

Wilhelm Reich

Wilhelm Reich's Course Descriptions and Bio Reprinted from the 1940 and 1941 New School for Social Research [course] Bulletin

"His [Wilhelm Reich's] ideas, with their emphasis on general attitudes, and his intense interest, influenced by Marxism, in the effects of society on personality, could easily be considered the most important application of psychoanalytic ego psychology to psychotherapy and psychopathology in his time or later."

(Shapiro, 2002)

Wilhelm Reich was born in Austria and received his MD from University of Vienna. He was a member of Sigmund Freud's Viennese Psychoanalytic Society and was considered one of his most promising students. After living in exile in Denmark and Norway during the outbreak of World War II, he came to America in 1939. In 1940 he became a professor at the New School for Social Research. The following are excerpts from his course

Acknowledgements - We thank Carmen Hendershott, Archival Librarian at Fogelman Library, New School University, for her help with this article

descriptions and bio as it originally appeared in the New School for Social Research course catalog (1940 and 1941).

CHARACTER FORMATION: BIOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

I. The biological nucleus of psychic structure

"Psychic Structure"; the result of a conflict between biological and sociological factors. Definition of the biological, psychological and sociological points of view.

Libido and anxiety as primary functions of the autonomic nervous system; the sensations of pleasure, anxiety and anger, in relation to the autonomic nervous system. Emotional current and the function of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Plasma-current in amoebae. Electrophysiological findings concerning pleasure and anxiety. The abdominal vegetative plexus and the function.

II. The Characterological Armor

Psychic defense mechanisms, character armor; the neurotic symptom as a sign of dammed - up biological energy. Stiffness, hardness, feeling of deadness. The longing for and fear of liberty; neurotic helplessness and need for help' lack and fear of responsibility; human structure as conditioned by authority and freedom.

The somatic basis of the neurosis. The muscular armor and its identity with the characterological armor. Muscular spasm binding biological energy. Connections with various metaphysical teachings e.g. yoga breathing ceremonials, Nirvana, etc. Typical somatic sensations as the basis of delusion formation.

III. Characterological structure as a structuralized social process
Irrationalism in mass psychology. From cure of mental disease to prevention; possible contributions of medical psychology to understanding somatic disease, mental hygiene

THEORETICAL SEMINAR: PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The principal aim of this seminar is a study of Freud's libido theory and the problem of how and why it reached the limits of psychological investigation which it was not able to transcend. The seminar shows, further, the clinical avenue of approach from purely psychological investigation to biology and physiology, leading up to a discussion of the psychosomatic problem. It discusses scientifically and clinically the material which the preceding lecture course presented in a more general and popular way.

CLINICAL PROBLEMS IN PSYCHO-SOMATIC MEDICINE

This is a character analysis psycho-therapy clinic for physicians, teachers, psychologists and research workers who have attended the general lecture course. It gives the students the opportunity to present clinical and educational cases for discussion.

BIOGRAPHY

Wilhelm Reich. Vienna. Director of the Scandinavian Institute for Life Research in Sex Economy, Oslo and Copenhagen; formerly at the Psychological Institute, University of Oslo; first Assistant at the Psychoanalytic Polyclinic and attending physician at the Psychiatric Clinic , Vienna; member of the Psychoanalytic Educational Committee and director of the seminar of the seminar for Psychoanalytic Technique, Vienna; Honorary Member, International Society for Plasmogeny. Author of Die Funktion des Orgasmus; Charakteranalyse; Experimentelle Ergebnisse uber die elektrische Funktion von Sexualitat und Angst.

Reprinted from Spring 1940, Fall 1940 and Spring 1941; New School For Social Research Course Catalog.