

Freud AO1 Handout

Essay Title:

Examine how Freud argued that religious belief was a product of the human mind.

Bulleled summary

- Saw religion as a collective neurosis
- Religion is an outward expression of inner psychological conflict
- Each horde was dominated by a jealous male, seizing the women and driving off all rivals
- In 1913 Freud wrote Totem and Taboo in which he sought to explain the origins of religion in human beings
- Freud compared the behaviour of patients who suffered from neurosis with religious behaviour
- The totem was usually an animal and became worshipped.
- Each generation inherited the guilt resulting from having killed the father or having entertained thoughts of doing so.
- The young males united and killed the dominant father. After the event they felt guilty.
- A totem took the place of the father
- The Father complex could also be explained by the Oedipus Complex
- Hysterical behaviour akin to worship
- Phobias and anxieties akin to fear of judgement
- Obsessive behaviour akin to religious rituals
- Dreams show repressed wishes
- Repression explains neurotic behaviour which is then expressed through the belief and practices of religion
- Religion is based on wish fulfilment of the human unconscious
- Father figure and authority helps us deal with our fears and our sense of helplessness

Quotations

- "Religion is nothing but psychology projected into the external world." (Freud)
- "A personal God is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father." (Freud)
- "Biologically speaking, religiousness is to be traced to the small human child's long-drawn-out helplessness and need of help...at a later date...when confronted with the great forces of life...he regresses to the force which protected his childhood." (Freud)
- "The 'longing for the father' constitutes the root of every form of religion." (Freud)
- "Religion was an attempt to get control over the sensory world, in which we are placed, by means of the wish world, which we have developed inside us as a result of biological and psychological necessities." (Freud)

- “Religion is the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity.” (Freud)
- “We recognise that the roots for the need for religion are in the parental complex.” (Freud)
- Religious dogmas are illusions “fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind.” (Freud)
- “The religious life represents a dramatization on a cosmic plane of the emotions, fears and longings which arose in the child’s relation to his parents.” (Ernest Jones)