

Freud's Concept of Civilization in Terms of Psychoanalytic Theory

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Sigmund Freud was born in the Czech province of Moravia to a Jewish, German-speaking family in 1856. When he was four years old, his parents moved to Vienna, where he spent his whole adult life, in the study and practice of medicine. His father, Jacob Freud, married twice. Of his first marriage, there were two sons, one born in 1832 or 1833 and the other born in 1836. At forty, Freud's father re-married twenty-year-old Amalie Nathansohn, who was to be Freud's mother. She happened to belong to the same generation as her step-sons. Freud was the first son by her, and his childhood love toward his mother was extraordinarily strong. These aspects of Freud's personal life are particularly significant since they correlate with one of the major tenets of his psychoanalytic theory, the Oedipus complex. At the time of the second marriage, Freud's father was already a grandfather. The little Sigmund, therefore, was born an uncle. This strange structure of his family, in which generations overlapped and roles were confused, helped to open his eyes to the sexual attraction and aggression in parent-child relationship.¹⁾ In 1896 Freud's father died. Although this was expected since the father was quite old, the death caused such an unexpected and profound disturbance in Freud that he could not help seeking its origin. It brought about the famous "self-analysis" which he began in 1897.

In 1887, Freud married Martha Bernays after five years of engagement. His extreme poverty prevented him from setting up a home earlier. He loved his future wife passionately. During the engagement period he wrote nine-hundred letters to her which are valued as sources for studying Freud and also for the graceful literary style, mirrored in his published writings. His marriage was a happy and satisfactory one. Along with his passion for his fiancée, his predilection for archaeology should be mentioned, too, for

1) H Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society* (New York: A.A Knopf, 1958), p 126

it absorbed him increasingly. His collecting of archaic things is suggestive of his works. He was always concerned with the past, and later this past plays a crucial role in his psychoanalytic theory. He declared that we should take the past into due consideration, since without understanding it, we cannot enjoy the present; nor can we understand the present without knowing what the past was.²⁾ An essential part of psychoanalysis is considered to lie in this sentence. Only in his late years, was he able to tear himself from this haunted past and to look at the present and future.

When the invasion of Austria by the Nazis had become inevitable in 1938, Freud's friends finally succeeded in persuading him to come to England. London welcomed him heartily. He died in London in 1939.

In his medical career, he had passed several stages before he came to use psychoanalytic technique with his patients. After three years in the University, he entered the Institute of Physiology and worked under Dr. Ernst von Brucke. During his two years with Brucke, he acquired sound scientific principles. Then he had to enter into practice. Gradually, neurology became his specialty, but he very quickly came to see that neurology, as he had been instructed in it, could do little for the majority of his patients. They were not generally suffering from any organic disturbances of the nervous system.

In 1885, he managed to go to Paris as a scholarship student, in order to study under Charcot. The experience with Charcot in Paris aroused Freud's interest in hysteria. Charcot made a systematic and extensive study of all the symptoms of hysteria. The conclusion of his comprehensive investigation showed that, whatever the unknown neurological cause of hysteria might be, the symptoms could be cured by ideas alone without having anything at all to do with the physical elements.³⁾ This became a motivation for medicine to investigate the psychology of patients. It turned the study of psychology to a different direction from its previous academic one, and made discoveries possible about the deeper layers of the mind; discoveries that could not have been made in any other way. Here Freud turned from neurology to clinical psychology. Charcot's influence must be ascribed as the most important one in turning Freud in this direction. Thus, the way for developing psychoanalysis was paved.

As a psychopathologist, his therapeutic tools were electrotherapy and hypnotism. While he was in Paris, he had seen Charcot use hypnosis to create symptoms and then, remove

2) Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1953), p.112.

3) Jones, p.227.

them in the patients. Finding electrotherapy ineffective, he gave it up and primarily employed hypnosis. In this manner, Freud, unintentionally, moved further and further away from the study and treatment of organic nervous illnesses. During his practice, he found that hypnosis did not work with everyone. Sometimes it was not at all practicable. In 1889, dissatisfied with hypnotism, he spent a few weeks at Nancy Hospital to improve his technique. During this period, he conceived of the possibility of the existence of the unconscious in the human mind. He expresses his observation as follows:

I was a spectator of Bernheim's astonishing experiments upon his hospital patients, and I received the profoundest impression of the possibility that there could be powerful mental processes which nevertheless remained hidden from consciousness of men ⁴⁾

Unsatisfied with hypnotism, he decided to try Breuer's cathartic method. It was an empirical method created less by the doctor's ideas. The method was decided by the unpredictable and uncharted course of the treatment, and was a method upon which the patient collaborated in developing.⁵⁾ Later, this method came to be called the "Free Association" method, and it became the first and most important tool of the psychoanalytic technique. The technique of free association evolved gradually between 1892 and 1895.

Freud attempted to formulate a theoretical basis for the new discoveries he was making in psychopathology and with the help of this, to found a theory of the mind that would give a due amount of consideration to the curious features of the unconscious. The result of his efforts is called "psychoanalysis." In developing theory, he worked without reference to the direct influences of his predecessors or contemporaries. He may justly be called the original founder of psychoanalysis.

But there were philosophers such as Bergson and Nietzsche, who possessed theories similar to those of Freud, although it would be difficult to prove any direct relationships. Freud was not directly dependent on the work of others in these areas. Bergson, for example, referred to the deeper layers of consciousness, where the logic of space and number did not apply.⁶⁾ This is obviously close to Freud's "unconsciousness." The Nietzschean notion of "will to power" seems to be similar to Freud's "libido" and Bergson's

4) *ibid* , p.238.

5) *ibid.* p.240

6) Hughes, p.124.

“l'élan vital.”⁷⁾ Walter Kaufmann points out the similarities between Freudian and Nietzschean theories in the notes to his translation of *Beyond Good and Evil*. He not only enumerates the similar theories but also adds that such a list of similarities can easily be lengthened.⁸⁾ The real predecessors might be said to be the great literary artists. Freud could find much material available in great literature that supported his new theory. Thus, he felt that psychoanalysis and literature were interrelated, and that they could enrich one another.

The theory of the mind that Freud gave to the world was by no means a complete one, but a gradually developing one. Psychoanalysis can be profitably studied only as a historical evolution, and its development was closely bound up with the personality of its founder. Freud tends to find some features from the study of an individual—and sometimes the individual may be himself, and then generalizes them to the whole of humanity. Psychoanalysis started as a technique of treatment based on clinical observation. It was then expanded into a general account of neuroses; then into a theory of psychological processes in general; and finally, it came to be a system by which most phenomena in body and mind, and in society and culture, could be explained.⁹⁾ After five long years of study, Freud and Breuer jointly published *Studies on Hysteria* in 1895. This book is generally considered to be the first work in the literature of psychoanalysis. The term “psychonalysis” was first used in a paper published in 1896. This was a decisive step in Freud's life as a scientist. From this point, all his original discoveries would be fully developed. At this time, he was deeply imbued with the principles of causality and determinism, which had been prevalent during his early scientific education. Although he is a discoverer and originator, he could not but be a product of his age, the nineteenth century.

The existence of unconscious psychical processes, the theory of resistance or repression, the importance of the role of sexuality, and the Oedipus complex comprise the main contents of psychoanalysis and the foundation of its theory. When enumerating the essential elements of psychoanalytic theory in 1924, Freud emphasized the importance of the unconscious and described the nature of it as “the thoroughgoing meaningfulness and

7) *ibid*, p 105

8) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: A A Knopf, 1966), p 80 (Translated, with commentary by Walter Kaufmann.)

9) Hughes, p.130

10) *ibid*, p.133

determinism of even the most apparently obscure and arbitrary mental phenomena.¹¹⁾ His experience as a practitioner had confirmed his belief that the most complicated processes of thought could go on without being accompanied by consciousness, and referred to these as "unconscious mental processes." Of the well-known Oedipus complex, Freud himself remarked, "recognition of it has become the shibboleth that distinguishes supporters of psychoanalysis from their opponents."¹²⁾

As he had widened the concept of "mental" by his discovery of the unconscious, so he widened the extent to which the term "sexual" could justifiably be applied. Treating neurotic people, he discovered that the etiology of neuroses was a sexual, mostly infantile one. The singling out of the sexual factor in the etiology of hysteria did not come from any preconceived opinion.¹³⁾ For a long time, after finding out the sexual factor in the etiology, Freud had been accumulating proofs of the importance that must be given to sexual factors in causing neuroses. In addition to this, the psychoanalytic study of early childhood and the knowledge of adult perversions compelled him to recognize that sexuality has many manifestations besides the simple genital union. The sexual instinct does not begin in this final form. Although this form obviously serves the purpose of reproduction, sexuality has to pass through a rather complicated and psychologically significant development before this stage is reached.

In 1905, he published *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, which caused a sensation. The anger of the public was not caused by the subject itself, but by Freud's two shocking declarations--one was that sexual instinct strives to find satisfaction from infancy and it passes through many intermediate phases before fulfilling the purpose of reproduction. The second declaration was that there should not be any demarcation between normal and perverted sexuality. Freud maintains that sexual instinct begins diffusely from the excitability of man's erogeneous zones of the body. By erogeneous zones, he means mainly the mouth, anus, and genitals. The intermediate phases before reaching the final stage are usually called "oral phase" and "anal phase." Anticipating the indignation of the public by his theory of infantile sexuality, he says, "It seems to me my fate to discern only the obvious, that children have sexual feelings, which every nursemaid knows."¹⁴⁾ Schopenhauer and Rousseau also perceived this strange phenomenon and wondered at it.

11) Jones, p.366

12) *ibid*, vo II, p 291

13) *Ibid*, p 221.

14) *ibid*, p 350.

In the matter of the importance of sexuality, Nietzsche can be quoted as another who recognized its importance. He says, "The degree and kind of a man's sexuality reach up into the ultimate pinnacle of his spirit."¹⁵⁾

Earlier in his practice, Freud had detected an unmistakable unwillingness on the part of his patients to disclose memories that were painful or unpleasant to them. To this opposition he gave the term "resistance," and soon he connected it with "repression." Treating his patients, he also came to detect the phenomenon of "Transference." He himself explains it as follows:

What are transferences? They are new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis, but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it another way a whole psychological experience is revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment ¹⁶⁾

His own observations of the manifestations of "resistance" and "transference" date from 1890 and 1892. In later years, he declared these two concepts to be the hallmark of psychoanalysis.¹⁷⁾

According to Freud, there are three agencies in our psychical life: Id, Ego and Super-ego. Their interrelationship completely governs the health or sickness of the mind. Freud believes the whole task of analysis is to discipline and control the chaos of the id and to reduce the commands of the super-ego to reasonable proportions. The id is the older one among these three, and our primary instincts start in the id. All the processes in the id are unconscious. The id is unaware of negation, contradiction, feelings of duration or the idea of time. Nor, of course, has it any sense of values, of good and evil, or of morality. Freud describes it as follows:

It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality, what little we know of it we have learnt from our study of the dream-work and of the construction of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego. We approach the id with analogies, we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations. We picture it as being open at its end to somatic influences, and as there taking up into itself instinctual needs which find their psychical expression in it, but we cannot say in what substratum. It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will ¹⁸⁾

15) Nietzsche, p.81

16) Marthe Robert, *The Psychoanalytic Revolution* (New York. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), pp.208-209.

17) Jones, p 284.

18) Robert, p.336.

The other two agencies, the ego and the super-ego, have responsibility for the organization and the maintenance of our mental life. The ego has developed out of the id through the influence of the external world. It is to perceive the excitations of the id and to resist them. The ego is the one which has the sense of time and space, and which is to be able to foresee and to synthesize. It possesses a high degree of organization, which allows it to carry out the things which the id cannot. If the id represents the untamed passions, the ego stands for reason and caution.

The super-ego is said to be born of the child's relationship with its parents by a complex process of identification.¹⁹⁾ By this identification, the external authority is transplanted inside the subject and plays the role which was attributed to the moral conscience. In the hierarchy of the three agencies, the super-ego occupies the highest position. But as it is partly unconscious, is closer to the id than to the ego.²⁰⁾ The super-ego performs the act of repression and, owing to its archaic origin, it represents the past, tradition. Its excessive tyranny is one of the great dangers which threaten the psyche. A clear example from Nietzsche which shows the tyranny of the super-ego appears:

"I have done that," says my memory.

"I cannot have done that,": says my pride, and remains inexorable.

Eventually memory yields ²¹⁾

Here the ego is represented as memory and the super-ego as pride. The adjective "inexorable" is well chosen for tyrannical character of the super-ego. The phrase "Eventually the memory yields." reveals the act of repression.

Placed between three uncompromising tyrants the outer world, the id, and the super-ego, the ego is in an unhappy situation. Praising Freud's taste for the drama, Jerome S. Bruner shows the conflict the ego faces as follows:

The characters are from life the blind, pleasure-seeking id; the priggish and punitive super-ego; the ego, battling for its being by directing the energy of others to its own use. The drama has an economy and a terseness. The ego develops canny mechanisms for dealing with the threat of id impulses: denial, projection, and the rest. Balances are struck between the actors, and the balance is character and neurosis.²²⁾

19) *ibid.*, pp.336-337.

20) *ibid.*

21) Nietzsche, p 80.

22) Hughes, p.128.

The continued study of psychoanalysis has brought us several curious findings. One is that a boy's earliest choice of love objects are incestuous ones, and that those objects are forbidden ones— — his mother and his sister. Freud believed that the beginnings of religion, morals, society, and art converge in the Oedipus complex. This again happened to correspond with another finding, that the Oedipus complex constitutes the nucleus of all kinds of neuroses. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud tries to define the word "taboo" in several ways. He mentions that it is a kind of fear. Nietzsche says fear is the mother of morals too.²³⁾ It is at this point in the paper that the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and civilization can be drawn.

One of the most important conclusions psychoanalysis acquired from a study of the dreams and mental slips of normal people, and also from the symptoms of neurotics, is that the evil impulses of mankind have not vanished in any individual, but exist latently in a repressed state.²⁴⁾ This information helped Freud to develop the human aggressive-instinct theory. Psychoanalysis also made us realize that the so-called intellect which we value highly is a feeble thing, and a tool of our impulses and emotions.²⁵⁾

In his late years, Freud came to expand his theory in effort to explain society and culture. By this time, he managed to come out of his haunted past, and looked at the present civilization and gave some attention to the future, too. He attempted to explain the origin of human civilization as follows: men originally lived in small hordes; each of the hordes was ruled with brute force by an older male who appropriated all the females and put all the young males, including his own sons, to labor, or killed or ousted them. In time, the sons united and rebelled against the father and killed and ate him. Then in order to live peacefully with each other, the victorious sons renounced the women for whose sake they had murdered the father, and they agreed to practice exogamy. For the hypotheses he used in the above theory, he is indebted to Darwin, Atkinson and Robertson Smith.²⁶⁾ Freud emphasizes that this very renunciation marks the beginning of our civilization. In other words, it can be said that civilization was brought about through the discovery that a number of men who renounced some of their instincts were stronger than an individual who satisfied his impulses without any restraints.²⁷⁾

23) Nietzsche, p.113.

24) Hughes, p 143

25) *ibid*

26) Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1939), p.206 (Translated by Katherine Jones.)

27) Jones, *vo III*, p 340.

The result was the taboo on incest. Freud declared that this was the founding ordinance of civilized society. He imagined that the first act of the self-discipline of primitive man had been the curbing of incestuous fantasies. He deduced this hypothesis from his studying of children. He continued to reason that the prohibition of incest had been followed by other moral imperatives, which in time had become equally rigorous. He argued that these ethical precepts had been indispensable for the civilization, but at the same time they had seriously restrained man's deepest instincts. He also points out that the renunciation had never been complete. The forbidden desire for the mother and the sister remained repressed. Mankind vaguely understood this fact and from that time on, labored under a sense of guilt ²⁸⁾

Freud went on to say that the ambivalence of the sons toward the father existed during the whole further development. His theory runs as follows: instead of the father, a certain animal was declared the totem; it represented their ancestor and protecting spirit, and no one was allowed to injure or kill it. But once a year, the whole group gathered for a feast in which the very totem was killed and eaten. No one could abstain from this feast, it was the solemn repetition of the father-murder. Freud points out that in this father murder event, social, moral laws and religion had had their origins.²⁹⁾ After attempting to explain the origin of our civilization, in his books, especially in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud contrasted his psychoanalytic findings with the rigorous requirements of human civilization. First, he connects neuroses with the restraints of civilization. Civilization, which is grounded on the prohibition of incest, restrains human libido in various ways by insisting on strict monogamy and putting a ban on homosexuality and all kinds of so-called perversions. He argues that the psychology of the neuroses has given us proof that, if wishful impulses are not fulfilled, their libidos transformed into anxiety.³⁰⁾ He develops his argument that the characteristic feature of the neurosis is the preponderance of the sexual over the social instinctual elements. Thus, it follows without contradiction that the study of the psychology of the neuroses is important for an understanding of civilization. A single comparison between taboo and obsessional neurosis is enough to make us understand the nature of the relation between the numerous forms of

28) Hughes, p 146.

29) Freud, p.207

30) Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (New York, W.W. Norton & Co, Inc, 1950), p.69 (Translated by James Strachey)

neurosis and cultural institutions.

Earlier, Freud had postulated a reality principle and a pleasure principle. He explained that the relationship between them was similar to the one between the ego and the id. Hughes gives a concise description of them with the ego represented as "the consciously formed personality, and the id as "the undifferentiated, amoral realm of primitive yearning."³¹⁾ It is natural that the id should be curbed in building civilization. In other words, the reality principle is to dominate over the pleasure principle. Freud maintained that the more civilized or refined a person is, the more he devotes himself to avoiding pain rather than actively seeking pleasure. Freud came to conclude that this was characteristic of civilization, and so its effect was to lessen the amount of enjoyment in life.³²⁾ In this struggle between the two, to make matters worse, the super-ego appeared as the dwelling place of guilt and of the internalized values of the father. From one point of view the super-ego appears to be the most important motive-force in building civilization. It never ceases to punish the ego and it forces the ego to resort to extreme self-deprivation.³³⁾

But the irony is that a radically heterogeneous power is also working; that is, Eros in the civilization. The Eros is "the thirst for affection characteristic of the id."³⁴⁾ Therefore, love as well as self-punishment, hand in hand, push man toward the social life. Eros is different from a blind pursuit for instinctual gratification. It aims at binding together individuals into humanity.³⁵⁾ Thus, paradoxically, love and self-punishment are combined in civilization.

In Freud's later years, after the experience of World War I, witnessing the behavior of the Nazis and the deaths around him, he declared that the tendency to aggression is an "innate, independent, instinctual disposition in Man."³⁶⁾ In fact, he postulated this theory at the risk of his whole system. He maintains that this instinct is the most powerful obstacle to culture. This inclination to aggression disturbs our friendly relations with our neighbors, as well as having other ill effects on man. This instinct forces civilization to be alert in order not to be destroyed. He develops the theory and states that the most characteristic way of handling this instinct is to internalize it into a part of the self, called conscience or the super-ego, and to make it exercise the tendency to aggression

31) Hughes, p.148.

32) Jones, vo. III, p.335.

33) Hughes, p 148.

34) *ibid.*

35) *ibid.*

36) Jones, p.341.

against the ego.³⁷⁾ This entails tension between ego and aggression. This tension is called the sense of guilt, which is the response to the repressed aggressiveness.

It was in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* that Freud most clearly expressed his concern with this sense of guilt. His reasoning about this sense of guilt is shown in the following quotation:

Since culture obeys an inner impulse which bids it bind mankind into a closely knit mass, it can achieve this aim only by means of its vigilance in fomenting an ever-increasing sense of guilt. That which began in relation to the father ends in relation to the community. If civilization is an inevitable course of development from the group of the family to the group of humanity as a whole, then an intensification of the sense of guilt will be inextricably bound up with it until perhaps the sense of guilt may swell to a magnitude that individuals can hardly support.³⁸⁾

Since the sense of guilt is to a large extent unconscious, it manifests itself as a feeling of uneasiness, discontent, or unhappiness. Freud represents the sense of guilt as the most crucial problem in the evolution of culture and proclaims that the price of progress in civilization is paid by deprivation of human happiness through the increasing sense of guilt.³⁹⁾ Psychoanalysis also points out a tension between the demands of society for steady, rigorous, and organized productivity, versus the innate tendency toward unreliability and carelessness in work, due to the constant pressures of the pleasure principle.⁴⁰⁾

From the above considerations, one might say that civilization is moving towards an increasingly severe repression of the instincts. Freud considers this as the cause of civilization's discontent. His assumption is that it is not reasonable to force nature beyond a certain point and to think that the human libido can be sublimated indefinitely.⁴¹⁾ Kaufmann again points out that Nietzsche was the first to use "sublimieren" in its specifically modern sense and that this is associated with Freud widely.⁴²⁾ In his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud states that it almost seems that the happiness of the individual has no place in the creation of a successful human community. As a conclusion, he diagnoses the civilization and declares it neurotic:

If the development of civilization] has such a far-reaching similarity to the development of the

37) *ibid.*

38) Hughes, pp.147-148.

39) Jones, p.342.

40) Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York. W.W. Norton & Co, Inc., 1962), p.40.

41) Robert, p.358.

42) Nietzsche, p.102.

individual and if it employs the same methods, may we not be justified in reading the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilization possibly the whole of mankind have become 'neurotic'⁴³⁾

Diagnosing the civilization as neurotic, he suggested the best possible treatment for it, although he was rather pessimistic about the cure. His suggestion is to diminish somewhat the instinctual restraints and, by finding some sort of compensation, to reconcile mankind to the restraints that must inevitably remain.⁴⁴⁾ He also shows a touch of elitism in expressing his ideal that a small number of disinterested and highly gifted intellectuals might better the state of human beings in society to some extent. He imagines that mankind might succeed in producing a "throng of superior, dependable and disinterested leaders, who could "act as educators of the future generations" and train them to non-repressive living.⁴⁵⁾

Freud's career had been a combined one: he was a scientist with sound principles, and a philosopher who possessed powerful imaginative power. It is true that psychoanalysis was not a fully refined theory when it was first presented. Even during his life time, it was to undergo several alterations, additions, and modifications where they became necessary. Some of the changes, such as the "childhood seduction theory" or additions such as the "aggressive instinct" were serious enough to shake his whole system of theorization. This system was and is still to undergo several minor corrections and additions. More than a quarter of a century has passed since his death. As yet, as far as I know, no theory has come to replace his, and no one has been able to change or contradict the essential notions of the theory. It can be pointed out that what was considered to be the product of an unhealthy imagination in 1905 when Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* appeared, is now admitted by specialists and even by a large public to be a scientific truth beyond dispute.

As I have indicated in earlier sections of this paper, Freud was the originator of the theory of psychoanalysis, although the bases of the idea were developing independently in the works of other writers and researchers. Freud drew his examples both from the society around him and the literary works of his contemporaries and predecessors. The original view of Freud as perverted has given way as more and more confirmation of

43) Freud, p 91.

44) *ibid.*, p.136.

45) Hughes, p.137.

the theory is found. Support for the psychoanalytic theory with respect to individuals lends support to the analysis of civilization in terms of the the theory.

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— 概 要 —

“프로이드의 精神分析論에 依한 文明의 概念”

프로이드의 정신분석학이 어떠한 과정을 거쳐서 그 기반을 굳혔는가를 단계적으로 고찰하고 이렇게 자리를 잡은 정신분석학이 구체적으로 의미하는바의 것 즉 정신분석학의 중요한 내용들을 (무의식의 작용, 본능 억압론, 性역활의 중요성 그리고 웨디퍼스 콤플렉스) 분석연구했다.

다음 단계에서는 프로이드가 주로 그의 저서 「文明과 不滿들」에서 정신분석학의 중요한 내용들 하나하나를 文明의 概念과 연관지어 고찰해 나간것을 연구했다. 프로이드에 의하면 종교, 도덕, 사회 그리고 예술 모두가 웨디퍼스 콤플렉스에 그 기원을 두고 있고 또 이 콤플렉스가 온갖 종류의 신경질환의 핵심을 이룬다. 그리하여 그는 그의 저서에서 인간 문명의 냉혹한 요구들과 그의 정신분석과정에서 발견한 사실들을 대조시켜 고찰하고 그의 소위 “현실 원칙”과 “쾌락의 원칙”을 적용시켜 신경질환은 문명이 인간에게 부당하게 강요하는 여러가지 본능의 억압에서 비롯되는 것으로 진단을 내린다. 결과적으로 그는 문명이 인간이 인생을 즐길 수 있는 量을 감소시켜서 인간을 불행하게 만들고 있다고 선언한다. 그 치료책으로서 본능의 억제를 가능한한 감소시키고 불가피한 약간의 제약은 다른 방법으로 보상하도록 해야 한다고 갈파하고 있다.