
Freud's And Marx's Views On Civilization And Roots Of Human Aggression

Philosophers have tried to decipher what the root of human aggression is and possible solutions. Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud both have discussed their theories in their works. The Communist Manifesto was written by Karl Marx, in an attempt to outline his theories on the ideal civilization including abolishing private property and publicizing everything. In 1929, Sigmund Freud published Civilization and its Discontents, where he goes over his theories regarding civilization as a whole including what humans strive for and a psychoanalysis of human desires. Both writings share some beliefs about civilization as a whole, including civilization is the cause for some sources of suffering and misery. Although Marx's beliefs on achieving an ideal and peaceful society make sense in theory, Freud more accurately considers the roots of human aggression, making the conclusion it is inevitably unavoidable.

Marx feels social class and private property is the root of aggression and oppression in society. In his writings, he heavily speaks about the impact of social class, and how they impact civilization and society as a whole. The bourgeoisie, which is defined as "the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production, and employers of waged labor," hold all the power in society. Marx states that "society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (p 32). People in a capitalist society thrive to be the bourgeoisie turning them into robots who only live to achieve wealth and power. They repeat the cycle of waking up, eating, going to work, and sleeping over and over in an attempt to achieve the illusion of money and power. This links to the ownership of property, which is an essential element to holding power in this social class. Marx feels that these social classes that are formed from a capitalist civilization cause humanity to have less genuine meaning. Capitalism has caused society to disregard the sentimental and valuable bonds among families and people, and replace it with mere monetary value. He feels there is one solution to these problems society faces today: communism.

Communism essentially is the abolition of private property. It publicizes merely everything in society: property, education, banking, production, and nationality. The wealth in civilization will be distributed among all members, meaning all families and individuals make the same income. Therefore, there will be no separation between the two classes, making every member of civilization on the same page. A misconception is this targets the entire public, rather, it targets the bourgeoisie as Marx stated:

The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few. (49)

This would prevent the bourgeoisie from obtaining all power and wealth within society, meaning the dehumanizing strategies in order to achieve this social status would be diminished. Although these measures seem extremely surreal or unattainable, Marx insists these will create a more happy and fulfilling lifestyle for members of society. He stated "In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past. In

bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality" (p 50). Essentially, with Marx's theories of capitalism and social class being the root of aggression and hostility in society today, removing these barriers would create a more peaceful and happy civilization.

In Freud's work, he has identified a different root to human aggression and darkness through a psychoanalysis. He strives to make sense of and acknowledge various human tendencies that are normally brushed off to the side because they lack explanation. Psychoanalytic focuses on the underlying psychological processes that humans subconsciously partake in. This differs from traditional cognitive science, where the primary focus lays on motive, and what we are aware of. Overall these different takes on human psychology come down to one large difference: conscious vs. subconscious (Sousa). Freud partakes in a psychoanalytic theory and perspective on human desire, making his theories on civilization far different from Marx, who follows a more cognitive view of the human mind.

Freud stated that humans have two different drives, or natural instincts, within the libidio: eros and thanatos. Eros is defined as a human's object-instincts. This includes love, sexual desire, and a drive for integration and civilization. Essentially, eros is what would be considered a human's natural instincts, such as avoiding situations that will cause pain and rather pursuing the positive things in life. However, humans have a contradictory sense within themselves a desire for destruction, pain, and aggressiveness. Freud identifies this as the thanatos, or the death-drive. When a person becomes angry at either themselves or surroundings, they release anger through aggression. It is natural for this to be released onto other objects or people in order to prevent self-destruction. Manifestations of the death-drive can be incorporated into a human's eros, such as in sadism, where a human's sexual desire is now involving the desire to cause harm, yet it is fully satisfying the erotic pleasure that is implemented from eros. These complexities of human intuition make it impossible to define and achieve happiness for society.

The goals of civilization seem simple; creating a happy and peaceful society for all humanity to thrive in. Marx feels that communism is the solution to finding happiness in humanity. However, Freud feels this is impossible to do, as part of natural human desire is in fact to struggle; to both be aggressive and oppressive, and to have a desire for darkness. He feels that the psychological basis of communism is a mere illusion, and the struggle between life and destruction that is presented in civilization is impossible to avoid. In Freud's work he stated "In abolishing private property we deprive the human love of aggression of one of its instruments ..." (p 60). This demonstrates his belief that it is important that the Thanatos drive is fulfilled alongside the eros. Private property and the aggression that comes with this are a natural way for people to meet these desires, rather than self destruction. Taking away this would require people to find a new way of meeting these desires, which could be potentially more dangerous. Man would feel uncomfortable without aggression, and this essentially means civilization would be moving backwards in its attempts to create a happy and fulfilled society.

Both Freud and Marx believe civilization is responsible for misery and implements sources of suffering. They differ however, because Freud believes these sources are necessary where Marx feels they must be eliminated. Marx's philosophy of communism lacks understanding of the true root of darkness in the world. He assumes throughout his argument that humanity is capable of living as one whole happy and united community, never looking further into the true reasons civilization has turned into an oppressive and aggressive system. Freud's views of civilization go further into analyzing why exactly it has turned out this way. His psychoanalysis

takes our understanding of the human mind to a further level looking deeper into inner-conscience and its needs. Humanity is incapable of living in the perfect civilization Marx established in Communist Manifesto. He feels capitalism is unsustainable, but essentially communism is unsustainable as it lacks the attention to a human's true and natural desires.

The different approaches of Marx and Freud to understanding the root of human aggression create different views on an ideal civilization. Marx feels the problems such as oppression and aggression can be solved by communism, or abolishing private property. Freud feels that communism will not solve these problems, and rather deprive people of their subconscious need for aggression and darkness.