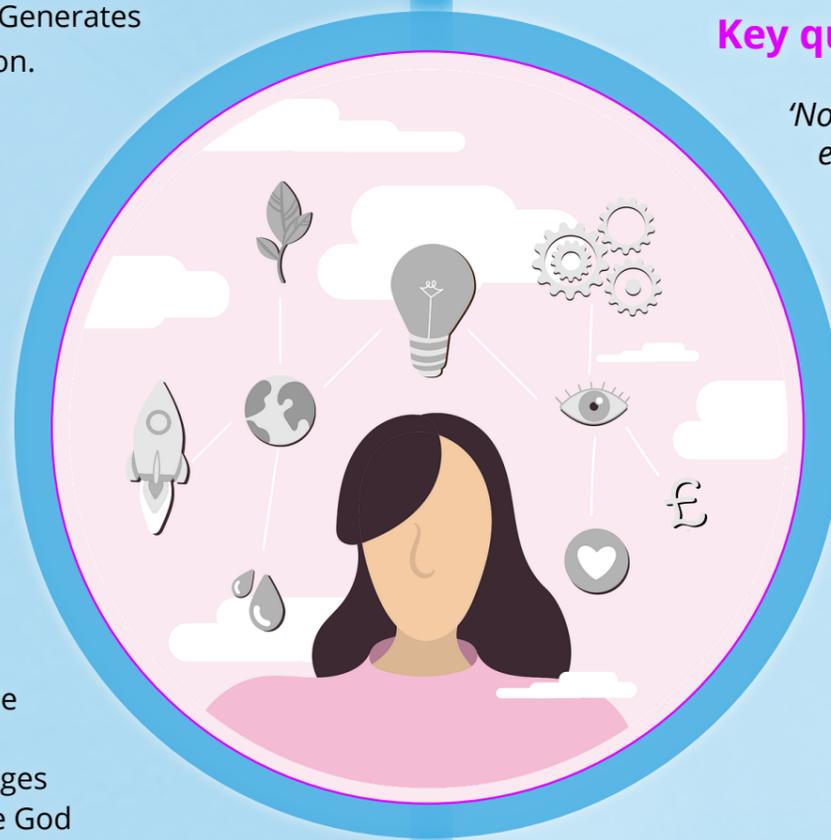


Key concepts

- One challenge to religious belief is that it is produced by our minds, not derived from any objective, external reality.
 - Jung saw religion as a natural, beneficial process that enriched human life.
 - Jung claimed there are three levels of the human mind (**psyche**):
1. Consciousness (**ego**) – the part of the mind that responds to the world.
 2. **Personal unconscious** – unique to each person, where repressed experiences and desires reside.
 3. **Collective unconscious** – impersonal and **universal** in all humans. Generates **primordial** (ancient or earliest) images and is the source of all religion.
- Evolution provides a blueprint for the psyche in the same way as it provides a blueprint for the body.
 - **Archetypes** reside in the collective unconscious. They are structures or image generators in all minds that mean we respond to the world like our ancestors.
 - Archetypal images can be found in myth, literature, dreams, rituals, and religion regardless of culture or time. For example: the shadow (Satan, Voldemort, Mr Hyde) – our suppressed, ‘dark’ side or the self (sun, Christ, soul) – the midpoint of the personality between the conscious and unconscious
 - God is an archetypal image generated by the collective unconscious, as are angels and other deities. They represent psychic wholeness and unity.
 - **Individuation** is a process that is necessary for mental health by integrating and balancing the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche through religious symbols generated by the archetypes.
 - Individuation is governed by the self-archetype which generates images of wholeness. The self-archetype produces the same **symbols** as the God archetype. The self is the God within us and the two are indistinguishable.
 - God exists as a psychic reality in human experience, but we cannot comment on whether He exists beyond the collective unconscious.
- Over 35 of Jung’s patients had apparently suffered a loss of religion and he claimed their illness was resolved by gaining a religious outlook.
 - Myths, religions, and dreams often contain similar themes, e.g. schizophrenic patient, Miss Miller, dreamt she was a moth desiring light, Jung compared the light with God and the moth with personal longing.
 - Religion often provides people with strength, comfort, and wholeness when the world appears chaotic or challenging.
 - Many religions share the quest for spiritual harmony and balance that leads to fulfilment e.g. through meditation or prayer and goals such as nirvana or divine perfection. Eastern faiths are most successful at this.
 - Societies that include regular collective worship often have better social cohesion.



Challenges:

- There is little empirical / testable evidence to support Jung’s views: There are many mentally healthy non-religious people. Jung claimed that atheism is a form of religion but has no supporting evidence. Archetypes are unnecessary since common human experience accounts for similar ideas across cultures.
- Jung’s views reduce God and religion to a construct of the mind: religion, though positive, is still an error or a delusion. Religious people would argue that Christ is more than a symbol, he is a historical figure. Jung undervalues God by valuing random dreams as much as religious experiences.

Key quotes

‘Nothing positive or negative has thus been asserted about the possible existence of God, any more than the archetype of the ‘hero’ proves the actual existence of a hero.’ (Jung)

‘The question of whether God exists at all or not is futile.’ (Jung)

‘I make no transcendental statements. I am essentially empirical.’ (Jung)

Key words

psyche	ego	personal unconscious	collective
unconscious	universal	primordial	archetypes
individuation	symbols		

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key arguments/debates

Whether Jung’s views about religion were as positive as they seem
Whether it is possible to back up psychological theories with empirical evidence
If it is reasonable to call any image production ‘religious’

Key questions

Could a religious believer ever accept Jung’s view of God and religion?
Is God nothing more than an archetypal image generated by the collective unconscious?
What does Jung’s theory mean for the existence of God?