



# Quarreling with Culture: The Value of Discontent— Clinical Implications

Presented By: Don Greif, Ph.D.

Saturday, March 23, 2019

9:00AM—12:30PM

8:30AM Registration

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel  
Deerfield Beach - Boca Raton

## THE PRESENTATION

Sigmund Freud was torn about civilization— indeed, he was one of “its discontents,” the term he used in the title of his influential work, *Civilization and its Discontents*. According to Lionel Trilling, Freud had a “quarrel with culture.” Though he recognized that “greater security and union with other people” i.e., belonging, is an advantage of civilization, in Trilling’s view, Freud also sought to establish a place for the self to stand apart from culture. Although he was unable to find a place for the resistant, quarrelsome self within his theory of normal development, Freud understood—at least in a nascent, unformulated way—that there is a normative part of the self that has an adverse relationship with culture. Yet the centrality and significance of this dimension of the self and its struggle with culture has largely eluded the grasp of psychoanalysts.

An accumulating body of knowledge within psychoanalysis (from a wide array of relational theories), along with contemporary evolutionary biological perspectives and Trilling’s insights, helps us see that the relationship between the self and culture involves an ongoing negotiation between two deeply rooted longings. Simply put, human beings want to be a part of culture and stand apart from culture. We have an intrinsic desire to engage with culture and an equally intrinsic desire to disengage from culture. These desires correspond to different aspects of ourselves—a part that is intrinsically social and cultural and a part that, as Winnicott conceptualized it, wants to be free from influence by external reality. Because of the double-edged, ambivalent nature of our relationship with culture, we are continually challenged to find ways to live with dual—at times dueling— longings. Creating a viable balance between these longings-- to be a part of culture and to be apart from culture--poses a major psychological challenge throughout life.

I will demonstrate, through clinical and biographical vignettes, that the ability to quarrel with culture and to value discontent--and to make use of adaptive apartness--play an essential role in everyday experience, psychological development, motivation, and emotional suffering, and that understanding this dimension has important implications for how we think about our patients and practice psychoanalytic therapy.

## THE PRESENTER

Don Greif, Ph.D. is a psychologist and psychoanalyst with a private psychotherapy and forensic practice in NYC. He is a faculty member and supervisor at the William Alanson White Institute and Emeritus Editor of *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. He has written articles on “The Revitalization of Psychoanalysis: Antidote to ‘Instant Culture’”; “The Challenge of Viewing Sexual Offenders as Both Perpetrators and Victims”; “Revaluing Sports”; “Mastering Athletic Demons”; and “Good Enough Parenting.” Currently he is writing a counterpoint to *Civilization and its Discontents*. Don received his B.A. in philosophy at Yale College and his Ph. D. from Yeshiva University.

## OBJECTIVES

After the presentation participants will be able to :

1. Name the central psychological challenge humans face in relation to culture: to be a part of it and to be apart from it.
2. Identify expressions of discontent, quarreling with culture, standing apart from culture, fulfillment of culture, and being a part of culture.
3. Define what “adaptive apartness” is and how psychoanalysts facilitate it in the clinical setting.

Membership Category	Early Bird Rate	Day of Event
Professional Member	\$65	\$80
Non-Member	\$95	\$110
Student Members	Free	\$15
Student Non-Member (Student ID required)	\$15	\$30

**PRE-REGISTRATION IS APPRECIATED**

Early Bird Rate available until 3/18/2019

**REGISTER AT WWW.SEFAPP.ORG**