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German Psychoanalyst Erich Fromm Dies at 79

MURALTO, Switzerland (UPI) — German psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, who achieved worldwide fame as a follower of Sigmund Freud, died of a heart attack at his home today just five days before his 80th birthday.

Fromm, born in Frankfurt on March 23, 1900, was the son of a Jewish businessman. He studied sociology, psychology and philosophy at the universities of Heidelberg, Munich and Berlin.

In Heidelberg he gained his first degree with a study

on "The Jewish Law." He later studied medicine in Munich, then continued his research at the newly founded Psychoanalytic Institute in Berlin. After graduation he returned to his native Frankfurt to lecture in social psychology.

When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, Fromm was one of the first of thousands of German intellectuals who moved to the United States rather than risk imprisonment by the Nazi regime.

From 1934 he was associated with a series of American universities, including Columbia University and Bennington College in Vermont, and also taught at the University of Mexico in Mexico City.

In leading works such as "Escape from Freedom" (1941), "Man for Himself" (1947), "The Forgotten Language" (1951) and "Sane Society" (1955), Fromm made his chief contribution to the advance of psychoanalysis in applying psychoanalytic thought to social and cultural problems.

He stressed that society and the individual are not entirely separate and opposing forces, but exist in an interrelationship

whereby the nature of society is determined both by its historical background as an entity and the individual people who compose it.

Similarly, the needs of the individual are determined by the society in which they live, Fromm said.

As a result, he believed, the fundamental problem of psychology and psychoanalysis was not to resolve a conflict between unchanged and unchanging instinctive drives in the individual and the fixed demands and laws of society, but rather to bring about understanding and harmony in the relationship between the two.

These theories led Fromm to assert that the relationship between society and the individual produced certain specific personality types in societies formed by specific social-economic patterns.

But these theories, lumped together under the concept of the "acculturation" of man, did not mean the individual should allow himself to be formed and shaped by authoritarian societies such as the Nazi regime he himself fled.

In this case, Fromm wrote, man should develop and hold to his own standards.

Fromm's work achieved particular recognition after the publication in 1956 of "The Art of Loving," a book still widely read today for its simple theories on the social influences and individual differences between man and woman that can shape a relationship.

From 1958 to 1962 Fromm served as professor of psychology at Michigan State University, founding that school's institute of psychology in addition to the William Alanson White Institute he established with other American colleagues in 1946.

Fromm's work was closely associated with that of American psychoanalysts Karen Horney and Harry Stack Sullivan.

The three formed a group known as the neo-Freudian psychoanalysts, whose theories examined the social influences contributing to individual neuroses and thus moved away from Freud's pure emphasis on individual experiences and family relationships.

Fromm analyzed the relationship between his own theories and those of Freud in his book, "Sigmund Freud's Mission," published in 1959.

After spending more than 30 years in the United States, Fromm left to settle in Muralto on Lake Lugano in Switzerland in 1974.

Despite failing health, he continued to write and develop his theories, producing another critical study of Freud published in West Germany just last year and continuing work on a new study of psychotherapy until shortly before his death.

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