

Washington School of Psychiatry

Erich Fromm: social critic, radical humanist and clinician

Four Friday afternoons, a short course

February 1, 8, 15, 22, 2019 12:30-3:30 PM

Mauricio Cortina, MD is a psychiatrist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist who has edited a book with Michael Maccoby on the contributions of Erich Fromm to psychoanalysis. He has edited two books, one in English with Mario Marrone and a recent book in Spanish on the clinical applications of attachment theory. He has authored articles with Giovanni Liotti on multi-motivational approaches to psychotherapy. This approach integrates attachment theory with current relational approaches to psychoanalysis, intersubjectivity and their implications for working with patients with history of attachment trauma. He is written several articles on human evolution that puts cooperation and the emergence of prosocial motivations and shared social norms at the center of what made us human. His is past president of the Iberoamerican Attachment Network and fellow of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychotherapy

Michael Maccoby, PhD was trained by Fromm at the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute of Psychoanalysis where he became a training analyst. He is co-author with Fromm of *Social Character in a Mexican Village* (1970) and on issues of nuclear disarmament and foreign policy. He is a globally recognized expert on leadership who has worked in 36 countries and has authored or coauthored 15 books. The Washington School of Psychiatry presented him with a life-time achievement award in 2016

Continuing Education Credits:

12 CE/CME 12 credit hours

Fees

Regular fee \$200

WSP Current member \$150

WSP Current students \$75

Other students please contact administrative office

At the Washington School of Psychiatry, 5028 Wisconsin Ave. NW #400, Washington DC 20016.

The Relevance of Erich Fromm

At this time of profound social change, the work of Erich Fromm can equip us to better understand the causes of change, its impact on our psyches, and how to respond in a way that sparks hope.

Fromm shows us that mental health is not the absence of symptoms but rather the development of our human powers to love and create. In this time of anxious social and political conflict, his work helps us understand social pathology and shows the way toward a sane society where policy is evaluated according to whether it facilitates or impedes human development.

As clinicians, we can learn from his understanding of the unconscious and its social as well as individual determinants. Through interpretation of dreams, he shows that we do not only repress negative impulses, but also the creative insights and energy essential for full mental health.

The Context

Global markets, the information technology revolution, and the urgent need to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies within the next few decades are creating a tidal wave of change and causing an explosive mix. There are winners and losers in this brave new world. Global markets and new technologies have lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty in countries like China and India while at the same time creating brutal economic disparities and enormous dislocations all over the world. In the United States and to some extent in Europe, the working class is seeing their livelihoods threatened and communities

disintegrate through the combined effects of automatization and the loss of good paying manufacturing jobs that are being exported to countries with cheap labor. Their collective

sense of powerlessness, anger and wounded pride has been channeled by Trump, finding scapegoats in immigrants, minorities and government regulations, while inflaming racial tensions and hatred. The rise of populist, right-wing movements are exacerbating tribal instincts and turning them into fanatical and racist crusades.

The middle class that has been the engine of economic growth has been falling behind. But even those who have prospered economically suffer the anxiety and lack of meaning that Fromm described in his concept of the marketing character. Both the winners and losers are trying to escape from themselves and their feelings and to find meaning on their lives

Fromm the social critic

Erich Fromm witnessed a similar rise of a populist right-wing virulently racist and genocidal movement as a young man in Germany at the time he was being trained as a sociologist and a psychoanalyst. Throughout the decades of the 30's, 40's and 50's he developed a brilliant Freud-Marx synthesis he called social character theory, and other socio-psychoanalytic concepts: the pathology of normalcy and the related concepts of social filters and the social unconscious. He used these concepts to understand and analyze the rise of Nazism and the triumph of capitalism, with its dual potential to create greater freedoms and innovations as well as alienation and greed.

Fromm the radical, existential humanist

Fromm merged his critical view of society with a radical humanistic vision that he developed from many sources: his Jewish teachers and mentors, the philosophers of the Enlightenment, Aristotle, Spinoza, Goethe, Kierkegaard Marx, and mystics such as Meister Eckert and Buddhist masters, among others, to affirm the unity of humankind.

Two ideas are central to Fromm's radical humanism. He thought humans had basically two existential "solutions" to the anxieties and fears caused our uprootedness from nature. We can either relate to the world productively, developing our capacity for love, autonomy and creativity, or we can escape from our fears and existential anxieties through consumerism, automaton conformity to social norms and institutions, idolatry to religious, political and cultural dogmas, group narcissism and lust for power and destruction. The most developed

and challenging expression of our humanity is through the biblical command to “love the stranger”, have empathy for those who are not like us and not part of our tribe. Fromm’s radical humanism can inspire and guide in creating an inclusive humanistic vision for the 21st century.

Fromm the clinician

Though there are many clinical examples and case studies scattered through his 20 books, Fromm never wrote a book on clinical psychoanalysis. It is fair to say that he anticipated by several decades the relational and intersubjective turn of psychoanalysis. He believed that the main problem in psychology was not the discharge of drives for individual satisfaction, but how to relate actively and humanly to others. Early in his career he gave up the use of the couch to develop a more direct and authentic relation with patients that he called a “center to center relatedness”. We will examine some of the strengths and some of his weaknesses of this approach and how it anticipated current intersubjective approaches that emphasize authenticity. Through these four seminars we will be examining these concepts using selected readings from Fromm and some of our own writings. WE will be exploring the clinical applications of Fromm’s concepts with the seminar participants.

1. Selections from *Escape for Freedom* (1941) and op eds by Cortina and Mclaughlin and Maccoby’s keynote address to the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis

- the rise of Nazism and the authoritarian personality
- relevance for today: right wing populism and the Trump phenomena

2. Selections from *Man for Himself* (1947)

- humanist ethics and his concept of productivity
- Fromm’s existential humanism
- What makes Fromm’s humanism radical?

3. Selections from *The Forgotten Language* (1951) and recent articles (2017) on Fromm in a in *Psychoanalytic Review* dedicated to Fromm’s contributions to psychoanalysis.

- Fromm’s experiential approach to dreams
- Fromm’s clinical approach: center to center relatedness
- Strengths and weaknesses

4. Clinical examples from participants

5. Who should attend?

The workshop is intended for psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, psychiatric nurses, licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, physicians, medical students, and other graduate students.

6. Refund policies

Refunds will be made from cancelations at the school office in writing at least 10 days before seminar date and are subject to non-refundable administrative fee of \$ 50

Continuing Education

The Washington School of Psychiatry is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Washington School of Psychiatry maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

The School is approved by the Social Work Board of the State of Maryland as a provider of continuing education for social workers in DC, MD, VA and WV.

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About the Washington School of Psychiatry

Celebrating its 80th year, the School is an accredited provider of post-graduate continuing education.

The Meyer Treatment Center provides low cost access to mental health services. It is an out-of-network facility for insurance purposes.

The Washington School of Psychiatry is an independent non-profit organization. It is not affiliated with the government of the District of Columbia or the government of the United States.

Location and Telephone

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