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OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship 2023 Religious Studies

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

You should answer ONE of the questions in this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–20 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (☒). This area may be cut off when the booklet is marked.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

INSTRUCTIONS

Write an essay about the psychology of religion and spirituality, in response to ONE of the questions below.

Space for planning is provided on page 4 of this booklet. Begin your answer on page 5.

EITHER: QUESTION ONE

“Spiritual emotions such as gratitude, awe and reverence, and love and hope are likely to be generated when people perceive sacredness in various aspects of their lives.” →jung

— Patrick McNamara, neuroscientist, and Robert Emmons, professor of psychology

“Our own words to God become sacred when they are spoken from the heart.”

— Joy Cowley, New Zealand author

People committed to religious and spiritual traditions generally prefer to trust the inspiring leaders and texts from their own traditions as a guide to their religious and spiritual practice.

For whom, and to what extent, are findings from the psychology of religion and spirituality convincing and useful?

OR: QUESTION TWO

“While this work is ongoing, findings to date are unequivocal; various aspects of religion are strongly related to physical and psychological well-being in everyday life in general.”

— Crystal Park, professor of psychology

“If one submits everything to reason, our religion will contain nothing that is mysterious or supernatural.”

— Blaise Pascal, philosopher, mathematician, physicist

Researchers in the field of the psychology of religion and spirituality claim to clarify and expand our understanding of aspects of religious and spiritual experience.

What is it about religious and spiritual perspectives and experiences that makes them such a challenging yet rewarding area of study for researchers?

FINDINGS OF

4



| <u>GENERAL</u> | <u>PLANNING</u> | <u>and USEFUL/CONVINCING</u> |
|-----------------|--|---|
| <u>FOR WHO?</u> | <u>WHAT EXTENT</u> | <u>useful</u> |
| everyone | to understand effects of religion / spirituality on mind / society | |
| atheists | to prove/disprove = | useful learning as aim to show God not real |
| religious | to understand positions on mind | not useful/convincing as it undermines guide from religious texts / readers |

| <u>Freud</u> | <u>Jung</u> | <u>James</u> | <u>Fowler</u> |
|--|--|---|---|
| WEAKNESSES NOT USEFUL ① Oedipus complex ② Monotheistic → not convincing lack of scientific basis ③ cannot be determined = based on unconscious | USEFUL = everyone ① Archetypes ② Happier society ③ Wide Range Cultures NOT CONVINCING → Christians believe Jesus real not symbol → cannot be refuted → parable interesting | STRENGTHS ① Characteristics ② Historical Figures → cognitive caused by God CONVINCING = different place and time = same fundamental | ① Source of Faith ② Implications NOT USEFUL → doesn't further understanding / limits possibility Someone explores religion properly NOT USEFUL = relies on God |
| USEFUL/CONVINCING → fulfilling effect on brain = convincing backed up by anterior psychologists | | | |
| | | | |

Select (✓) ONE essay question to answer.

- Question One Question Two

W. V Braun provokes "My experiences with science led me to God. They challenge science to prove the existence of God. But must we ^{systematic} really light a candle to the sun?". Psychology is the study of human beings or people in their experiences, their thoughts and actions, and their relationships with others. Many people follow religions that form a foundation to their life - religion being a set of beliefs that can act as a moral compass for ones life. Religious people often feel an enhanced aspect of spirituality in their life - a sense of peace or meaning in life. Throughout the ages, psychology has been used to intricately analyse the closely intertwined religion and spirituality, in hopes of reaching a greater understand of humanity and our societies. However, a key aspect of religion is faith in the unknown - the unprovable. Therefore, while the findings from the psychology of religion, and thus spirituality, may prove useful and convincing in determining cause-effect relationships of religion on the human mind, it directly contradicts the faith aspect of religion. Leading psychologists of the 17th/18th century which include Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and William James - began studying religion from a psychological lens. Their findings led each of them to put forward theories, some bouncing off each other and others in disagreement - and this opened up the portal to religion from a psychological viewpoint - which is ^{carried} on by various psychologists today. However, despite strenuous efforts from these psychologists, none of them could use their scientific understandings to

prove or disprove the existence of God. So while the findings of psychology ~~on~~^{on} religion can help us understand the human condition better, its underlying objective - to discern whether God is real or not - can not be verified or falsified. For non-religious people, the extent of religion from psychological findings may be of interest, collecting scientific tangible evidence that can be used to debate the existence of God, and thus they may find it useful and convincing. To religious people, the psychological findings of religion may be considered unuseful, letting the prying eyes of science wreak havoc where it is not desired - and undermine the trust from religious traditions and leaders. Therefore, the extent to which the findings of psychology of religion and spirituality are convincing and useful to most people, it to gain insight on the effects of religion on the human mind and soul - but its usefulness ends there. Beyond that, it can be used as an unnecessary tool for divide amongst different groups. As W.U Braun alludes to, psychology and religion are both valuable in their own respects, but to compare them to fit each other does not ~~fulfil~~^{fulfil} its purpose.

Sigmund Freud, a famous psychoanalyst in the 18th~~th~~th century, offered his ^{largely} ~~unconvincing~~ and ^{not} ~~useful~~ psychological findings on religion to further his theory that religion is a "form of neurosis". Religion, in Freud's eyes, was an "illusion" used to fulfill the deepest wishes of the human mind. Freud's findings led him to believe that religion is used as a coping mechanism to deal with childhood past trauma, specifically of sexual nature. Freud's bold theories and findings

lack a scientific and collective basis, meaning his study on religion contains many weaknesses, that make his findings not convincing. Freud claims that each of us have an innate Oedipus complex which results in us creating an image of an all powerful, almighty God the father - one of Freud's more questionable theories/finding. The Oedipus complex is based on the Greek legend of Oedipus, who kills his father and sleeps with his mother. Freud analyses that each of us have a want to kill our fathers out of jealousy and hatred, but we cannot act on it as we view him as too powerful - and this leads to feelings of repression that provide the 'neurotic' symptoms of religion. The view that God is an all powerful fatherfigure is seen in both Christianity and Islam. In the Bible, Ephesians 4:4-6 states "one God and Father of all, who is above and through and in all". This depicts God as a superior dominant figure to us. In Quran 112:1-4 it says "He is God, the one, the Absolute... and nothing is comparable to him". This furthers the image of God as powerful, and us as inferior. However, the Oedipus complex theory is not convincing as most people do not relate to this complex, and believers do not view God with hatred/jealousy - thus making this finding unuseful in the psychological study of religion. Another one of Freud's theories, is that religion helps us deal with our deepest fear of our parents dying. Therefore, ~~humans~~^{humanity} produced the image of an eternally, protective God the father to fulfill our wish of our parents living forever and loving us. This furthers Freud's claim that religion is an illness that needs to be cured. An underlying weakness/unuseful aspect of Freud's theories on

religion, is his limited focus on monotheistic Judeo-Christian religions from a male point of view. This results in a lack of credibility for Freud's findings, as it can only explain religious phenomenon in a specific demographic. For example, Freud's finding that "the longing for father constitutes the root of every form of religion" is disproved by the countless Eastern religions who have female deities or where the father plays an insignificant role in the development of a child. The religion of Buddhism also goes against Freud's theory, as it does not have a divine worshipping figure, but instead focusses on individual spirituality and enlightenment. Therefore, Freud's limited view on the psychology of religion, has led to his findings being unuseful and not convincing for ~~the~~ most people - ~~users~~, and may only prove useful for the minuscule number of people who relate to his multiple theories. It has also been argued that Freud has an unnecessarily negative view on religion, and this leads to a lack of reasoning or evidence to his theories. Another weakness of Freud's findings is that they cannot be verified or determined for reliability, as they are based on the unconscious mind - which can't be certainly tested. However, an unintentional finding of Freud's which is convincing, is his discernment that religions have fulfilling effects on the brain, which many future psychologists would later back up. While non-religious people may claim this fulfillment comes from the brain, religious people may claim it comes from the divine presence of God. Therefore, although Freud's theories are mainly disregarded as not useful or convincing to the study of religion from a psychological view, he introduced a set of deep and meaningful questions which

would lead the path for more illuminating findings from psychologists ahead of his time.

Carl Jung, alike Freud, believed that religion was a construct of the mind - however, viewed it as a positive that enriches human life - making his^{psychological} findings on religion mostly useful and convincing in understanding the effects of religion on the human mind. Jung, an eager student of Freud, put forward his 'theory of mind' which involves the collective unconscious which generates archetypes. Archetypes are universal symbols present in myths, dreams and religions from the beginning of time. Jung's^{psychological} theory finds that when these archetypes are integrated and balanced through 'individuation', with religious symbols, it has a positive impact of mental health - adding to the idea that religion has positive effects on the mind and spirituality. This is as these archetypes cluster together and point towards something the individual has to integrate into their lives. As religious people integrate religious symbols into their everyday lives, they will reciprocate the positive feelings that come with individuation. The four archetypes present in the human psyche according to Jung's findings, are the central self (the midpoint between consciousness), the shadow (our most negative traits), and the anima/animus (opposite gendered characteristics). These archetypes can be related to Christianity, as God/Christ represents the central self - creating feelings of wholeness and unity in the human psyche, whereas Satan, the devil, represents the shadow with our most negative traits such as greed and temptations. Religious people will likely integrate the central self archetype most, and will

feel unity and wholeness in response on Jung's findings. Jung also determined that due to his theory of mind, societies that practise religious traditions daily together, live in a happier, more socially cohesive group. A study done in a predominantly Muslim country aligns with Jung's idea, as it found that in the month of Ramadan, a religious period for Muslims where there are strict daily prayers and fasting, there are less inclinations towards violence or terrorism from individuals. This shows Jung's theory that when religious symbols are integrated daily, it leads to a happier individual and thus society. Jung's theory of mind is considered useful and convincing, as his studies apply to a wide range of cultures and religions worldwide. While his theory applies to the Western religion of Christianity, it also applies to the Eastern religions of Buddhism and Hinduism. This is as in Buddhism and Hinduism, there are daily practices of meditation which is completed to deepen a sense of spirituality and ^{in Buddhism} reach the goal of nirvana. This shows as they integrate their religious symbols through meditation- they achieve positive effects on the mind. The weaknesses of Jung's study are similar to Freud's, as his theory of mind is also based on the unconscious collective and cannot be tested or proved. Jung also claims that religion is a construct of the mind which cannot be proved as it is a possibility that God put religion in people's mind. Christians may also disagree and find Jung's theory not useful or convincing, as they believe that Jesus was a real historical figure, and not just a symbol of the mind. Therefore, the extent at which Jung's theory are useful

may ~~be~~ be to all religious and non-religious people to understand the effects of religion on the mind and soul - and thus human condition - but not as a way to prove or disprove God. Overall, Jung's findings on the psychology of religion are not only useful in understanding how religion and spirituality impact one's mind, life, and community - but also offers interesting insight into the parallels between archetypes from the beginning of time continuing to have effect today, for both religious and non-religious people.

* ~~This directly~~ Jung's findings directly align with the quote from Patrick McNamara stating "spiritual emotions such as gratitude, awe and reverence, and love and hope are likely to be generated when people perceive sacredness in various aspects of their lives". Religious people that allow sacredness into their lives through daily religious practices, balance their archetypes positively, and thus generate the fulfilling spiritual emotions McNamara speaks of. This shows that Jung's psychological findings on religion continue to hold relevance in modern society - adding to its convincingness.

the psychology of William James offers a different outlook on religion than Jung and Freud, as he believes religious experiences are the heart of religion. Unlike Freud and Jung who base their psychological studies of religion on the unconscious mind, James focusses his on religious experiences - proving useful in understanding the effects of religion on our ^{mind} ~~minds~~ and bodies. James noted that when someone had a religious experience,

It had great authority over their life, and would change it in almost always a positive way. Often, these people would change their lives completely to be central to the message conveyed to them in the religious experience. To determine the credibility of religious experiences, James ~~came up~~^{found} with the four characteristics of a religious experience that were universal. These include passive - not being in control of the experience, ineffable - not being able to put the experience into words, noetic - knowledge/message being conveyed, and transient - the experience occurring for a short period of time but having long lasting effects. James believed that due to the strength of a religious experienced, they were cognitive and had to be caused directly from God. James theory of religious experience on his study on the psychology of religion becomes convincing when it is applied to historical figures in both sacred texts and real-life. The fact these historical figures have similar experiences despite the ~~vast~~^{vast} differences in time and location, add to the credibility of James theory. In Christianity, the Biblical figure St Paul underwent a religious conversion experience that would change the course of his life. St Paul, originally Saul, was a powerful Jew who made it his life's mission to persecute Christians. However, one day on a journey to Damascus St Paul sees Jesus in a bright light saying "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me" in Acts 9 of the Bible. After this religious experience, St Paul became a devout Christian who dedicated his life to evangelism and spread the word of God widely across the world. The strength of a religious experience James refers to is seen in the case of St Paul, as to leave his regarded

life as a Jew behind and face scrutiny from his community, is not something he would do unless he ~~believed it was~~ believed it was a strong message that came from God. Looking at a different case of religious experience, centuries apart, is author C.S Lewis. C.S Lewis grew up in a religiously indifferent household, and would spend his time debating with his Christian friends on how religion is not real. However, on a random bus ride one day, Lewis suddenly felt a need for God in his life, and would then develop his faith to be a Christian apologist - defending his faith in his famous writing. Therefore, looking at these cases, James' theory becomes convincing and useful to understand religious experiences, part of the psychology of religion, as despite the varying circumstances of these experiences in time and place, they both have the same fundamental characteristic. ~~However,~~ However, an underlying weakness of James' findings on the psychology of religions is that it relies on God being a real external divine presence, when the religious experience could alternatively be put there by the unconscious mind. Although James' ~~findings~~ can't be born non religious and tested, it proves useful and convincing for religious people in understanding the power of religion on the mind and how it can change the course of one's life. However for religious people they will find James' theory more convincing as it involves evidence from religious text and tradition - making it more convincing and trustworthy.

James Fowler's theory on faith development in his psychological study of religion, is that faith develops over

different stages in one's life, and is induced by the brain - not God. Fowler's findings prove not useful in analysing the psychology of religion, and instead harmful, as it can lead to a disaffiliation with Christianity. This is as while Fowler's determines faith comes from the ^{developmental} brain, Protestant Christians claim faith comes directly from the grace of God. This is backed by Bible scripture Ephesians 2:8-9 which states "for you have been saved through faith by the grace of God alone, and not that of yourselves". Therefore, those who follow Fowler's theory may face the negative implications of it. As these people become concerned with ~~between what~~ ~~is tangible~~ whether God can be proved with tangible real evidence, which God cannot be, they disregard the possibility of God as a whole and disaffiliate with Christianity. As they turn themselves off the morals of Christianity, they may find a decreased sense of spirituality and instead live a life without meaning or purpose. This may mean they ~~not~~ resort to short term pleasure, drinking or damaging relationships. Therefore, as they looked for instantaneous proof on God's existence, they lose the opportunity to live ~~the~~ more fulfilling life that religious people ^{findings} live. This means that Fowler's ~~theory~~ ultimately proves ~~not~~ useful in the study of psychology of religion, as it does not help us reach a better understanding of ~~how~~ ^{how} religions influences us, but instead limits the chance that people explore religion properly with an open-mind.

Religion is a force of mystery in humanity in influencing

human behaviours and motives. Thus, it comes to no surprise that the analytical world of psychology is desperate to study this intriguing phenomena. Throughout the ages, religion has been seen as a positive catalyst that mainly improves humanity. Therefore, the revelations^{and findings} of psychology of religions may not truly capture the essence of religion, and instead attempts to shade its illuminating light on humanity. This is as it must be considered that while psychologists such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, William James, and James Fowler offer insight, they do not offer evidence. From the theories of the unconscious mind that Freud and Jung find, to the theories of direct religious conscious from Freud James explores – there is no one answer, no undeniable proof. Therefore, when asked on the extent that the findings of psychology & religion and spirituality are useful and convincing, the only fair answer is by observing the effects of religion and spirituality on humans as individuals, and society. That is what is true, real and tangible. While non-religious and religious people may disagree ^{on the extent of} whether psychology has a place in analysing religion, they can agree on the psychological effects of religion on the mind. Although religious people base their knowledge on religious traditions and spiritual practises, and non-religious people base their knowledge on psychological scientific evidence – perhaps ~~they~~^{both groups} can reach a common ground on determining the place of psychology ~~in~~ in religion, on people – not God. Or perhaps, religion is a mystery that can never be cracked, only appreciated.

Ephesians 4:4-6 "one God and Father; who is above and through
and in all"

Aura

Acknowledgements

Material from the following sources has been adapted for use in this assessment:

Page 2

First quote: Emmons, R. A., and McNamara, P. (2006). Sacred emotions and affective neuroscience: Gratitude, costly signalling, and the brain. P. McNamara (Ed.), Where God and science meet: How brain and evolutionary studies alter our understanding of religion 1, (p 12). Praeger Perspectives.

Second quote: Cowley, J. (2018). Veil Over The Light – Selected Spiritual Writings, (p 65). FitzBeck Publishing.

Third quote: Park, C. (2005, November 16). Religion as a Meaning-Making Framework in Coping with Life Stress. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(4), pp 707–729. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2005.00428.x>

Fourth quote: Pascal, B. Pensées, Fragment 162:II, 602. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pascal/> sourced 2/03/2023

Outstanding Scholarship

Subject: Religious Studies

Standard: 93603

Total score: 21

| Question | Performance descriptor | Score | Marker commentary |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| 1 | Analysis and critical thinking | 7 | <p>This response demonstrated perceptive and insightful comprehension of religious ideas related to their chosen approach(es), to show understanding of the psychology of religion and spirituality.</p> <p>The analysis of psychology of religion could have been developed further.</p> |
| | Integration, synthesis, understanding | 7 | <p>This response demonstrated the implications of various answers beyond the immediate context, into other areas where religion and spirituality, and methodologies in the psychology of religion and spirituality intersect.</p> |
| | Development, precision, clarity | 7 | <p>The candidate answered this question with a novel and clear argument.</p> |