



Civilization and Its Discontents

Sigmund Freud

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In this seminal book, Sigmund Freud enumerates the fundamental tensions between civilization and the individual. The primary friction stems from the individual's quest for instinctual freedom and civilization's contrary demand for conformity and instinctual repression. Many of humankind's primitive instincts (for example, the desire to kill and the insatiable craving for sexual gratification) are clearly harmful to the wellbeing of a human community. As a result, civilization creates laws that prohibit killing, rape, and adultery, and it implements severe punishments if such commandments are broken. This process, argues Freud, is an inherent quality of civilization that instills perpetual feelings of discontent in its citizens.



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