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Freud's Theory of Human Nature and Instincts in Chuck Palahniuk's Novel *Fight Club*

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Abstract

The 1996 novel Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk demonstrates a strong basis in psychoanalytical theory. The analysis of this novel shows that Freudian concepts of human nature and the basic instincts of Ero and Thanatos explain the reason behind the struggle of nature and nurture. This representation is evident in the setting, in the plot, and in the major characters of the novel. Within this framework for the discussion, I argue that the narrator's initial attempt to rebel against consumer culture force his natural instincts to resist nurture. The narrator escapes from the social orders and chooses violence as the best practice to break the chains of the nurture of civilized society. He starts living a life in the freedom offered by the real nature led by his instincts and desires. The attempt of nature to dominate nurture and vice versa ends up further escalating the struggle rather than eliminating it.

Key Words: Psychoanalysis, Nature, Nurture, Instincts, Ero, Thanatos

Introduction

Fight Club is a masterpiece of the American novelist Chuck Palahniuk. This novel is unique and different from usual stories, for it portrays so many aspects of human nature, society, and especially the lives of young men living in the postmodern American society. It portrays the life of a man, an unnamed narrator, who symbolizes an ordinary working-class man. The narrator, just the rest of the men in that society, is searching for some sort of fulfillment in his life in any way possible. With everything going the way every man wants, the narrator still feels something is missing in his otherwise perfect life. This emptiness becomes the cause of his persistent insomnia. Even having a respectable job, a great apartment and a decent collection of clothes and

furniture never seem to make him happy, satisfied, or content.

Then, one day he meets an enigmatic guy named Tyler Durden, and they soon become friends and even create an underground fight club together. Eventually, he becomes more and more absurd, and his unhealthy obsessions lead to destruction as he develops his Fight Club to Project Mayhem. At the end of the novel, we learn that the narrator suffers from Dissociative Identity Disorder and that Tyler Duren is nobody, but his alter ego.

The novel *Fight Club* is a fictitious narration and seems far from reality at times. Nonetheless, the critics find it psychologically true to its themes of Freudian concepts of Id, Ego, Dissociative Identity

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Disorder, and troubled masculinity. This research aims to analyze these Freudian concepts of basic human instincts of *Eros* and *Thanatos* and find their connections to the struggle between nature and nurture in the context of the novel.

Literature Review

The writings of Palahniuk have been characterized as transgressive fiction by critics and literary figures, including Palahniuk himself. In Palahniuk's words, like a most postmodernist novel, this book was created out of a need for emotional release for men, though through violent means. As a result, the response was polarized; some critics called it a "Swiftian attack on our consumerist, designer-label-worshipping society" (Taubin, 1999, p. 16), some criticized it for promoting the "hyper-masculine—warrior culture" (Giroux, 2001). The research of Alex Tuss (2004) and Kennett (2005) analyzes the aspect of gender and masculinity in *Fight Club*. They offer explanations on masculinity being expressed via a self-destructive manner in the novel.

In his essay "Masculine Identity and Success", Alex Tuss argues (2004) claims that the narrator's fatherless upbringing is the main reason for the troubled masculinity of the narrator in the novel. The lack of a father figure in his childhood development results in his identity crises as a man. It seems like a cautionary tale about the scary consequences we face when the fatherless, abandoned and rejected a return to avenge.

Besides the absent father, the second enemy to the nineties men, according to Faludi is a postmodern consumer society. He declares it an "ornamental" society where men are displayed as objects just like women have been in previous decades. We encounter in *Fight Club*, an unnamed narrator at the heart of this kind of "ornamental" society. He is one of those white-collar workers, having a great apartment full of IKEA furniture due to his obsessive consumerist habit of collecting and nesting in furniture items.

According to Susan Faludi (1999), in the '90s, the 'crisis of masculinity had taken place right when the book was published. The idea of a 'man' was challenged due to women's increasing emergence in the workplace in the '90s, and the societal roles of

men were diminished. The frustration in men led to violence and hostility to cope with troubled masculinity, as is supported by *Fight Club*. The novel is successful in conveying the terrifying truth of how we live now that rarely books do. "The way we live now" in postmodernism shows an existential aspect of our lives in the postmodern world. The narrator finds solace in his alter-ego Tyler to "feel alive" and more masculine (Wartenberg, 2011).

Adrienne Redd (2004), through light upon the subordinated masculinity by saying that *Fight Club* actually shows us what's it like to be a man and serve others like women do maintain one's personal masculine identity and meaning in such a life. The novel resists this attempt of erasing masculinity and stealing manhood from the men in this post-modern society. Consumer culture is seen as domesticated, which is seen as passive and feminine, leaving these men feeling emasculated (Giroux, 2001). The novel is present. The *Fight Club* in the novel is depicted as a generational statement. Society, according to Palahniuk, has a generation of consumers, feminized men, socially isolated and generally mechanized, and *Fight Club* is an attempt to stop it (Boon, 2003).

Fight Club proposes "that either masculinity or culture will have to go or maybe that both have to change" (Jordan, 2002, p. 368). However, one might say that *Fight Club* is neither glorifying the hegemony of masculinity nor stand against it. It may rather be about the realization and attempt to overcome the issues of the modern gender stereotypes.

The new model of the working-class man in *Fight Club* is the "young, computer-whiz yuppie" whose goals are to be rich by their twenties and to acquire or consume expensive products. The *Fight Club* and its men are fighting against it (Giroux, 2001). *Fight Club* blames the developing culture of consumerism for attacking on and stealing traditional values of masculinity.

The novel renders an acerbic critique of post-modern American society and portrays an aggressive protagonist. The violence in the character's psyche seems to be a direct consequence of the dehumanizing treatment of the individuals in a consumer culture. Such a society gives rise to psychopathologies in individuals because of its deep-rooted base in unbridled capitalism, fierce

competition, stark materialism, and rampant consumerism. Deep psychoanalysis of the novel reveals the root cause of these issues of consumer society, troubled masculinity, identity crises, and ultimate violence. This research, however, goes deep into the psychoanalytical interpretation of the novel and explores the Freudian idea of human nature and its inherent instincts to understand the motivation behind the violent nature of the story.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of Human Nature in the psychodynamic theory of Sigmund Freud is based on two distinct hypotheses, psychic determinism and dynamic unconscious. Psychic determinism states that the process in the conscious mind is determined by the unconscious, whereas dynamic unconscious suggests basic and innate drives, needs, and desires lie outside a person's self-awareness. According to this theory of Human Nature, people are evil and victims of their own instincts that must be balanced. People distribute certain amounts of energy to the Id, Ego, and Super-ego, which is what determines human behavior. Hence, Freud carries a deterministic view of human nature based on instincts and personality.

The dynamic unconscious connects basic drives and forces in the unconsciousness to personality. According to Freud, people's behaviors are motivated and organized to fulfill natural drives and needs. The concept of the unconscious is beyond individual awareness, such as the drive, desires, motivations, and influence on how individuals think and behave within the conscious state. He also believed humans behave the way they do from the interaction of the three parts of personality: Id, Ego, and the Super-ego. The Id, which forms the source for basic and biological needs and instincts like hunger, thirst, sex, and aggression and constitutes the larger percentage of the mind, is all due to nature. The id produced aggression that in turn created the urge to fulfill pleasure-based actions irrespective of consequences. The Ego, on the other hand, is based on survival instincts and directs the Id's drives as acceptable to society. The Super-ego is supported by nurture since it is brought through the upbringing by the training of the child. It is developed from the individual interactions with parents and society, which teach acceptance and conformity to the social values and

norms in the society ([Ziegler, 2002, p. 76](#)). The Super-ego operates on the "Ideal Principle" and tries to keep individuals out of trouble in society. The aggression in human nature can be observed in children's behavior that cares less about pleasing parents or other people in the society and may even cause inconveniences when satisfying their needs ([Freud, 1930](#)).

Freud considers human beings as animals with all animalistic innate biological drives and primitive urges. These drives are only kept under control through the repression of society. Freud relates the word "instinct" to four major drives, including self-preservation, aggression, the need for love, and the impulse to satisfy pleasure. From a conservative point of view, a psychodynamic psychologist believes that man is bad and society is good. In fact, it asserts that man is a wolf to man ([Freud, 1930](#)).

By quoting Schiller: "hunger and love are what moves the world," Freud proposes his concept of two Opposing Instincts or drives in the human libido; the death drive (Thanatos) and the life instinct (Eros), which when it comes to mind create conflict. The life instinct or Eros guarantees the organism's life. The Id compels us to survive and to produce. "The Hunger instinct preserves the individual; while love strives to make sure the preservation of the species" ([Freud, 1920, p. 30](#)). The Eros seeks pleasure to survive while the Thanatos tends to push us to fulfill the "death wish." "This wish for death, according to Freud, becomes the source of our own destruction.

These feelings have to find a way of expression and release; otherwise, they are directed outward and generate aggression. Also known as the love drive, Eros desires to join itself to an object like another person or group. The second—death-drive, strives to break down the bonds between people, destroy the worlds around, even the self. Freud suggests that the people in society must maintain, within the economy of their libido, a balance between these two instincts or drives ([Freud, 1930, p. 36](#)).

The love-drive and death-drive both seem at work in interactions between persons and within societies. The drives work in opposition in a society: Eros glues society together while Thanatos tears it apart. Civilization itself has been an ongoing and unresolved struggle between Eros and Thanatos. The

sole purpose of human civilization is to bind people libidinally to one another into communities; the death drive complicates this process greatly. Eros leads to aggression between people and the impulse toward destruction. The violent and destructive behavior throughout the evolution of civilization reflects the intensity of the death drive. Freud concludes that the death drive is dominant in human nature and that Eros must constantly fight back to ensure the existence of the society (Freud, 1930, p. 38).

Aggression is a primal instinct of human beings. The Golden Rule of 'Love thy neighbors' and enemies themselves seems unnatural to Freud. According to him, it is, in fact, more natural to be aggressive towards other people. This aggression and selfishness are instinctual to humans, and "the primary mutual hostility of human beings [is]" a "perpetual threat" to "civilized society" (Freud, 1930, p. 31). Man exploits, abuses, humiliates, tortures, and kills other men is evident throughout history. Consequently, society invests great energy to curb aggression. Civilization has to use its full force to lay restrictions upon man's aggressive drives and keep in check their manifestations (Freud, 1930, p. 32). Earlier, the head of the family has instinctual manifestations of his aggression at the cost of the rest of the family members; however, the modern civilized society restrains this natural aggression via the rule of law and authority. Restrictions are placed on such aggressive and even sexual desires as a way of curtailing more aggressive desires in modern societies. People have accepted limits on their aggressiveness in society because it ensures safety and protection against other people's aggression. Human aggression will always find an outlet despite the restrictions. The law of a civilized society regulates most forms of aggression but often fails to prevent it.

Originally aimed at preventing mutual aggression and self-destruction, society curtails these aggressive instincts. Nonetheless, this suppression paradoxically causes great unhappiness, a sense of guilt, and even various kinds of psychological neurosis in the worst cases. In such a civilized society, individuals have begun to rebel against the civilization with even more aggression, exceeding the level of charge originally suppressed. Ironically,

Freud argues that the inclination to aggression has also served to build and reinforce a sense of nationalism among individuals who then define themselves in opposition to other "foreign" people and binds even communities together against outsiders (Freud, 1930, p. 29). Like fight club members bonded to fight against all others who have been alienated from the society.

Living post-Darwin, Freud relates human beings to animals like all other living beings and even asserts *Homo Homini Lupus* (man is a wolf to man). Human nature is inherently bad, argues Freud. Based on the deductive argument of Freud, it is concluded that human beings are innately evil, and aggression lies within as a part of his nature. Freud's theory of human nature shows pessimism. Developing the Darwinian original idea, he states that man is a biological creature with biological drives that lead to survival and self-preservation. Even the aggressive drives help and guarantee his survival. However, over time human has developed a society to keep our animal nature in check through rules and regulations.

Since aggression is a basic instinct and *Homo homini lupus*, men cannot be perceived as gentle. According to Freud, "men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love," but rather animals who have "a powerful measure of desire for aggression [that] has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment" (Freud, 1930, p. 85). They don't look at their fellow human beings just as helpers and sexual partners but also as someone who may at times satisfy their aggressive instinct. The expression of such behavior "reveals man as a savage beast." As a result, communal life for the individual constituent elements of humanity requires an intentional restriction of many natural tendencies (Freud, 1930, p. 86). This inclination to be aggressive is innate, independent, instinctual in the disposition of a man, and this aggressiveness and hostility among people prove to be the most powerful obstacle to culture and opposes this system of civilization (Freud, 1930).

The Id contains all psychic energy—the libido, generated by the survival and sexual drives and the driving force of all behavior. The repression of an instinct claims a constant expenditure of psychic energy. The instinct is viewed "as an innate tendency

in living organism impelling it towards the reinstatement of an earlier condition, one which it had to abandon under the influence of disturbing external forces" ([Mortimer, 1990, p. 651](#)). All human behaviors result either from Eros, the life instinct, where the libido is directed towards preservation, enhancement, and reproduction of life, or from Thanatos, the death force, whose energy focuses on demise, decay, or termination of life. The life instinct is predominantly expressed in the form of sexual desires and behavior, while Thanatos or death instinct is reflected in the aggressive behavior of human nature. The conflict between the preservation (Eros) and destruction (Thanatos) of life directs the energy of libido outwards, away from the self, which leads to the expression of aggression towards others. This kind of aggression is inevitable because if the libido of Thanatos is not directed outwards, it may cause self-destruction.

Findings

Tyler, being the reflection of the narrator's id, represents both the life and death instinct through his character and actions concerning the narrator, Marla, and other people of the society. In *Fight Club*, the fulfillment of sexual desires is mostly shown in the relationship of Tyler and Marla, while the aggression can be seen in his relation to everyone else in the Fight Club and Project Mayhem. These instincts reflect its suppression at the beginning of the novel when the narrator suffers from insomnia, seems obsessed with collecting consumer goods, and poses a lifeless existence in a civilized society.

However, everything in his life changes drastically when Tyler appears in his life at a nude beach. The significance of their meeting and its repercussions lies in the fact that the 'nude beach' hints at how his sexual drives emerge and dominate over his ego for its fulfillment in the form of Tyler. Completely uninhibited, outspoken, and rebellious, Tyler Durden opposes the narrator conforming to society's norms in relation. Intrigued and even fascinated by Tyler, The narrator befriends him and soon moves in with him after his condo mysteriously burns down. Their relationship is based on the instinct of survival and sometimes seems to be based on sexual desires too. Nonetheless, the reflection of life instinct dominates the text as Marla becomes

involved in Tyler's life. Marla exists in the life of the narrator before Tyler, and the narrator is unconsciously attracted to her. However, the narrator does not act upon his sexual desire. With the appearance and dominance of his alter-ego, Tyler, the fulfillment of his sexual drive takes place.

In the beginning, the narrator suffers from chronic insomnia, temporarily cured in the support group. When he meets Marla is one of the support groups, his insomnia comes back. He thinks Marla is the reason that brought back his insomnia, and he starts hating her. However, unconsciously he is attracted to her, and instead of taking the help of a motherly figure like now, his libido wants him to focus on the fulfillment of sexual drive. His Id is compelling him to express that sexual instinct. Instead of acting upon his sexual desires, he suppresses them, and so he suffers from sleeplessness again. That is the reason for his hate towards Marla. As time passes, his sexual desires become more and more repressed and finally fight back in the form of Tyler. The narrator's insomnia cracks the "natural way" of manifesting Id's suppressing desires, transformed in the character of Tyler Durden.

The sexual relationship of Tyler with Marla shows how the narrator unconsciously struggles with the life instinct. Though he shows to his super-ego that he is an obliged follower of society, through the creation of Tyler he fulfills his innate sexual drives and channelizes his natural desires. He feels that he has some feeling of fulfillment when Tyler does so. It seems that unconsciously he knows that he was having sexual relations with Marla. He states, "All night long, I dreamed I was humping Marla Singer ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 33](#)). Nevertheless, when he is under the control of ego or consciousness, he denies his unconscious behavior and blames Tyler for having a sexual relationship with Marla. He avoids Marla and shows as if he has no relationship with Marla whatsoever.

Tyler also connects the narrator with his feeling using verbal and practical techniques. He fronts the narrator with pain on one occasion and makes him feel like a natural being does, rather than escaping or suppressing the pain as men are taught to do in society. He orders the narrator: "Stop! That's your pain, your flaming arm. Don't confront like the dead

ones do. That's the biggest moment of your life, and you're somewhere else" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 55](#)). The fact that the Id contains both Life and death instincts complements Tyler's belief that as all the organic matter, humans are also condemned to decay. Life and death are inseparable, and once we accept death, only then can we experience life.

The instinct of Thanatos can be observed from his destructive drives due to his tedious and conformist lifestyle and insomnia before Tyler. He states, "Every takeoff and landing, when the plane banked too much to one side, I prayed for a crash... when we might die helpless and packed human tobacco in the fuselage" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 10](#)). The narrator shows no intention of acting upon his instincts, especially the Thanatos. These wishes hint towards his desire for the destruction that has been suppressed by society through its nurture and civilization. The appearance of Tyler in the novel changes his thoughts into actions.

The destructive instinct is manifested in the revival of aggression of the narrator's nature. The idea of human nature being violent and aggressive is crystal clear from the moment the narrator meets Tyler Durden. Their mutual life journey starts with the expression of aggression when Tyler offers to move in with him on one condition: "I want you to do me a favor. I want you to hit me as hard as you can" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 30](#)), signifying the birth of Fight Club. Since Tyler represents his true yet suppressed nature, his meetings provoke the narrator's aggression and violence also. Tyler though, not a rational creature, uses insane logic for the narrator to become aggressive. Tyler explains that he does not want to die without any scars and that he is tired of watching professional wrestlers fight. Tyler wants to feel it for himself and to know if he can bear it. He wants to know more about his personality in difficult situations.

The feminine comfort has been substituted for the aggression in the narrator's nature to avoid violence in society. This replacement is against his manly aggressive instincts. Therefore, he couples with Tyler to initiate a Fight club. Tyler states, "What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 29](#)). Fight club is a safe haven for men of troubled masculinity. Consumer

society has changed the concept of masculinity. These men are angry about it, and they express their frustration in the fight club through aggression. Fight club gives them the real experience of aggression, not a fake one on television. Fight club is not like a football match or pro-wrestling on television. Unlike a television show, Fight Club is set in a natural environment to get the natural feelings of fight and aggression. Palahniuk uses an analogy that "After you've been to fight club, watching football on television is watching pornography when you could be having great sex" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 29](#)). Since sex and aggression are both real natural drives and they must be fulfilled in the real sense, not an artificial and acceptable way in society. Society has changed the natural ways of men behave. It has introduced feminine masculinity that is responsible for the masculine identity crises in the men of the society. They go to the gyms "trying to look like men,...looking the way a sculptor or an art director says" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 29](#)). They are trying to show that they are still men and retain a masculine sense in the feminine society through the artificial looks of a man. Fight club, on the other hand, gives them real opportunities to revive their naturally aggressive masculinity. They have an opportunity to express their anger and frustration and show aggression in the real sense.

The description of the narrator's fight with a guy in the fight club shows the people's frustration over the system and the resulting aggression and violence. The narrator says that the guy who seems to had a rough week at work "rammed my face into the concrete floor until my teeth bit open the inside of my cheek and my eye was swollen shut and was bleeding, and after I said, stop, I could look down, and there was a print of half my face in blood on the floor" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 30](#)). The author also seems to be taking pleasure from the description of his bloodshed and terrible injuries and calls it a good fight for the expression of anger and aggression. Tyler also seems happy and satisfied, and he shows his appreciation for the violent expression of aggression. The narrator, now under the influence of Tyler, seems to be fine with the injuries and shakes hands with his opponent, who beats him up badly. Fight club trains them for the real situation and hard times in life, unlike the gym, which only aims at

making you look good. Once a man fights in the Fight Club, he is ready to trust himself, and "This guy trusts himself to handle anything" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 30](#)).

The Fight Club soon becomes a place for the expression of aggression for all the frustrated people of the consumerist society who have suppressed their aggression. The fight club provides them a channel to have that cathartic experience for their aggression, instinctive energy that is left suppressed in society and makes the people neurotic. Fight Club provides a safe place for them where they can fight and beat each other up, and where society won't judge or call them criminals. Here they fulfill their individual Thanatos or death instinct in the form of anger and aggression. This aggression of fight club is then directed outward against the society and these men fight against consumer society and its slavish followers. Gradually, these people come to power under the leadership of Tyler and the Narrator. This turns fight club into Tyler's cult-like organization 'Project Mayhem' whose mission was to aggressively spread his anti-establishment and anti-consumerist ideals. Project Mayhem reflects the struggle for the fulfillment of death instinct on a much larger scale.

The narrator struggles between Eros and Thanatos in search of a balance of mind. In the beginning, he focuses on Eros, but that does not cure his insomnia, so he turns to Thanatos, thinking that "maybe self-destruction is the answer" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 28](#)). The psychic energy is directed toward destructive instinct. The societal nurture has convinced the narrator that the only way to find meaning and happiness in life is to improve yourself so that you can better fit in the society for a larger good. This has made him want more comfort and safety at the expense of his natural drives of Thanatos. Since the perpetual suppression of instincts is not possible, the instinct of Thanatos fights back and he realizes, "I should run from self-improvement, and I should be running toward disaster" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 40](#)). Tyler convinces him that society has misled him to believe that acting upon the Thanatos is fatal to the individuals; however, in reality, it is lethal to the sense of civilization, nurture, and society. The society provides protection and security not for individuals' sake rather ensure its own existence. Tyler thinks that

"Disaster is a natural part of my evolution," since it is the only way to "discover the greater power of my spirit... clears all possessions from my path will set me free" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 69](#)). Society has chained the narrator and men like him through this deception and has destroyed their natural spirit. Tyler argues that the narrator should now turn towards Thanatos for the revival of his true nature that has been destroyed through constant nurturing of the society. The drive for death is most common in an emotionally and spiritually disturbed state. The narrator's lack of freedom, his obsession with IKEA, and his insomnia push him to such a state that he has to rebel or become mentally insane. His lifeless existence adds to his natural desire for Thanatos.

With the dominance of Tyler and the success of the Fight Clubs, the destructive instinct of the narrator shows its control over the body and mind. The narrator turns this instinct outward in society and wants to cause mass destruction to avenge his failures and overshadow his weaknesses. "I wanted to destroy everything beautiful I'd never have...to kill all the fish I couldn't afford to eat, and smother the French beaches I'd never see" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 78](#)). He is frustrated over his situation in the consumer society that has, on one hand, made him desire things and, on the other hand, curbed his desires by creating hindrance in his way that resulted in his failure. This frustration increases day by day and finally pop-up in his desire for mass destruction. He wants to "Burn the Amazon rain forests. Pump chlorofluorocarbons straight up to gobble the ozone. Open the dump valves on supertankers and uncap offshore oil wells" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 78](#)). He is now in control of his life and, therefore, expressing anger over his suppression. He is now able to have a release of his instinctual drive an opportunity to let his aggression out in fight club. Therefore, he first shows his anger over his situation and society and feels he could get his hands on everything in the world that didn't work for him. He says, "Nothing was solved when the fight was over, but nothing mattered" ([Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 31](#)). He does not care about his problems and the consequences of his action he just wants to do what his instinct tells him.

The dominance of Tyler increases influence on the narrator. And he becomes more like him in his desire to destroy society and civilization. He takes

more and more interest in fight clubs and shows satisfaction in the expansion of his fighters and clubs. The narrator grows more affinity to his alter-ego—Tyler because he wants to be more like Tyler in following his instincts. This aggression, he uses against himself and others that come in the way. He just not only beats his rivals rather takes pleasure in the whole idea of destruction. Once in a fight in the fight club, the narrator shows a full swing of his aggression against his rival, the handsome guy that Tyler appreciated, and Tyler applauded the narrator saying that “he'd never seen me destroy something so completely” (Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 78). He becomes an animal in pure jealousy and competition. His desire to express his aggression reaches its peak and “It was that morning, Tyler invented Project Mayhem” (Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 78). The project Mayhem takes this destruction on a much larger scale. Here, the anger and destructive instinct turn toward society and civilization. Tyler is sick of the civilization and nurture of man in the society that has caused so much depression due to constant suppression of his real nature. Tyler being the symbol of the narrator's true nature is against civilization and nurture. He wants to get rid of society and its nurturing civilization by destroying it completely. For this purpose, he proposes Project Mayhem. The goal of this Project Mayhem is “the complete and right away destruction of civilization” (Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 79). Tyler now wants a revolution against society and civilization for the freedom of the real nature of the individuals.

Palahniuk seems to believe that modern consumer society is responsible for our miseries, and the only way to be happy again is to get rid of all the consumer corporations and consumer goods. Tyler in project Mayhem targets all those machines that have influenced natural human existence, whether that is good or bad. He especially focuses on Credit Card companies that have trapped men in debt. In Project Mayhem, the job of a group 'was drilling bank machines and pay telephones' (Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 85), mostly targeting man-made artificially created consumer goods like machines, cars, computers. This effort of destruction seems to be an attempt to go back to the primitive age of human existence where there were more nature and less nurture.

The fulfillment of destructive instinct soon gets out of the hands of the narrator and his struggle to free himself from the chains of societal nurture soon leads to chaos in society. Tyler reminds him that the chaos is his own creation since the narrator himself said that he was fighting everything that he hated in life (Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 111). The narrator's desire to change his life and rebel against civilization blooms into massive aggression in individuals of society that leads to violence in their behaviors and actions too.

A hint towards this destructive instinct can also be analyzed in the scene where Tyler leans his gun on the random salesman and makes him fulfill his dreams by tomorrow. After that, Tyler explains to the narrator that tomorrow will be the most beautiful day of his life and his “Breakfast will be tastier than any meal you and I ever tasted” (Palahniuk, 1996b, p. 97). For Tyler, the near-death experience is a near-life experience. Once we have a near-death experience and accept death as a reality only then we can really experience and appreciate life. The unification of Eros and Thanatos is also reflected in the character of Marla with her extremely destructive lifestyle and her sexual relationship with Tyler. She is an alcoholic, a smoker, and suicidal but at the same time very passionate about wild sex. The narrator and Tyler save her life multiple times in the novel.

The Eros takes the primacy over Thanatos and vice versa, the imbalance is restored via opposite instinct. Marla's love and sexual feelings compel the narrator to attempt to destroy part of himself—Tyler, to re-establish balance in himself. Man is naturally inclined to be dominated by his Id, just like Tyler's control over the body in the novel, forcing the narrator to counter-balance.

Conclusion

The two Opposing Instincts or drives in the human libido; the death instinct (Thanatos) and the life instinct (Eros) are also crucial to this study. Both the love-drive and the death-drive and their mutual interactions run human relationships within societies. Eros brings people together and Thanatos takes them apart through violence and aggression resulting in an ongoing and unresolved struggle in the society.

In *Fight Club*, the narrator has successfully suppressed his natural instincts in the beginning of the novel. However, with the appearance of Tyler, he drastically changes his life style and the fulfillment of his sexual drive takes place. Tyler represents both the life and death instinct through his character and actions. The fulfillment of sexual desires can be seen in the relationship of Tyler and Marla, while the aggression in his relation to everyone else in the Fight Club and in its offshoot Project Mayhem.

The Instincts of Thanatos can be observed from the narrator's horribly destructive wish for a plane

crash to get rid of his boring and conformist life. This aggression is revived even stronger with the dominance of Tyler. They invent Fight Club for the expression of aggression for all the frustrated people of the consumerist society who has suppressed their instinct of aggression. The fulfillment of destructive instinct gets out of control with Project Mayhem and his struggle to free himself from the chains of societal nurture soon leads to chaos in society. This reflects the struggle of nature and nurture where the human nature is inclined to express the basic instinct of sex and aggression while society tries to resist and stops them.

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