

# Freud conceive of religion

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Freud was a man deep in knowledge and committed to research on doctrines involving religion and the supernatural. He developed a lot of theories explaining source of religion which according to him was not supposed to be a thing to really amuse at.

Freud did this by committing his own time and resources conducting practical cases to help him come up with conclusive findings. Freud developed important theories for studies by students and people wishing to know the exact significance of religion. These theories have been criticized by individuals who feel they are not sufficient in terms of the weight they bear. These critics actually felt greater scientific back up was necessary for the theories to hold some water. The conception that Freud had of religion involved among other things the fact that religion is just an illusion. The oxford dictionary describes an illusion as a false impression.

Freud personally felt that religion was just a thing that people wanted to justify as being true. The effect of this is that people become slaves to the religion. They have to follow it despite the circumstances underneath simply because it is justified as being there and true. Further people tend to become fanatics of religion on ground that it exists. The phenomenon according to Freud is just a false impression that actually is non-existent. Freud also believed that religion is an expression of psychology and distress.

Psychology refers to those factors to those factors that affect the mental state or state of thinking. Freud felt that people tend to express what they feel through religion. Their ideas are translated into the belief of the existence of religious figures such as God. People for example think that evil

come from Satan while all good is from God. This justifies the fact that God is present to control all the good deeds while the works of evil are there because of Satan.

Freud also felt that religion is expressed through distress. This means that it is a direct effect of pressure on the brain in terms of stress. When people are distressed due to problems and difficulties in life, Freud feels that the direct result of this is that they tend to start believing in a supernatural power to come to their rescue. The whole point is that religion is psychological and that it depends on individuals' state of mind at a certain point in time.

(Jonathan, 1980) Freud also felt that religion is also an attempt to control the Oedipus complex. These are emotions of sexual aspiration that a boy has towards his mother and thus feeling of jealous towards his father.

Oedipus was a boy whose father, Laius had been told by the oracle that his son, Oedipus would kill him. Laius left Oedipus on a mountain to die but a shepherd saved him. Oedipus went back home after many years but he did not recognize his parents. He killed his father and later married his mother.

(Smith, 1995) The Oedipus complex thus is the sexual desire that results into such acts of immorality. People therefore go into religion as means to control this complex.

This means that were it for the strong sexual desire present in people and which drives them to fall into evil, religion would not be recognized. People are forced to believe that God will help them go through sexual temptations as well as other forms of temptations. Freud also believed that religion is a

means of giving structure to social groups. Social groups refer to gatherings of people with a relation and a motive. The family is one such social group.

Fact remains that there has to be people with a relation. Social groups further depict the earnings and living standards of people. The members of a social group such as family, organizations with economic intentions etcetera will want to associate with religion since they believe it will give them the success they desire in the social group. (Malcolm, 2001) Freud researched on this and realized that they believe in God among different social groups was because there were dreams and aspirations that they had and for the group to have meaning, the intervention of God and the supernatural was quite inevitable, it was important that God is considered. Freud also believed that religious beliefs and beliefs in the supernatural was an attempt by man to control the outside world.

This is because the outside world consists of complexities and a lot of inventions into the same. Man's intention is to control the world and to subdue it fully. Man wants to be diverse in terms of ownership and as such wants to be rich. Man is thus tempted to believe in a supernatural being, God whom he believes is the answer to his ambitions. He will thus work extremely diligently but also engage in prayer and fasting so that God is gracious in his provisions.

Freud thus believed that religion is non-existent in actual sense but due to the ambitions that man has at the time, he is forced to believe in the religion. Freud was himself an atheist. He did not believe in the existence of God. Judaism at the time had it that God was a supernatural being who is

very powerful and who controls the universe. They believed he is all knowing, omnipotent and omnipresent. They also believed that the cosmos was created by God who also happens to be the giver of life.

They believed that God is the sole provider who is capable of anything.

These attributes are of a figure that lives in heaven and who people cannot see but can see his works and deeds. He is also capable of taking away life in the way of death. Freud felt that this was a mere cover up for people's psychology and state of mind and thus opted to be an atheist. (Fitzgerald, 1990) This person believes that his day to day survival is dependent on himself and not on any supernatural influences.

Freud wrote about this too. Freud felt that religion should be overcome since it is misleading. He felt that it is baseless and cannot be proven scientifically by anyone. Freud went further to say that such a kind of belief is not in any way justifiable and as such should be scrapped off from people's minds. He felt there is no point of continuous indulgence in religious institutions, groups and beliefs while the whole thing was a mere illusion. He argues that religion should be fought by people from within and as such was preaching atheism.

In fact, he himself was an atheist. Freud also felt that religion is relative. This means that it is a variable factor ranging from one person to another. Freud felt that religion is loved by some people and hated by others. There was therefore no consistency in the attachment that people had in their hearts concerning religion. Freud further argued that all these individuals were justified to have their own stand and belief in the whole thing since it was an illusion any way.

The haters of religion are justified not to waste time dwelling on a fallacy of beliefs that are non-existent in actual sense. Freud explains in a nut shell the reasons why religion exists in spite of lack of evidence of its tenets. He thinks that all these beliefs are in the mind of people and range from one person to another. It is therefore justifiable for one to belief his own things and lead his life as he wishes. Freud thinks that rational arguments of a person cannot change his neurotic response.

The neurotic response is independent and involuntary. The neurotic response comes first in that a person for example wants to feel good or bad. The feelings are involuntary and not a direct result of his rational arguments. (Fitzgerald, 1990) Freud further explains the origin of faith and persistence in individuals. Faith is the belief and hope in achieving something while persistence is the consistency of an individual who is ambitious enough and who wants to achieve certain things in life first.

Freud thinks these are issues of the mind and thus psychology. The neurotic response makes people to have faith that they are going to land somewhere. This is what initiates the persistence that is present in people as well. Without it, faith and hope would all be useless. Freud records this as well.

Freud also talks about repression. This is the process of excluding a desire from the conscious and holding it in the unconscious part of the mind. This is the basis of good and evil, an important aspect of religion. Feelings that are bad such as the desire to kill or harm are stored in the unconscious and thus excluded from the conscious. This brings out a defense mechanism,

according to Freud which dictates what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

Only things that are acceptable are included in the conscious mind. All the unacceptable things do not enter the conscious mind. Conclusion Religion according to Freud is a matter of the state of the mind. It is not a fixed situation that exists. It is simply an illusion that does not exist in real life. This belief practically saw Freud develop into an atheist who does not believe in God or the supernatural.