**Questions Week 10:**

**Sigmund Freud (1856 –1939) - *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2015 (sections IV-VII)**

**Section IV**

GROUPS 5 & 6 (Ellie, Jamie, Nadia, Ryan)

In this section, Freud talks at greater length about how Kultur – and in general the formation of human groups, from early family and tribal groups to later developed and complex societies – come about in the first place, and what the (sometimes favourable, sometimes conflictual) role of the libido is in this process.

* How does Freud describe the historical development from family groups to modern society, and what causes that development (64-66)?
* What is the role of love/libido in this development (in particular 66-68)? Which different forms do the libidinal drives take on? What does that tell us about their nature – are they the same as ‘instincts’? (It might be helpful to think back to what Marx has to say about instincts in animals, and what distinguishes human beings from animals.) Are libidinal drives a promoter of Kultur (if yes, how?) or do they get into conflict with it (if yes, why) – or both?
* How does Freud describe the role of women in this process? What distinguishes women from men? Would you say Freud is influenced by historical circumstances of the time when he is writing this?
* What do you think of the comparison of the relationship of culture and sexuality to that of different social strata, or of coloniser and colonised (69)? It is supposed to tell us more about the former relationship, the one between culture and sexuality – could it also be seen as telling us more about how the latter, the one of coloniser and colonised, is seen?
* What exactly are the restrictions that civilisation imposes on sexuality, and what are the consequences (69-71)?

**Section V:**

GROUPS 3 & 4 (Danielle, Sarah, Bill, Gina, Natalie)

Freud opens this section with a lengthy discussion of the commandment to ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’, and the even more demanding ‘love your enemies’ (72-75). He discusses the challenges of this demand, and the various ways in which it ignores some basic facts about human life, before developing his own account of how people actually are (76ff).

What picture does he give us (76)? Have you come across the sentence *Homo homini lupus*, or its English equivalent, ‘Man is a wolf to man’ – what philosophical tradition is Freud linking to here? How does our picture of human beings and what makes them tick change in this section, compared to what was said in the first half of the book?

Freud then discusses various attempts to control human aggression, notably communism (77-78) and nationalism (78-79) – how promising are they?

**Section VI**

GROUPS 1 & 2 (Hannah, Rachael, Ciera, Helen, Sophia)

In this section, Freud starts discussing the mechanisms by which the control of drives actually works in the individual. First, though, he gives us a brief overview how his thinking about the ‘Todestrieb’ developed (80-82), and then goes on to defend this fairly late addition to his model of the human psyche against possible objections. It is interesting how strongly references to literature serve as evidence and illustration here, though. I don’t think any of this absolutely requires a detailed discussion, so let’s just read it and see if any questions emerge, and otherwise move on to Section VII. One interesting more general question might be:

* Given that Freud could make do rather well throughout most of his career without the assumption of a destructive death drive, the question is why that changed around 1920 when he published ‘Jenseits des Lustprinzips’, where the death drive makes its first explicit appearance. Are there any historical developments that might have prompted him to think differently about human destructiveness?

**Section VII**

In this section, Freud talks about the psychological mechanisms and psychic structures by which aggression is contained in society. Again, the metaphor he chooses is interesting: Culture deals with the individual’s aggressive impulses like an occupying power controlling a conquered city (87).

* What is implied by this metaphor?
* What does Freud say here about the origins of notions of ‘Gut’ and ‘Böse’ (87)?
* What are the stages by which a sense of ‘Gut’ and ‘Böse’ and the ability to have a ‘schlechtes Gewissen’ are installed in the individual as s/he grows up (87-88)?
* What, accordingly, are the different stages of the relation of Triebverzicht and Schuldbewusstsein (90-91)? In particular, why would Freud say – after summarising again the first two stages of this development – that from a certain point, Triebverzicht is not just a consequence of Schuldbewusstsein, but in turn becomes a ‘dynamische Quelle des Gewissens’ and makes it more severe and unforgiving? (91-93)?

ALL:

**Section VIII**

This is a bit of a mopping-up section, and in view of time restraints I think it is sufficient if we just focus on a few aspects here:

* What follows for Freud for the function of religion (98)?
* What does he have to say (102-104) on the “Beziehung zwischen dem Kulturprozeß der Menschheit und dem Entwicklungs- oder Erziehungsprozeß des einzelnen Menschen” (102)?
* What is the overall perspective Freud opens up for the possibilitiy of happiness in civilisation, if any (108)?

QUESTIONS FOR ALL:

* How does Freud’s view of the development of ‘schlechtes Gewissen’ (in particular in section VII) compare to Nietzsche’s as developed in section 16 of the second ‘Abhandlung’ of *Genealogie der Moral* (pp. 824-826)?
* How do Freud’s and Nietzsche’s critiques of religion compare?
* What perspective to deal with a dissatisfying state of affairs (not sure if one can call it ‘solution’) does each of the two authors offer? (See also, e.g., sections 24 & 25 of *Genealogie*, pp. 835-837). What do you think of their stances?