

Psychiatry Grand Rounds

WCM Department of Psychiatry
Psychology CE Announcement
The Stern Distinguished Visiting Professorship Lecture

Vulnerabilities of Meaning: Vicissitudes of Hope and Gratitude

Jonathan Lear, Ph.D.

John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor
Committee on Social Thought
The University of Chicago

Wednesday, May 1st, 2024

11:00am – 12:30pm

<https://weillcornell.zoom.us/j/92812036154>

Meeting ID: 928 1203 6154

Password: 12345

1.5 CE credit available to WCM Department of Psychiatry full time and voluntary faculty Psychologists and Social Workers who sign in with their full name, attend the majority of the lecture and complete a survey which will be emailed following the completion of the lecture. Note the survey must be completed within 30 days of the lecture. Please contact wcmpsychiatryce@med.cornell.edu for additional CE information.

SPEAKER: Dr. Lear has no relevant financial relationship(s) with ineligible companies to disclose and DOES NOT INTEND to discuss off-label or investigational use of products or services.

Jonathan Lear is a member of the Committee on Social Thought at The University of Chicago. He was educated at Yale, Cambridge University and The Rockefeller University, and has taught at philosophy Yale, Cambridge and the University of Chicago. He trained as a psychoanalyst at the Western New England Institute of Psychoanalysis and serves on the faculty there as well as at the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute. His most recent book, *Imagining the End: Mourning and Ethical Life*, was selected by the Washington Post as one of the twenty notable nonfiction books of 2022. His book *Freud* was ranked number one by the Guardian (UK) Newspaper in its top ten list of books on psychoanalysis. He is also the author of *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. Other psychoanalytic books include *Love and Its Place in Nature: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freudian Psychoanalysis*, *Wisdom Won From Illness*, *Therapeutic Action: An Earnest Plea for Irony*, *A Case for Irony*, and *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul*. He is also the author of two books on Aristotle: *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* and *Aristotle and Logical Theory*. Lear serves on the Editorial Board of *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. He is a recipient of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Award in the Humanities. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a Member of the American Philosophical Society.

Abstract:

We are creatures whose lives are permeated with meaning. Our lives are constituted by actions and thoughts, interactions with others, and the forms of life that are available in our historical period and in society -- and all of this is meaning-*full*. But meanings are themselves vulnerable, and we inevitably inherit that vulnerability. Indeed, vulnerability to meaning goes to the heart of who we are. So, a question arises that is basically ethical: Are there better and worse ways of living with our shared vulnerability? In this talk, I trace a broad range of vulnerabilities -- vulnerability '*from the outside*', vulnerability '*from the inside*', and vulnerability to *puzzles of absolute goodness*. None of these names are very good, but they will get us started.

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the large-scale meanings of a culture interact with individual psychic meanings.
2. Explain how emotions function as forms of thinking
3. Demonstrate the challenges that absolute value plays in living a healthy, psychically integrated life.

References:

1. Wittgenstein, L. (2014). *Lecture on Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118887103>
2. Young, J. (2023). Jonathan Lear, *Imagining the End: Mourning and Ethical life*. *Society*, 60(4), 628–630. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-023-00864-7>
3. Lear, J. (2008). *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. Harvard University Press.