

## Welcome to Michael Thompson

IPU, December 4, 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear students, dear colleagues,

I would like to welcome you all very warmly  
here in the lecture hall of the International Psychoanalytic University in Berlin  
and also all those who have joined us online from around the world.

Every year, the Erich Fromm Study Center organizes an Erich Fromm Vorlesung, sponsored by the Karl Schlecht Foundation. On behalf of Thomas Kühn, with whom I co-direct the Erich Fromm Study Center, and also on behalf of the International Psychoanalytic University, I would like to cordially welcome you to this event. Unfortunately, both the President and the Vice-President are unable to attend this evening to give a special greeting from the University – so I would like to extend a heartfelt welcome to you on their behalf as well.

Our very special welcome goes to today's speaker, Professor of Political Theory and psychoanalyst Michael Thompson from New York.

Erich Fromm himself first studied sociology and then became acquainted with psychoanalysis. This was almost exactly 100 years ago. And from Fromm we can learn: When committed human scientists take an interest in psychoanalysis and the unconscious, this often leads to very creative findings and discoveries. This holds true not only with regard to Erich Fromm, but also with regard to our speaker this evening.

Michael Thompson first studied Language and Literature at Rutgers College and University and then turned more and more to questions of social philosophy and political science. He received his PhD in Political Science from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His first book was published in 2007 with the title: *The Politics of Inequality: A Political History of the Idea of Economic Inequality in America*.

Since 2004, he has been Assistant, Associate and finally Professor of Political Theory at William Paterson University in New Jersey. Among his hundreds of publications over the last 20 years are many that deal with critical theory. As early as 2014, there was also a contribution on Erich Fromm's social theory for the first time. Thompson's publications in the last 10 years have increasingly focused on the neglected psychological dimension of critical theory.

At the same time, he became increasingly interested in psychoanalysis, which eventually led to a psychoanalytic training at the Erich Fromm co-founded William Alanson White Institute in New York, where Michael Thompson now also teaches. In the last years his interest in Erich Fromm's social psychoanalysis began to take shape and led more and more to publication about Fromm.

Among the increasing number of books in recent years, I would like to highlight one in particular: It is entitled: *The Domestication of Critical Theory* and was published in 2016. In view of the fundamental social transformations of the present, a critical theory is required that attempts to reflect and translate the alienation of the subject in the digital age in a political theory. However, this is not possible without a socio-psychological theory as developed by Fromm as well as by Marcuse.

These few remarks on the development of Michael Thompson's scientific thinking may be enough to make us eager to follow his thoughts of his Fromm lecture with the title: "Erich Fromm and the Revival of Radical Psychoanalysis".