



Bacciagaluppi\_M\_1991b

## Introduction in The Clinical Fromm

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„Introduction“, in: The Clinical Fromm: Patient's Change, in: Contemporary Psychoanalysis, New York (William Alanson White Psychoanalytic Society), Vol. 27 (1991), pp. 579-580.

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This unpublished paper by Erich Fromm is presented for publication to mark the tenth anniversary of the author's death and the ninetieth anniversary of his birth. It is the edited version of a talk given by Fromm on September 25, 1964, to the Harry Stack Sullivan Society, the candidates group at the William Alanson White Institute in New York.<sup>1</sup> (see page 581)

Many points in the paper deserve attention. I shall only point out a few. To begin with, it is one of the few contributions by Fromm concerning psychoanalytic technique. In particular, the case history which is briefly outlined in it is a rarity in Fromm's work.

A second point is the emphasis on constitutional factors. On the one hand, when Fromm speaks of potentials at birth which are distorted by later experience, he seems to be describing the dialectic between „true“ and „false self,“ in advance of Winnicott's published discussion on the subject. On the other hand, when Fromm refers to constitutional factors, in order to explain the different effects of similar environmental circumstances, he seems to underestimate the protective effect of alternate interpersonal experience, the importance of which has been demonstrated by recent empirical research (see, for example, Rutter, M. [1985] Resilience [580] in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. British Journal of Psychiatry 147:598-611).

Finally, there is the distinction Fromm makes between benign and malignant neuroses. The concept of malignant neurosis makes it possible to establish connections between Fromm and others who have studied severe, non-psychotic pathology. In particular, Fromm's position seems similar to Kernberg's and Guntrip's who also have a unitary view of severe pathology. But Fromm differs from Kohut who distinguishes borderline from narcissistic pathology.

Fromm's works have always been more familiar to the general public than to psychoanalysts except those analysts at the William Alanson White Institute. This publication may contribute to a wider circulation of Fromm's ideas in the psychoanalytic community.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1964 Dr. Nathan Stockhamer, then president of the Harry Stack Sullivan Society, the candidates organization of the William Alanson White Institute, invited Dr. Fromm to present a paper to the Society as part of its scientific program. Coincidentally, the Institute had just moved to its new building. And so at Dr. Fromm's suggestion his presentation became the celebratory inaugural paper offered to the William Alanson White Institute community. Dr. Fromm spoke informally from notes. A recording was later transcribed by Dr. Stockhamer, and a copy forwarded to Dr. Fromm for his files. It appears here with the permission of Dr. Fromm's literary estate which retains the copyright.



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The colloquialisms in the original text have been left unchanged. Some repetitions have been omitted. Subtitles were added by me. I wish to thank Rainer Funk, Erich Fromm's Literary Executor, for having entrusted me with the editing of this paper and for his valuable contributions to this task.