

**Nancy McWilliams**

**Why Psychotherapy is Not Enough to Save the World**

From the inception of the psychoanalytic movement in the early 1900s, therapists have hoped that their understandings of the human condition would be transformative on a scale that goes beyond the amelioration of individual suffering. Many prominent early analysts were involved not only in clinical practice but also in radical social movements; Otto Fenichel, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, for example, integrated Freud's ideas with the visionary ideals of Karl Marx. They hoped that our new insights about unconscious processes would instigate general social improvements. To some extent, they have. To a greater extent, however, progress based on our psychological understandings has been minimal at best. While it is true that psychological knowledge can explain the origins and functions of unconscious processes with toxic social effects, such as the need for an enemy and the urge toward domination and even genocide, it is also true that such processes are easier to see in the other than in the self. There is as yet no evidence that therapeutic values and practices have led directly to greater social justice, improved sustainability, peace, tolerance, and other social ideals. Dr. McWilliams will explore connections between the psychotherapeutic and the political, arguing that although psychotherapy may not be able to save us, it is nevertheless valuable to live as if it could.