

Freud AO2 Handout

Essay Title:

“Freud’s explanations of religion are a successful challenge to religion.” Evaluate this view.

Lines of argument

- Freud’s theories can also be used to explain his atheism.
- Freud’s theories are not a challenge as the evidence is flawed – lack of evidence.
- Freud’s explanations are a challenge -Religion is a neurosis – a mental illness and is therefore harmful.
- Freud’s explanations are a challenge - Religion is explained away by wish fulfilment and by the Oedipus complex.
- Freud’s explanations do not account for Buddhism and belief in Nirvana.
- Freud does convincingly explain how religious beliefs and rituals can be clearly traced back to a collective neurosis, the Oedipus Complex, wish fulfilment and a reaction against helplessness.
- Freud’s explanations of religion are unsuccessful as the evidence has a basis that is too narrow.
- Freud’s understanding of religion is a challenge because it means that religion will eventually die out.
- Freud’s explanations are not a challenge since religion in the 21st century is thriving.
- Other explanations are far more successful in challenging religion than those of Freud.

Quotations

- “Almost all the evidence that Freud presents has been discredited in one way or another.” (Michael Palmer)
- “It seems that the verdict must be ‘not proven’; ...the Freudian theory of religion may be true but it has not been shown to be so.” (John Hick)
- “I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.” (Freud)
- “The mind is like an iceberg, it floats with one-seventh of its bulk above water.” (Freud)
- “From a scientific point of view, classical Freudian psychoanalysis is dead as both a theory of the mind and a mode of therapy.” (Crews)
- “Freud’s theories are archaic and obsolete.” (Drew Western)
- “The unconscious mind revealed in laboratory studies of automaticity and implicit memory bears no resemblance to the unconscious mind of psychoanalytic theory.” (Kihlstrom)