Civilization and Its Discontents Book Summary, by Sigmund Freud
by Allen Cheng

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1-Page Summary of Civilization and Its Discontents

Overall Summary

Sigmund Freud begins his essay on civilization and its discontents by describing how he is unable to understand religious feelings. He believes that religion plays an important role in society, even though there are no longer many believers. Freud thinks that the ego, superego, and id – the self, the regulating self, and deep desires - represent three forces that exist at a personal level. He wonders if these same forces can be found at a societal level as well.

Freud's essay moves in an organic manner, which means it doesn't follow a strict order but rather moves from one idea to the next. Freud wonders how religions function in society and sees that they are based on selfless love. He then wonders whether this feeling is all that holds societies together and states that it isn't enough to constitute a society.

Freud then talks about how human beings become attached to each other. They do so by means of sexual love within family groups and the production of children through this union. However, these relationships are interrupted because they cannot be consummated. The drive for both sex and destruction is present in these relationships, which depend on eros (love) and thanatos (death).

Sigmund Freud believes that societies are made up of smaller groups, like families. They're held together by the love- and death-drives in all human beings. People want to be free, but they also want protection from other people. Freud's model explains this duality better than any other theory about social organization because it takes into account both sides of these desires – individual liberty and group stability.

Freud's essay is related to political conditions in Europe at the time of its writing. He wonders whether civilization is declining and considers the possibility that societies can be "neurotic", or overcome by an excess of anxiety about their base impulses.

Full Summary of Civilization and Its Discontents
Overview

Sigmund Freud attempts to explain the spiritual phenomenon of a feeling that people have when they feel like they're one with everything. He believes this is not caused by any religion, but instead is human nature. Churches and religious institutions are able to channel this sentiment into particular belief systems, but it's not what causes it in the first place.

People's egos usually perceive themselves as distinct from the outside world. This distinction between inside and outside is a crucial part of psychological development. The ego can recognize reality separate from itself, which allows people to develop psychologically. Freud disagrees with "oceanic" feelings being the cause of religious sentiment in human beings because it doesn't explain why this feeling exists in adults who were never children. Instead, he believes that "oceanic" feelings are actually caused by childhood longing for paternal protection that continues into adult life as sustained fear of superior power over fate.

Freud states that the common man's preoccupation with God is infantile and absurd. He claims that men exhibit three main coping mechanisms to deal with suffering in the world: 1) deflection of pain and disappointment (through planned distractions); 2) substitutive satisfactions (mainly through replacement of reality by art); 3) intoxicating substances. Freud concludes that religion cannot be clearly categorized within this schema.

What do people want in life? This is a question that has been asked for thousands of years. Many have tried to answer this question and it seems like the answers are different depending on who you ask. People tend to be happy, but they also experience unhappiness from many sources. They try to avoid unhappiness by isolating themselves or being part of something bigger than themselves (e.g., religion). Freud sees little benefit in religion, though he acknowledges its positive effects on society as a whole.

After looking at religion, Freud broadens his investigation into the relationship between civilization and misery. He claims that civilization is ultimately responsible for our misery: we organize ourselves into civilized society to escape suffering, only to inflict it back upon ourselves. His three main contentions are 1) Christianity's victory over pagan religions (and its low value placed on earthly life); 2) primitive tribes discovered by Europeans who appeared happier living in a state of nature; 3) scientific identification of neuroses caused by modern society's demands. The conclusion was that people would be happier if they withdrew from modern society.

Freud identified three stages of civilization. The first stage is character-formation, which occurs when the individual develops a sense of identity. In the second stage, sublimation, people channel their primal energy into other activities that are more socially acceptable and productive. Finally, in the third stage non-satisfaction/renunciation of instincts, individuals bury aggressive impulses through law and order.

Civilization is a great thing, but it can get in the way of love. Freud identifies several reasons for this later antagonism. For one, family units isolate themselves and prevent individuals from detaching and maturing on their own. Civilization also saps sexual energy by diverting it into cultural endeavors; laws and customs restrict choice as to whom we may love; taboos (namely, against incest) impose further restrictions. The conflict arises from civilization's need for people to form communal bonds based on
relations of friendship -- if libidinal activity were allowed to run rampant, it would likely destroy the monogamous relationship that society has endorsed as the most stable form of loving relationships between two people.

Freud objects to the Biblical commandment "Love thy neighbor" because he thinks that people are primarily aggressive rather than loving. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, he first identified this instinctual aggressiveness. The civilization is threatened with disintegration because of this inclination to aggression. It invests great energy in restraining these death instincts, and achieves this goal by installing within the individual a sort of watchdog agency called super-ego to master our desire for aggression. For Freud, the entire evolution of civilization can be summed up as a struggle between Eros and Death Drive overseen by Super Ego.

With the development of the super-ego, people develop a sense of guilt. This is because it regulates thoughts and actions much more than parents or other authorities can. It's also internalized, so there are two sources of guilt: fear of authority and fear of one's own conscience. The latter comes from instinct renunciation being unable to free individuals from the burden that their super-ego creates. Civilization makes this worse by reinforcing guilt to regulate relationships between men in society. It becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to tolerate this repression as civilization advances; it takes an enormous toll on their happiness and well-being.

In the last chapter, Freud explains how he uses the terms "super-ego" and "conscience." The super-ego is an internal force that can be inferred. It's one of the functions of this super-ego to keep watch over a person's intentions and actions. This sense of guilt comes from when someone feels like they're being watched by their conscience and it arises when there is tension between what you want to do or think about doing something (the ego) and what your conscience says you should do or not do (the super-ego). Remorse only happens after you carry out a guilty act whereas guilt can happen before committing an act. Finally, Freud emphasizes aggression as mankind's greatest problem today because it manifests itself in so many ways such as war, crime, terrorism, etc.

**Chapters 1-2**

In the first paragraph, Freud takes issue with a colleague's account of an oceanic feeling. He states that this feeling is subjective and not an article of faith. It does not point to allegiance to any specific religion, but instead points to the source of religious sentiment in human beings. Churches are adept at channeling this sentiment into particular belief systems, but they do not themselves create it.

Freud did not experience the "oceanic" feeling, but he is not denying that it exists for other people. He tries to understand its causes scientifically by summarizing his previous findings about it. In general, the ego perceives itself as being separate from and distinct from the outside world. However, in moments of intense love, the ego can consciously allow this boundary to become more fluid without feeling threatened or overwhelmed by reality. Otherwise, the tendency of an ego is to detach itself from negative feelings associated with external sources so that they do not affect its perception of reality. This distinction between inside and outside allows a person's mind to recognize a "reality" separate from itself at an earlier stage in life than when maturity comes along with a shrunken sense of reality because one has separated oneself emotionally from others around them.
Freud then asks, is it possible to infer the earliest stages of psychological development? Yes, because science makes such claims all the time. For instance, we can infer that higher species evolved from lower ones even though there are no physical evidence of those links. The mind is exceptional in this regard because mature and infantile feelings co-exist throughout a person's life: once memories have been recorded, they're never erased and can be recalled under certain circumstances. Freud draws another analogy to archeology by describing excavating past ruins under present-day buildings such as Rome (the "Eternal City"). He concludes that the analogy isn't sufficient because the mind cannot ultimately be represented visually or pictorially.

Freud acknowledges his earlier statement that memory is erased, and now says that it's not necessarily so. He returns to the idea of "oceanic" feeling which he dismisses as a source for religious sentiment in people. Instead, Freud believes this longing for paternal protection from childhood can continue into adulthood as a sustained fear of fate or superior power. Freud reiterates how frustrating it is to have an intangible quantity with no physiological basis because it can't be scientifically analyzed.

Freud states that men are constantly trying to avoid pain and disappointment in the world. They do this by distracting themselves with art, entertainment, or intoxicating substances. However, they still suffer because of their problems and life's hardships. Freud believes religion is a way for people to cope with these issues while still being able to enjoy life.

Freud says that religion is the only thing that can answer questions about life's ultimate purpose. The first goal of men is to be happy, and they do this by following the pleasure principle. However, we often experience unhappiness from three sources: our body, the world around us, or other people. We deal with these problems by avoiding them (e.g., isolating ourselves), being part of a community (i.e., contributing to something bigger than ourselves), or influencing our own bodies in some way (e.g., through intoxication). Another strategy for dealing with unhappiness involves sublimation—the redirection of energy into other activities—and spiritual meditation practices are another method for dealing with unhappiness as well as controlling instincts like sex drive and aggression.

Only a select few can influence their own psyche. Most of us derive satisfaction from illusions, such as the enjoyment provided by art, which provides temporary relief from the misery of life. Another strategy is isolation, but reality intrudes too forcefully for that illusion to persist. Finally we have love, which can be intensely happy if you find someone who loves you back; however this comes with vulnerability and defenselessness in relationships.

Sigmund Freud recognizes that beauty is a source of pleasure, but it doesn't have any discernible nature or origin. It's also something that philosophers study in aesthetics. However, psychoanalysis would say that beauty has to do with sexual feeling because beautiful things are often attributes of the desired sexual object.

It is impossible to reach a state of complete happiness. Each individual must identify what makes them happy and how they can achieve it, as well as the capacity of their own mind to experience this pleasure.
Religion provides one path to happiness by dictating simple rules for people to follow; however, Freud sees little value in religion other than that. If you realize that religion has limited your options for finding true happiness, then you will need to find alternative paths.

The most intriguing aspect of the introductory chapter is Freud's attempt to compare psychoanalysis to other accepted scientific disciplines and show how it differs from them.

Freud believes that human civilization is regressing. He also subscribes to Darwin's theory of evolution, which states that the human race has conquered nature through technological advancement but this very same technology has made it harder for individuals to adapt to their environment. Freud feels humans are biologically unprepared for civilized life and are thus regressing.

Freud's analogy to archeology illustrates his background in classical literature and history, but also shows the primacy of Western civilization to his thinking, since Freud considers ancient Rome as the historical origin of culture and society. The "super-ego," as Freud will conjecture toward the end of his essay, is both individual and collective. We inherit our notion of authority from past leaders or figures with imposing personalities such as Roman emperors Nero, Hadrian, and Agrippa. At the same time we can learn about Eastern cultures' methods for attaining self-knowledge through practices like yoga or worldly wisdom from East Asia.

Freud was critical of organized religion. He said that it's delusional and infantile, but he believed in science and art more than in religion. He included many poems from literary sources throughout his book.

According to Freud, the purpose of human life is not redemption in an afterlife, but rather happiness. His theory of the pleasure principle clashes directly with biblical teachings that man should be happy. This irony isn't included in God's plan for humans.

Freud was interested in the idea that beautiful things can have a positive effect on people. This is an unusual theory, as it goes against what most people believe about beauty. Freud uses Kant's ideas to explain his views on beauty and aesthetics; however, he doesn't fully explore the topic or integrate it into his theories of psychoanalysis.

Chapters 3-4

Sigmund Freud begins by arguing that civilization is responsible for our unhappiness. We organize ourselves into civilized society to escape suffering, only to inflict it back upon ourselves. He identifies three key historical events that led people to this conclusion: 1) the victory of Christendom over pagan religions; 2) the discovery and conquest of primitive tribes and peoples who appeared more happy in a state of nature; 3) scientific identification of neuroses (which are caused by frustrating demands put on us by modern society). Antagonism toward civilization developed when people concluded that we could be happier if we withdrew from the society that imposes those demands.

Technology also brings the promise of better lives and greater happiness, but Freud disputes that notion. On the other hand, it's difficult to gauge how happy people were in earlier eras because happiness is subjective. People who are suffering might be desensitized to their own pain.
Civilization can be defined as the sum total of human achievements and regulations intended to protect men against nature. Technological advances have enhanced our power against nature but also given us a greater sense of sensory perception through inventions such as the telephone and photograph. These inventions have made man feel like he's a "prosthetic God."

Civilization is not just about living in a safe and healthy environment. It's also about beauty, cleanliness, and order. Freud argues that civilization has higher aims than merely providing safety from the natural world; it also provides opportunities for artistic expression.

As for the regulation of our "mutual relations," a "decisive step" toward civilization lies in the replacement of the individual's power by that of the community. Yet, this substitution henceforth restricts the possibilities of individual satisfaction in favor of law and order. Civilized societies place rule over individual instincts. In Freud's view, this is similar to how civilizations evolved from character formation (the acquisition of an identity) to sublimation (channeling primal energy into other physical or psychological activities), ending with non-satisfaction/renunciation (burying aggressive impulses; imposing rule over society).

The communal life of human beings is based on the need to work and love. Freud believes that sexual desire created strong relationships between people, especially couples who wanted to be with each other for a long time. However, there are some risks involved in love; therefore, some people choose not to have individual partners but rather devote themselves to universal love for all mankind (typified by Christian saints). This is known as "love with an inhibited aim."

Civilization was created to bind people together in love. However, Freud identifies several reasons why that eventually fails. For one, families tend to isolate themselves and prevent their members from growing up on their own. Women especially resent the intimacy that work takes away from them because they are married. Civilization also saps sexual energy by diverting it into cultural endeavors; it restricts our choices of partners and mutilates our erotic lives through laws and customs; fear of sexual revolt leads us to precautionary measures beginning in childhood; even heterosexuality freely practiced is channeled into monogamy and marriage by society with a severely impairing effect on men's sexuality.

Freud uses rhetorical techniques to make his arguments. He often anticipates potential objections and preemptively counters them by using phrases such as "But here the voice of pessimistic criticism makes itself heard..." Freud's writing style is very conversational, like that of a patient in an analyst's office. In truth, he isn't really responding to any critics so much as anticipating their possible objections before they can be raised. Similarly, Freud often uses passive constructions to conceal references to himself and the use of his own research in support of his claims. For instance, "It was discovered that a person becomes neurotic because he cannot tolerate the amount of frustration society imposes on him" is one example where Freud recasts something he has just said as external verification for it.

In this passage, Freud uses the collective "we" to discuss his ideas about psychoanalysis. By doing so, he blurs the line between what is common knowledge and what is a contestable interpretation or assumption. He also does not define terms rigorously and expects us to be guided by linguistic usage.

Freud's rhetoric is often slippery. He makes bold claims without providing much evidence and tries to give the impression that he has a scientific basis for his observations about civilization through biology.
His footnotes are full of speculation on the social consequences of humans standing up straight, scents from excrement and anal erotism, and the human sexuality being fundamentally bisexual. These bizarre reflections are justified as a "digression" which will help fill in some gaps left by an earlier discussion.

Freud's misogynistic attitude is evident in this chapter. Although he views women as inferior, they play an important role in society at large, both enabling and undermining the development of civilization. Freud's observations on "the primitive family" are lacking historical perspective and falsely assume a continuity between gender relations today and those undergirding the structure of the familial unit. On the other hand, Freud also acknowledges that human sexuality has been increasingly repressed over time due to societal pressures to conform to marriage norms and heterosexuality.

### Chapters 5-6

Sigmund Freud believes that civilization is threatened by the sexual drive. Civilization requires people to work together and build ties of friendship, so they must put their libidos in check.

Freud did not agree with the biblical commandment of "Love thy neighbor." He believed that human beings are aggressive by nature, and history has proven his point. Human beings have been known to kill one another for selfish reasons. Civilization is threatened because people have this tendency towards violence. Laws are created in order to prevent these tendencies, but they don't always work as intended.

Freud then turns to socialist thought. Communists think that by eliminating private property, they can eliminate greed and oppression. However, Freud argues that aggression predates the ownership of property and has been an important force in binding communities together throughout history (e.g., Jews were persecuted by Christians). Moreover, vilification of the bourgeoisie is a rallying cry for communism in Russia.

Freud believes that society is not as great as it could be. In fact, he feels that we have exchanged the possibility of happiness for security. He compares primitive societies to modern ones and finds them lacking in some ways. Primitive people are more instinctual than civilized ones, but they also enjoy less freedom because everyone's instincts are restricted by those above them on the social ladder. Freud does not specify which limitations on our instinctual freedom fall into which category (whether they're surmountable or intrinsic). The most dangerous society, according to him, is one in which a leader is exalted and individuals do not acquire an adequate sense of identity (individuals don't know who they are). Freud points to American society as an example of this danger; however, he doesn't elaborate further on his criticism.

Sigmund Freud quotes Friedrich Schiller, who said that hunger and love are what moves the world. Hunger can be characterized as an ego-instinct or satisfaction of internal needs while love is directed toward objects external to the ego. Libido is another term for this instinct. However, when considering sadism (which is technically an object-instinct but also bound up in the ego), it complicates this simple opposition between the two instincts. Also, self-love psychologically precedes - and is a necessary condition of - the love directed towards others in Freud's schema.

Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, he initially believed that Eros was
a powerful instinct in humans while Thanatos (the death drive) was not. However, his own research changed his mind and led him to believe that Thanatos has an equal or greater influence on human behavior than Eros does. Freud then argued that aggression is a basic instinctual urge in humans; its purpose is to destroy civilization. He also said that civilization's main goal is to bind people together through love and relationships; aggression makes this difficult for society as a whole to achieve.

In Chapter 3, Freud compares man to a prosthetic God by showing his technological innovations. In this chapter, he focuses on how "man" is like an animal or beast. He uses the Latin expression "Homo homini lupus", which means that man is a wolf to man in order to show the Darwinian undertone of his argument about human civilization and evolution from lower species.

Freud's critique of communism is a tour de force. He doesn't engage in the usual debate about economic issues, but instead focuses on the faulty assumption behind abolishing private property—namely, that you can eliminate all motivation for exploitation associated with capitalism.

Freud's conception of the individual is based on economics. He refers to this as the "economy of libido." While a communist may be concerned with finances, Freud considers it more important to understand how people distribute their sexual energy. One can't predict or alter that fundamental economy, which inevitably inclines toward erotic desire and destruction.

Freud suggests that aggression is a common human trait and can be destructive to society, but it's also used to create national identities. This idea can be connected back to Freud's earlier critique of the biblical "Love thy neighbor" commandment because both ideas are about how humans form communities.

In the beginning of Freud's work, he mentions two instincts: object-instincts and ego-instincts. He then goes on to show that these two are actually one in the same. This realization is a typical deconstructionist move because it shows how each side of an argument is really just a function of the other side. For example, Freud realizes that our desires for mastery and control originate from within ourselves (i.e., from our ego). Similarly, he will contrast fear toward external authority with fear toward internal super-ego only to reveal they're really one in the same thing later on.

Freud starts by talking about Ego Instincts vs Object Instincts; however as we read further into his writing we see him talk about Id vs Super Ego where both sides are essentially one in the same thing/functioning off each other. This type of self revision or discovery can be seen as a prototypical act of Deconstructionism which consists in demonstrating how each term contains difference itself. We see this again when Freud contrasts Fear towards External Authority with Fear towards Internal Super Ego, only to reveal that they're actually one and the same thing/functioning off each other.

Freud is open to the idea of changing his mind. He's willing to admit when he was wrong. This quote serves as an example of how Freud anticipates and overcomes resistance from people who might disagree with him on a topic that he is about to introduce, such as the death drive. In other words, this passage shows Freud's rhetorical style in which he builds into his writing techniques for overcoming resistance from readers who might be resistant to what he wants them to believe or accept.

In Chapter 6, Freud relies on literature and poetry as evidence for his theories. He uses the works of Goethe and Schiller to help him understand human nature. In a footnote, he quotes from Faust, where the
description of evil coincides with what he calls the death drive in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. It's interesting to see how Freud treats literature as an authoritative source that can accurately describe feelings or conditions but is not always accurate when it comes to patient accounts.

**Chapters 7-8**

Society is an important part of the world because it helps people control their aggression. To do this, we install a sort of "watchdog" in our brains, which Freud called the super-ego. The super-ego controls and regulates your actions to make sure you don't act aggressively towards others. It does this by making you feel guilty if you do something bad or wrong so that you'll punish yourself for doing it.

Freud attempts to explain why people feel guilty. He postulates that it is because they have done something bad or are considering doing something bad. Freud also rejects the idea of a basic capacity for distinguishing between good and bad, since what we consider to be "bad" often feels good or is wanted by the ego. For Freud, the only thing that really counts as being "bad" is losing love from others. Children fear losing their parents' love and adults fear losing community approval.

Freud's theory about guilt can help us understand why some people feel guilty when they do things like breaking rules, disobeying authority figures, or hurting other people's feelings even though these actions don't actually harm anyone else in any way (such as stealing food from someone who has plenty).

With the establishment of the super-ego comes a sense of guilt. People who are overly saintly feel guilty for their actions, even if they have done nothing wrong. The super-ego is internalized and has an omniscient view of people's thoughts and deeds, whereas before it was established there were only external authorities that punished people for their misdeeds. External frustration also enhances the power of conscience to reproach and punish egos. Whole peoples have behaved this way: in reaction to misfortune, Jews created overly strict commandments because they felt guilty about what happened to them.

Guilt can be caused by two things: fear of authority and fear of the super-ego. In the latter case, instinct renunciation no longer liberates an individual from a sense of internal guilt that the super-ego continues to perpetuate. As time goes on, civilization reinforces this sense of guilt as it becomes a more repressive force for individuals to tolerate.

Freud apologizes for the fact that his essay has been so scattered. He believes guilt is one of the most important problems in human development and civilization. Anxiety manifests itself through symptoms, some more obvious than others. Religion seeks to redeem people from their guilt by means of sacrifice or martyrdom (i.e., assuming collective responsibility).

Freud discusses the super-ego, which is an internal agency whose existence has been inferred. The super-ego has various functions that include watching over the ego and making sure it doesn't do anything wrong. One of those functions is called "conscience." Conscience basically tells you when you've done something wrong before doing it, whereas remorse refers to the reaction after committing a crime or act of aggression.
Freud believed that people have a natural sense of guilt, but it is intensified when they feel guilty for not living up to their standards or breaking societal norms. However, this theory does not explain why some people are more prone to feeling guilty than others. Freud revised his theory and claimed that only aggressive instincts can be transformed into a sense of guilt via the regulating action of the super-ego. He also believes that repressed sexual desires manifest themselves as symptoms if they are not fulfilled in other ways (i.e., through actualized sex).

Freud's earlier analogy between the development of civilization and the libidinal maturation of the individual undergoes a revision. The program of pleasure is retained as central to personal psychological development, but in a larger context, it becomes about unity and social cohesion. In joining a larger community, an individual oscillates between egoism and altruism; he or she struggles with getting his or her own happiness versus uniting with others. This struggle is internal—a function of the ebb and flow of libido—and should not be confused with Freud's different understanding about Eros fighting against Thanatos (death drive).

Sigmund Freud compares the super-ego to a cultural one. He says that it's formed by great leaders and martyrs who represent humanity at its best, like Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to control aggression in society through "ethics," which are rules meant to keep people from being aggressive toward each other. However, these ethics may cause more psychological pain than if we were allowed to be fully aggressive toward others.

Freud wondered whether it would be possible to characterize certain epochs of civilization as neurotic. The problem is that diagnoses are based on a relative definition of individual psychological normality, and would be difficult to apply to entire groups, let alone segments of civilization.

Freud's essay is about the conflict between Eros (love) and Thanatos (the death drive). He asks whether love will win or if we're doomed to self-destruction. Freud sees religion as an infantile delusion, but he references Jewish history throughout the essay because it played a major role in his upbringing.

Guilt is a critical component of Freud's understanding of the formation of the super-ego and has its roots in Jewish history. For example, Jews who suffered persecution created their own religion that was strict about observing commandments. In addition, guilt may serve as an underlying force behind identity formation because it helps people solidify group membership.

In the beginning of Chapter 8, Freud uses the term "detours" to describe his thoughts about metaphors. This is no coincidence because he talks at length in the first chapter about how pictorial or visual metaphors are inadequate for describing complex ideas, such as those related to feelings and emotions. It's interesting that Freud thinks of himself as a road map, which is essentially a spatial metaphor like one he rejected earlier in the book.

Freud's discussion follows the structure of an essay, which is a type of writing that originates from scientific experiments. It emphasizes the process over results and frequently involves detours from its intended topic. In terms of genre, it was derived from scientific principles but has enough flexibility to accommodate both empirical and theoretical evidence in its discussions. Freud integrates references to literature and other disciplines (politics and economics for example) into his discussion, staying true to the interdisciplinary origins of essays as well as their experimental nature.
Chapter 8 of Freud's work is a comparison between the individual and civilization. He begins by looking at the individual and his symptoms, such as anxiety, fear, and guilt. Then he extends this analogy to civilizations that have leaders or idols who are worshipped by people in those cultures. However, there can be no empirical evidence of a "cultural super-ego," even if it can be logically deduced from the value placed on certain leaders or individuals within a culture. In addition, to characterize an entire epoch of civilization as "neurotic," one would also need to reference against a normative psychological state of being (a normality). Freud warns us that we are only dealing with analogies because they ultimately have only logical but not necessarily clinical or empirical validity.

Freud ends the essay by posing a question. He doesn't come to any definitive conclusions about what drives human civilization and he's not interested in making predictions. Instead, he wants to identify underlying trends within society and culture as well as the broader civilization.