Civilization and Its Discontents, Sigmund Freud, Penguin Adult, 2002, 0141182369, 9780141182360, 103 pages. In what remains one of his most seminal papers, Freud considers the incompatibility of civilisation and individual happiness, and the tensions between the claims of society and the individual. We all know that living in civilised groups means sacrificing a degree of personal interest, but couldn't you argue that it in fact creates the conditions for our happiness? Freud explores the arguments and counter-arguments surrounding this proposition, focusing on what he perceives to be one of society's greatest dangers; 'civilised' sexual morality. After all, doesn't repression of sexuality deeply affect people and compromise their chances of happiness?

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Studienausgabe, Volume 2, Sigmund Freud, 1972, Psychology, . .

Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis, Sigmund Freud, 1977, Psychology, 73 pages. Freud approved the overall editorial plan, specific renderings of key words and phrases, and the addition of valuable notes, from bibliographical and explanatory. Many of the ....

An Outline of Psycho-analysis, Sigmund Freud, 1969, Psychology, 75 pages. Throughout the period when Freud wrote his major works, various translations and editions, differing widely in the accuracy of their texts and the quality of their content ....

Eros and Civilization A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud, Herbert Marcuse, 1974, Philosophy, 277 pages. Contends that Freud's theory of civilization is substantially sociological, and examines the philosophical and sociological implications of key Freudian concepts, applying them ....


Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, 1977, Psychology, 500 pages. In reasoned progression he outlined core psychoanalytic concepts, such as repression, free association and libido. Of the various English translations of Freud's major works to ....


Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Sigmund Freud, 2001, Psychoanalysis, 430 pages. The Standard Edition of the complete works of the father of psychoanalysis D²D,â€œ the only definitive paperback edition on the market. Translated from the German under the General ....

Speaking from the Heart Gender and the Social Meaning of Emotion, Stephanie A. Shields, Jun 6, 2002, Psychology, 214 pages. Draws on examples from everyday life, contemporary culture, and the latest research to illustrate how culturally shared beliefs about emotion are used to shape
Two short accounts of psycho-analysis, Sigmund Freud, 1981, Psychology, 175 pages.

An Autobiographical Study, Sigmund Freud, 1963, Biography & Autobiography, 141 pages. Freud approved the overall editorial plan, specific renderings of key words and phrases, and the addition of valuable notes, from bibliographical and explanatory. Many of the ....

Studies in Hysteria, Sigmund Freud, Josef Breuer, 2004, Philosophy, 315 pages. Hysteria--the tormenting of the body by the troubled mind--is among the most pervasive of human disorders; yet, at the same time, it is the most elusive. Freud's recognition ....

The Varieties of Religious Experience A Study in Human Nature, William James, Mar 1, 2008, Philosophy, 384 pages. Please visit www.ArcManor.com for more books by this and other great authors..

Totem and Taboo Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics, Sigmund Freud, 1950, Psychology, 172 pages. Freud investigates the function and structure of totemic systems among primitive peoples and presents a psychoanalytical study of modern taboos.

Selected Writings, Karl Marx, 1994, Philosophy, 338 pages. Featuring the most important and enduring works from Marx's enormous corpus, this thoughtful new collection spans Marx's development from the Hegelian idealism of his youth to ....

The Schreber Case Sigmund Freud; Translated by Andrew Webber, with an Introduction by Colin McCabe, Sigmund Freud, 2003, Psychology, 69 pages. Freud rarely treated psychotic patients or psychoanalyzed people just from their writings, but he had a powerful and imaginative understanding of their condition--revealed ....

In this seminal book, Sigmund Freud enumerates what he sees as the fundamental tensions between civilization and the individual. The primary friction, he asserts, stems from the individual's quest for instinctual freedom and civilization's contrary demand for conformity and instinctual repression. Freud states that when any situation that is desired by the pleasure principle is prolonged, then it creates a feeling of mild contentment. Thus our possibilities of happiness are restricted by the law. Many of humankind's primitive instincts (for example, the desire to kill and the insatiable craving for sexual gratification) are clearly harmful to the well-being of a human community. As a result, civilization creates laws that prohibit killing, rape, and adultery, and it implements severe punishments if such rules are broken. This process, argues Freud, is an inherent quality of civilization that instills perpetual feelings of discontent in its citizens.

Freud's theory is based on the notion that humans have certain characteristic instincts that are immutable. Most notable are the desires for sex, and the predisposition to violent aggression towards authority figures and towards sexual competitors, which both obstruct the gratification of a person's instincts.

Freud begins this work by taking up a possible source of religious feeling that his previous book, The Future of an Illusion, overlooked: the oceanic feeling of wholeness, limitlessness, and eternity.[2] Freud himself cannot experience this feeling of dissolution, but notes that there do indeed exist different pathological and healthy states (e.g. love) where the boundary between ego and object is lost, blurred, or distorted. Freud categorizes the oceanic feeling as being a regression into an earlier state of consciousness before the ego had differentiated itself from the world of objects. The need for this religious feeling, he writes, arises out of “the infant's helplessness and the longing for the father,” as there is no greater infantile need than a father's protection.[3] Freud â€œimagine[s] that the oceanic feeling became connected with religion later onâ€• in cultural practices.

The second chapter delves into how religion is one of many modes of being that arise out of the
need for the individual to distance and soothe itself in the face of the suffering that exists within the world. The ego of the child forms over the oceanic feeling when it grasps that there are negative aspects of reality that it wishes to separate itself from. But at the same time as the ego is hoping to avoid displeasure, it is also building itself so that it may be better able to act towards securing happiness, and these are the twin aims of the pleasure principle when the ego realizes that "reality." must also be dealt with. Freud claims that the 'purpose of life is simply the programme of the pleasure principle'[4] and the rest of the chapter is an exploration of various styles of human adaptation used to secure happiness from the world while also trying to avoid or limit suffering. Freud points out three main sources of displeasure we attempt to master: our own painful and mortal existence, the cruel and destructive aspects of the natural world, and the suffering endemic to the reality that we must live with other human beings in a society. Freud regards this last source as "perhaps more painful to us than any other,"[5] and the remainder of this book will extrapolate on the conflict between individual instinctual gratification-seeking and the reality of societal life.

The third section of the book addresses a fundamental paradox of civilization: it is a tool we have created to protect ourselves from unhappiness, and yet it is our largest source of unhappiness. People become neurotic because they cannot tolerate the frustration which society imposes in the service of its cultural ideals. Freud points out that the contemporary technological advances of science have been, at best, a mixed blessing for human happiness. He asks what society is for if not to satisfy the pleasure principle, but concedes that civilization has to make compromises of happiness in order to fulfill its primary goal of bringing people into peaceful relationship with each other, which it does by making them subject to a higher, communal authority. Civilization is built out of wish-fulfillments of the human ideals of control, beauty, hygiene, order, and especially for the exercise of humanity's highest intellectual functions. Freud draws a key analogy between the development of civilization and the libidinal development of the individual, which allows Freud to speak of civilization in his own terms: there is anal eroticism that develops into a need for order and cleanliness, a sublimation of instincts into useful actions, alongside a more repressive renunciation of instinct. This final point Freud sees as the most important character of civilization, and if it's not compensated for, then "one can be certain that serious disorders will ensue."[6] The structure of civilization serves to circumvent the natural processes and feelings of Human development and eroticism. It is no wonder then, that this repression could cause a sentiment of discontent among civilians.

In the fourth chapter Freud attempts a conjecture as to the developmental history of civilization, which he supposed coincided with man learning to stand upright. This stage is followed by Freud's hypothesis from Totem and Taboo that human culture is bound up in an ancient Oedipal drama of brothers banding together to kill their father, and then creating a culture of rules to mediate ambivalent instinctual desires. Gradually love of a single sexual object becomes diffused and distributed towards all of one's culture and humanity in the form of a diluted "aim-inhibited affection." Freud discounts the idea that this passive and non-judgemental affection for all is the pinnacle of human love and purpose. Freud notes that while love is essential for bringing people together in a civilization, at the same time society creates laws, restrictions, and taboos to try and suppress this same instinct, and Freud wonders if there may not be more than sexual desire within the term "libido." "Psycho-analytic work has shown us that it is precisely these frustrations of sexual life which people known as neurotics cannot tolerate."[7] So Freud begins the fifth section of this work, which explores the reasons why love cannot be the answer, and concludes that there exists a genuine and irreducible aggressive drive within all human beings. And while the love instinct (eros) can be commandeered by society to bind its members together, the aggressive instinct runs counter to this tendency and must be either repressed or directed against a rival culture. Thus Freud acknowledges that there is irrevocable ill-will within the hearts of man, and that civilization primarily exists to curb and restrain these impulses.

In the sixth chapter, Freud reviews the development of his concept of libido to explain why it must now be separated into two distinct instincts: the object-instinct of eros and the ego-instinct of...
thanatos. This new concept of the death drive actually has a long developmental history in Freud’s writings, including his investigations into narcissism and sadomasochism. Freud admits that it may be difficult to accept his view of human nature as being predisposed towards death and destruction, but he reasons that the suppression of this instinct is the true cause behind civilization’s need for restrictions. Life and civilization, then, are born and develop out of an eternal struggle between these two interpersonal forces of love and hate.

Freud begins the seventh chapter by clearly explaining how the repression of the death instinct works to instill neurosis in individuals: the natural aggressiveness of the human child is suppressed by society (and its local representative, the father-figure) and turned inward, introjected, directed back against the ego. These aggressive energies develop into the super-ego as conscience, which punishes the ego both for transgressions committed (remorse) but also sins it has only fantasized about (guilt). All individuals must submit themselves to forming these feelings of guilt, for their aggressive instincts must be repressed if they hope to share in the love civilized society has appropriated for its members. Guilt and neurotic repression of instinct are simply the price we pay in order to live together in families and communities.

The guilty conscience is the price paid by the individual to belong to civilized society, but often this guilt is left unconscious and is experienced as anxiety or discontent. Freud also considers that in addition to the individual super-ego, that there may also be a cultural super-ego in existence that sets itself up as a conscience for society, and that his recommendation for it is the same as his recommendation for many of his neurotic patients: that it must lower its demands on the frail ego. Freud concludes this book by expanding on his distinction between eros and thanatos: When an instinctual trend undergoes repression, its libidinal elements are turned into symptoms, and its aggressive components into a sense of guilt. And he ponders on how the eternal battle between these heavenly powers will play out in mankind.

This work should be also understood in context of contemporary events: World War I undoubtedly influenced Freud and had an impact on his central observation about the tension between the individual and civilization. Amidst a nation still recovering from a brutally violent war, Freud developed thoughts published two years earlier in The Future of an Illusion (1927), wherein he criticized organized religion as a collective neurosis. Freud, an avowed atheist, argued that religion has tamed asocial instincts and created a sense of community around a shared set of beliefs, thus helping a civilization. Yet at the same time organized religion also exacts an enormous psychological cost to the individual by making him perpetually subordinate to the primal father figure embodied by God.

Written in the decade before Freud’s death, Civilization and Its Discontents may be his most famous and most brilliant work. It has been praised, dissected, lambasted, interpreted, and reinterpreted. Originally published in 1930, it seeks to answer several questions fundamental to human society and its organization: What influences led to the creation of civilization? Why and how did it come to be? What determines civilization’s trajectory? Freud’s theories on the effect of the knowledge of death on human existence and the birth of art are central to his work. Of the various English translations of Freud’s major works to appear in his lifetime, only Norton’s Standard Edition, under the general editorship of James Strachey, was authorized by Freud himself. This new edition includes both an introduction by the renowned cultural critic and writer Christopher Hitchens as well as Peter Gay’s classic biographical note on Freud.

Newly designed in a uniform format, each new paperback in the Standard Edition opens with a biographical essay on Freud's life and work, along with a note on the individual volume; (Peter Gay, Sterling Professor of History at Yale) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is one of the twentieth century’s greatest minds and the founder of the psychoanalytic school of psychology. His many works include The Ego and the Id; An Outline of Psycho-Analysis; Inhibitions; Symptoms and Anxiety; New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis; Civilization and Its Discontent, and others.
Sigmund Freud, whatever the variations in his posthumous reputation, remains the most compelling, daring, and persuasive analyst of the human condition we have. His psychoanalytic theories of sexuality, sublimation, repression, etc., offer original insights that profoundly influenced the course of Western consciousness in the 20th century. In addition to his gifts as a thinker, Freud was a master stylist, a man whose luminous prose and skillful argumentation make reading him a genuine pleasure.

"Civilization and Its Discontents," one of Freud's last works, remains one of his most vital and important. Don't be fooled by its brevity; this is a deeply complex and wide-ranging examination of Western civilization and its tensions. Freud speculates about the origins of our modern societies, the difficulties of assimilating ourselves to them given our own individual psyches, and ends the book with a rather pessimistic look forward. Clearly, Freud felt that civilization's "discontents" were an unresolvable fact of life.

What makes "Civilization and Its Discontents" so fascinating is Freud's application of psychoanalysis to Western society as whole. He examines how the factors at play in our own psyches--family conflicts, sexual desire, guilt, the "death instinct," and the eternal battle between our own self-interest and the interests of the human species at large--cause the problems that human beings encounter on a daily basis. As always with Freud, his ideas are put forward not as a final statement, but as a tentative first step.

I have to admit to being a little prejudiced before starting this book. I had read a lot of negative criticism of Freud, so finally I decided to read something for myself and find out what all the fuss is about. A person who creates such polar views must be saying something that touches the core. This slim book is a good place to start.

Freud clearly had a deep understanding of the human condition. When you consider he was a born in the 1800s, it is clear he was many years ahead of his time. This book discusses how the individual is inevitably subjugated by his society to become civilized. That is how the social order represses our desires. He discusses both the positive and negative aspects of this on personal development. I found it quite a difficult read as there are extensive footnotes throughout the book that are sometimes pertinent and at other times not, which I found disrupted the chain of reasoning at times.

I read this book at age 18 after getting interested in psychiatry by an author named Karl Menninger. Freud's essay, Civilization and Its Discontents, has had the greatest impact on my life out of any book or experience. Within this short book he had taken my whole view of the world, turned it upside-down, and added an exclamation point. To understand this book doesn't require great intellectual power but rather mental capacity i.e., a capacity to receive a massive dose of pessimism! I would add almost as a warning that Freud's implied philosophy is almost conducive to depression in a maladjusted mind! If you want hope or faith, this is not for you. Regardless, everybody should read this book.

Many people today believe that Sigmund Freud was obsessed with sex. However, most of these assumptions are based upon what another person said of Freud and almost never upon a careful reading of Freud's work. These people do not see the fact that Freud writes on more than sexuality, he also analyzes and researches the study of mankind. Sigmund Freud attacks the question why we do things the way we do head on and answers to the best of his reason. Therefore, Sigmund Freud was truly a man of his time and his debate on mankind was a very innovative method to answer mankind's most serious issues.

Man is an aggressive being and civilization is the means which humanity withholds its primal urges in check. At least Freud believes so and shows support for this thesis by referring to mankind's constant need to restrain its inherent passions despite all of the controls placed by society. I believe that Freud was definitely on to something with this point. He is right when he states that man is essentially an anti-social, anti-cultural being. One could look down through the pages of history and
see war after war, violent act after violent primarily as a result of the inherent greed for power and a
passionate thirst for more than one's own. This is one of the many reasons why communism is
impossible, man is a selfish being and always desires more than he possesses. He will do what is
necessary to increase his holding at the expense of his fellows. I believe that Nietzsche and Freud
are in agreement at this point. However, Nietzsche believes that the masses attempt to quell this
passion and label that as noble. I believe that Freud does not think it is possible to restrain this
aggressiveness and mankind is only able to cover it up in a semblance of control which we label
civilization. Though I see merit in both men's argument, my reaction is that there is another solution.
I believe in Christian perspective that "by beholding we become changed" and with a personal
relationship with Christ one is capable of achieving victory over that aggression. Freud argues that
the need for self-preservation is often disrupted by a "social anxiety". This anxiety is a state in which
individuals are controlled by the opinions of others towards them. Freud contends that the majority
of society is ruled by this anxiety. His solution to this is a "higher stage" attainable by rising above
the need to care about how others perceive one's conduct. This implies that behavior controlled by
social conventions is more primitive than behavior controlled by the individual. According to Freud,
morality is not an issue of socially determined shame, but a matter of internalized primal guilt. This
guilt is the basis for beliefs such as an original sin and is the main catalyst in mankind's aggression.
I doubt that this is the most flattering perspective to look upon our own nature, but Freud's argument
does contain a lot of merit.

We read earlier in Walden that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" and I believe Freud
saw this desperation as a direct result of the affects of social anxiety. We see this today in the pop
culture where in order to fit in an individual must conform to the trends in fashion. We see it in the
work environment where the worker flatters his boss. We see it in the political world where
politicians say and do what is necessary to keep public opinions high. We are so drawn into the
belief that the opinions of others matters that we spend the majority of our time and money on things
we don't need to impress people we don't care about.

After reading Civilization and Its Discontents I am not under the impression that Freud is correct
about everything. However, I am able to respect his writing as an important critical look at society
which still has merit even today. Perhaps our world would be a better place if all of its inhabitants
stop to think of why they do the things they do and what are the effects of their actions. Perhaps
mankind would improve if we learned how to control our inherent aggression and to not worry about
other people's opinions. Perhaps this is merely wishful thinking on my part. Read more &rsaquo;

&ldquo;Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and
impossible tasks. In order to bear it we cannot dispense with palliative measures... There are
perhaps three such measures: powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery;
substitutive satisfactions, which diminish it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensible
to it.&rdquo;

&ldquo;The commandment, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', is the strongest defence against human
aggressiveness and an excellent example of the unpsychological [expectations] of the cultural
super-ego. The commandment is impossible to fulfill; such an enormous inflation of love can only
lower its value, not get rid of the difficulty. Civilization pays no attention to all this; it merely
admonishes us that the harder it is to obey the precept the more meritorious it is to do so. But
anyone who follows such a precept in present-day civilization only puts himself at a disadvantage
vis-a-vis the person who disregards it. What a potent obstacle to civilization aggressiveness must
be, if the defence against it can cause as much unhappiness as aggressiveness itself! 'Natural'
ethics, as it is called, has nothing to offer here except the narcissistic satisfaction of being able to
think oneself better than others. At this point the ethics based on religion introduces its promises of
a better after-life. But so long as virtue is not rewarded here on earth, ethics will, I fancy, preach in
vain. I too think it quite certain that a real change in the relations of human beings to possessions
would be of more help in this direction than any ethical commands; but the recognition of this fact
among socialists has been obscured and made useless for practical purposes by a fresh idealistic
misconception of human nature.&rdquo;
No other technique for the conduct of life attaches the individual so firmly to reality as laying emphasis on work; for his work at least gives him a secure place in a portion of reality, in the human community. The possibility it offers of displacing a large amount of libidinal components, whether narcissistic, aggressive or even erotic, on to professional work and on to the human relations connected with it lends it a value by no means second to what it enjoys as something indispensible to the preservation and justification of existence in society. Professional activity is a source of special satisfaction if it is a freely chosen one if, that is to say, by means of sublimation, it makes possible the use of existing inclinations, of persisting or constitutionally reinforced instinctual impulses. And yet, as a path to happiness, work is not highly prized by men. They do not strive after it as they do after other possibilities of satisfaction. The great majority of people only work under the stress of necessity, and this natural human aversion to work raises most difficult social problems.

The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness.

In this way the ego detaches itself from the external world. It is more correct to say: Originally the ego includes everything, later it detaches from itself the external world. The ego-feeling we are aware of now is thus only a shrunken vestige of a far more extensive feeling - a feeling which embraced the universe and expressed an inseparable connection of the ego with the external world.

I can imagine that the oceanic feeling could become connected with religion later on. That feeling of oneness with the universe which is its ideational content sounds very like a first attempt at the consolations of religion, like another way taken by the ego of denying the dangers it sees threatening it in the external world.