

B) Freud's explanation of religious belief is adequate. (30)

Agree:

- Supporting evidence of redirection of guilt complexes—Examples of case studies such as Daniel Schreber, Little Hans etc (page 11 of the text book)
- Supporting evidence of instinctive desires from evolution
- Religious activity really does mirror aspects of a compulsive neurosis, such as OCD
- Often Freud's clinical work was successful in treating obsession
- There can be no doubt that the 'father figure' features in religion and the ideal father figure in authority is exactly the idea of God who is able to answer human longings and desires
- It can be seen that religious doctrines reflect our wish fulfilment—across all cultures there is a desire to escape death and achieve justice
- The sexual drive does need controlling—religions contain strict laws to do this
- There has been a rise of atheism and people moving away from religion in the 21s century , therefore perhaps Freud is correct in saying that religion would die out and be replaced by science?

Disagree:

- Lack of evidence for primal horde—there is a more greater variety in the way people were grouped
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- Freud misunderstands the essence of religion—he saw it merely in terms of sacred acts & rituals, rather than a set of beliefs/doctrines—he showed a lack of respect and humility.
- Surely anything could be explained through Neurosis, if you applied Freud's interpretations of behaviour to a school system or an office—surely you would see similar patterns of power, obsession and personal sense of duties too?
- Freud was no academic in the fields of theology and religious studies—'I am reading books without being really interested in them, since I know the result—my instincts tell me that' (Freud) - this is clearly unscientific.
- Religion hasn't fully died out—Freud's prediction as wrong
- Jung was much more positive about religion than Freud

B) Assess the extent to which Jung was more positive than Freud about the idea of God. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

B) Assess the extent to which Jung was more positive than Freud about the idea of God. (30)

High Extent—Jung IS more positive than Freud...

- Freud likened religion to a mental illness, which was harmful and limiting, whereas Jung rejects this view. He argues religion IS positive, and is about the evolving process in the development of the psychic personality. Through integrating the archetypes within the collective unconscious with the unconscious mind, the personality achieves its goal of individuation.
- Freud argued that religion is not something that heals and makes whole, but rather something that needs healing and curing. Jung argued the opposite, he argued that religion is an essential activity of human beings, which is necessary for human psychic development—a lack of religious belief was a failure to integrate the conscious and the unconscious.
- Freud argued that religion is infantile, and can lead to people not taking action to better society - they pray to an omnipotent father who is benevolent rather than do things themselves
- Freud argues God is a creation of the individual human mind, whereas for Jung God was a reality from the deepest part of the human collective unconscious.
- Freud saw symbols as a way an individual sought to avoid reality, but Jung saw symbols as th way to gain knowledge of realities which in themselves were unknowable—symbols transformed, rather than led to neurosis.
- Whilst Freud saw religion as negative, Jung saw it as evidence of the divine or a psychological component within all of us, the ‘Self’ capable of achieving insight and wisdom.

Low Extent—Both Freud & Jung are equally negative about the idea of God...

- Neither Freud nor Jung understood religion in its traditional sense - Freud viewed it in terms of rituals, whilst Jung understood it in terms of religious symbols & experiences.
- Jung did view all religions to be collective mythologies—they weren't real, and had an effect on the personality
- Dr Szasz: ‘in Jung’s view religions are indispensable spiritual supports, whereas in Freud’s they are illusory crutches’.
- Jung saw religion only as a toll to tap into oneself
- Neither Freud nor Jung claimed that God did not exist. Nor did they seem interested in objective truth. When Jung was asked whether or not he believed in God he said: ‘Difficult to answer, I know. I don’t need to believe’. He said he meant: ‘The God-image is the expression of an underlying experience of something which I cannot attain to by intellectual means’.
- Jung undermined the doctrines of Christianity
- Some parts of Freud’s theory could be described as realistic, E.G. Freud's claim that the present is a direct & unavoidable consequence of the past and the experience of repression is repeated in every individual could bear some links with the Fall and original sin

B) Critiques of empirical approaches are effective critiques of Jung's view on religion. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

B) Critiques of empirical approaches are effective critiques of Jung's view on religion. (30)

Agree:

- Jung's methodologies were questioned, as he derived from them metaphysical explanations, such as the collective unconscious and archetypes.
- Jung's approach was and continues to be challenged and accused of being unscientific - Michal Palmer called for a more 'scientific approach in Jungian Psychology'
- Mary Matton stated, 'These psychic facts were useful in the context of discovery, but not in the context of justification'.
- Whatever is derived from Jung's theories is subjective—Jung is more concerned about what the state of mind is, that is actually being experienced by the subject—he is not concerned whether the subjective experience has any grounding in a reality that is separate from the subject

Disagree

- Jung's methodology involved the inclusion of descriptions of certain observable psychic 'facts' such as dreams and visions - they are facts in that they provide knowledge of our own psychic world
- Jung argued that using subjective personal experiences was valid as an empirical method, since the imaging of reality by the psyche was the only reality for the individual who creates it
- Jung claimed he was an empiricist 'Although I have often been called a philosopher, I am an empiricist and adhere as such to the phenomenological standpoint'
- Jung did use empirical evidence provided by his research into ancient myths and legends
 - His observations that human beings have collective ideas and common ethics could be found in all religions.
 - Further, the images he referred to clearly exerted a hold on the human mind.
 - The constant recurrence of symbols from mythology in personal therapy supports the idea of an innate collective cultural residue
- There has been success of his theories leading to wholeness and individuation.
- A basic test of a scientific statement is whether it is falsifiable—since Jung's evidence is derived from inner psychological states, then the observation of this is not the same as observing at what temperature water boils.
- Jung argued that the truth of a psychic experience does not depend on whether it corresponds to reality but solely on whether it is 'felt to be true'.. He rarely made predictions, and so this freed him from being proved wrong—his theories were shaped by his own dreams, thoughts and introspection in addition to that of his patients
- Many see Jung's theories as a bridge between the scientific and religious that is respectful and non-judgemental, by avoiding issues of empirical verification

B) Atheistic arguments against religious belief are successful. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

B) Atheistic arguments against religious belief are successful. (30) LOTS MORE IDEAS ON PAGES 41-43!!

Agree

- Richard Dawkins – ‘Religion is the root of all evil’
- Dawkins – Goes against scientific principles & promotes ignorance – non- thinking: it is a blind faith
- Dawkins – God of the gaps is no longer there – the gap is now closed! Science answers our questions!
- Sam Harris – Science tells us what promotes human well-being
- God is not open to investigation through empiricism – religion is irrational and superstitious
- God delusion – religious belief is a delusion – a fixed false belief

Disagree:

- Natural sciences are beyond the scope of non-empirical notions such as value and meaning – science cannot tell if religion is right.
- Atheists make a deductive error – science only draws upon reasonable possibilities rather than certainties, yet a deny any other possibility could occur
- The view that religion is a delusion could be nonsense. For example, some scientists claim to hold a religious faith with no conflict between the two – Newton & Peacock
- Religion deals with ethics & spirituality, and science deals with empiricism

B) Assess the extent to which religious responses to New Atheism have been successful. (30)

Draft Mark scheme:

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

B) Assess the extent to which religious responses to New Atheism have been successful. (30)

High Extent

- Allistair McGrath – Religions have pointed out that they are not proofs, nor have they claimed to be. They are a posterior demonstrations of the coherence of faith. William Lane Craig defended the traditional arguments for God, showing them to be justifiable rather than proven .
- Religions have challenged the use of the word ‘religion’ in terms of religion being the ‘root of all evil’, regarding violence - ‘religion’ is false universal in that ‘religion’ as such does not exist, but rather individual religions exist. These individual religions have teachings about peace, non-violence and forgiveness. Therefore, new atheists just focus on a small group of extremists and label everyone with the same charge.
- Attacks against religious belief have led to a strengthening of religious belief—religious believers have been forced to address the charges and it provided an unexpected public platform in the whole area of religious beliefs
- New Atheism has failed to create the knock-out blow to religion that it had sought. Instead it appears to be in the decline. Many view it as a form of intolerant fundamentalism that focuses more on ridiculing opposition than engaging in intellectual debate
- Both science and religion are ‘genuine intellectual possibilities’
- Science cannot speculate about realities beyond the physical world—scientists ignore the limitations of science

Low Extent

- Religious world-view includes aspects that cannot be known, so easy to question their inclusion
- Belief is held in total absence of evidence, whilst science is based on evidence and so compels us to accept the truth
- Religious belief has led to violence such as suicide bombings—is the violence really more politically inspired than religiously? Evidence left behind often suggests otherwise.
- Sam Harris—Asserts that wrong beliefs and principles of action that do not correctly represent the world around them are intrinsically dangerous—however, they become deadly with the addition of faith.

SOME MORE IDEAS ON PAGES 43-44!!