

Psychoanalysis & Philosophy: Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Society

From Hegel to Fromm and Marcuse

Keith Barrett, BA PhD



Before Hegel, Western philosophy took ‘ultimate reality’ to be an eternal realm existing outside time. At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, Hegel brought philosophy down finally into human history and into the ever-changing flux of society.

On this course we will explore the new, social and historical vision of human life that was opened up by Hegel and the thinkers who followed him, including Marx and Nietzsche, and trace its influence in psychoanalysis. We will review attempts to synthesise Marx and Freud, and explore the use of psychoanalytic ideas to understand contemporary society, including psychoanalytic studies of the psychology of Fascism. Finally, we will examine some recent works of cultural history which situate the emergence of psychoanalysis itself in relation to the historical and cultural changes that brought modern society into being.

SCHEDULE

Session 1: Hegel based his philosophy on the idea that reality itself is dynamic and changing and that human consciousness evolves as society develops over the course of history. We will study Hegel’s masterpiece *The Phenomenology of Geist* (1807), exploring its grand philosophical vision before focussing on its most celebrated passage, the famous ‘Master-Slave Dialectic’ – perhaps the most influential pages in the whole of contemporary thought.

Section 2: We will trace the impact of Hegel – and especially that of the ‘Master-Slave Dialectic’ - in the Dialectical Materialism of Marx, in Nietzsche’s ‘On the Genealogy of Morals’ and in the philosophies of human existence developed by Sartre and Beauvoir - and study its application to psychoanalysis in the work of Lacan.

Session 3: In this session we will explore attempts to synthesise psychoanalysis and Marxism, such as those of Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich, and examine the most notable attempts to deepen Freud’s social thought, such as those of Herbert Marcuse and Normal O. Brown. We will also review psychoanalytic studies of the psychology of Fascism, and consider the recent emergence of critical psychology and psychotherapy.

Session 4: Finally, we will examine some classic works that use psychoanalytic ideas to critique contemporary society – such as those of Christopher Lasch – or that bring social theory to bear on psychoanalytic ideas – such as those of Deleuze and Guattari. We will also explore the ideas of Peter Homans, and of Eli Zaretsky – who attempt to explain how the social changes that brought our contemporary world into being created the conditions for the emergence of psychoanalysis.

This course will take place over 2 days: 20 and 21 April 2023, from 13.30 – 17.00 each day (time includes a tea break). All attendees will also receive access to the recording.

Keith Barrett BA PhD received his first degree in philosophy from Oxford University after having spent three years working as a nursing assistant in psychiatric hospitals. It was in this practical context that Keith first encountered existentialism and psychoanalysis. He then began postgraduate studies on both Freud and Heidegger, leading finally to a PhD from the Wellcome Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL for a dissertation on ‘Freud’s Self-Analysis’. Keith has been a philosophy teacher for over 20 years, and has been delivering courses at the Freud Museum for over a decade, where he has developed a series of introductory lectures on Freud, psychoanalysis after Freud, and exploring the overlap of philosophy and psychoanalysis.