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## “The Legacy of Wilhelm Reich, M.D.”

A Presentation by  
The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust  
at the Invitation of the:

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For a few minutes I'd like to take you back 77 years to Berlin, Germany in January of 1933. During that month, Wilhelm Reich—a physician, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst—finished a new manuscript entitled *Character Analysis*. This was a pioneering work in psychoanalysis in which Reich introduced his modification of “symptom analysis” by including “character” and “character resistance” in the therapeutic process, a process that Reich would now call “character analysis.”

Reich submitted his manuscript to the Psychoanalytic Press in Vienna, whose editorial director was Sigmund Freud himself. The book was accepted for publication, legal contracts were mailed to Reich, which he signed and returned.

Several weeks later, in March 1933—three days before Hitler's election—the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* condemned Reich's previous book *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*, published in 1932. Reich had written this book at the request of young people in the Socialist and Communist circles in which he was involved as a physician and anti-fascist.

And now, as the Nazis were about to achieve complete power in Germany, Reich was staying in hotels under a false name because of his anti-fascist activities. In fact, the S.A.—the Nazi stormtroopers—had already visited his apartment. So, when the Nazi newspaper condemned *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*, Reich knew he was in danger.

Using his Austrian passport and posing as a skier-on-holiday, Reich took a night train out of Berlin. He spent two days at the Bavarian-Austrian border, not knowing if Nazi arrest lists had been drawn up yet. Finally he crossed safely into Austria. Back in Berlin, Nazi stormtroopers would visit Reich's apartment again to confiscate books and other items.

From the Bavarian border, Reich continued by train to Vienna where he had lived for 12 years: from 1918 when he began medical school, to 1930 when he moved to Berlin.

The Vienna that Reich returned to in March 1933 was also in the midst of political turmoil. And there Reich learned that Sigmund Freud—wanting to further distance himself from Reich’s politics—had ordered the Psychoanalytic Press to cancel its contract to publish *Character Analysis*.

Reich borrowed money and arranged to have the book published privately in Vienna. And then, at the end of April, at the invitation of a Danish physician who had come to him for psychoanalytic training, Reich left Vienna for Denmark.

He traveled by train north through Poland and then east on a freight ship across the Baltic Sea, arriving in Copenhagen on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1933. In Copenhagen, Reich saw psychoanalytic patients and trainees. And he completed another manuscript that he had been writing for two years: *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.

In the spring of 1933, *Character Analysis* was published in Vienna. In September of that same year, Reich published *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* in Copenhagen. Both books would become classics.

And it was in *Character Analysis* where Reich introduced to psychiatry the concept of “character armor” as the sum total of typical character attitudes that an individual develops to block emotional excitations. And it would be the knowledge and insights in *Character Analysis*—from its 1<sup>st</sup> edition in 1933, to its expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, to its enlarged 3<sup>rd</sup> edition—that would provide the basic concepts for many therapeutic modalities today: mind/body modalities, energy-medicine modalities, modalities that move, as Reich did decades ago, beyond the spoken word to the language of the body and then deeper, to the biological energy of the human organism and to a practical therapeutic understanding of the *human organism as a biological energy system*.

All of these concepts originate in the book *Character Analysis*. And these concepts are a significant part of the legacy of Wilhelm Reich.

Two years later in 1935, Reich’s discovery of the “muscular armor” was presented in print for the first time in a monograph entitled *Psychic Contact and Vegetative Current*. In this monograph, published while Reich was living in Oslo, Norway, he says:

“In character-analytic work, we meet the function of the armor also in the form of chronically fixed muscular attitudes.”

Reich will later define this “muscular armor” as:

“the sum total of the muscular attitudes or chronic muscular spasms which an individual develops as a block against the breakthrough of emotions and organ sensations, in particular anxiety, rage and sexual excitation.”

Reich's discovery of the "muscular armor" required the further development of the "character analytic" process into what he would call "vegetotherapy."

On August 18, 1939, Reich left Europe forever aboard a ship sailing from Oslo. He arrived in New York City on August 28<sup>th</sup>, just four days before the outbreak of World War Two. Had Reich remained in Oslo, he most likely would have perished during the Nazi occupation of Norway which began in April 1940.

In America, vegetotherapy evolved even further into psychiatric orgone therapy. Reich named this therapy after his laboratory discovery in Oslo of a specific biological energy in living substances and in the human organism, and later, the discovery of this same energy in the atmosphere in 1940. Reich called this energy "orgone," and I'll talk more about this discovery in a few minutes.

In 1945, Reich published in English a second edition of *Character Analysis* which included his 1935 monograph *Psychic Contact and Vegetative Current*. Four years later in 1949, Reich published the third enlarged edition of *Character Analysis*. In it he added three new chapters, including a 40-page chapter entitled "*The Expressive Language of the Living*."

Personally I think this chapter comprises some of Reich's most beautiful writing. But more important, in this chapter Reich introduces what is perhaps his most influential discovery for many subsequent mind-body modalities. I'm referring to Reich's identification of seven specific "muscular armor segments" in the human body.

Prior to his discussion about these armor segments, Reich says:

"Cosmic orgone energy functions in the living organism as a specific biological energy. As such, it governs the entire organism. It is expressed in the emotions as well as in the purely biophysical movements of the organs.

Thus, for the first time since its inception and with its own means, psychiatry took root in objective, natural scientific processes.

I now propose to include both character analysis and vegetotherapy under the term 'orgone therapy': the common element is reflected in the therapeutic goal, the mobilization of the patient's plasmatic currents.

In orgone therapy, our work is concentrated on the biological depth, the plasma system, or, as we express it technically, the biological core of the organism."

Reich then moves on to a discussion entitled "The Segmental Arrangement of the Armor," in which he says:

“The individual muscular blocks do not follow the course of a muscle or a nerve; they are altogether independent of anatomical processes.

In carefully examining typical cases of various illnesses in the search for a law that governs these blocks, I discovered that the muscular armor is arranged in segments.

Since the patient’s body is held back and since the goal of orgone therapy is to restore the plasmatic currents in the pelvis, it is logically necessary to begin the work of breaking down the armor at the parts of the body farthest away from the pelvis.”

Reich then goes on to identify the seven specific armor segments or rings, *and* the integrated therapeutic process for dissolving these segments. I’d like to read a few excerpts of Reich’s descriptions of these armor segments. He writes:

“When I say that the armor is segmentally arranged, I mean that it functions circularly, in front, on both sides, and in back, like a ring.

Let us refer to the first armor ring as the ocular, and the second as the oral armor ring.

In the sphere of the ocular armor segment, we find a contraction and immobilization of all or almost all of the muscles of the eyeballs, the eyelids, the forehead and lachrymal gland.

The loosening of the ocular armor segment is brought about by opening the eyes wide as in fright; this causes the eyelids and the forehead to move and to express emotions. Usually this also effects a loosening of the upper cheek muscles.”

Of the second armor ring, he writes:

“The second, the oral armor segment comprises the entire musculature of the chin, pharynx and the occipital musculature, including the muscles around the mouth.

They are functionally related to one another; for example, the loosening of the chin armor is capable of producing spasms in the musculature of the lips and the related emotion of crying or desire to suck.

Likewise, the freeing of the gag reflex is capable of mobilizing the oral segment.”

Of the third armor ring, Reich says this:

“The armor of the third segment comprises essentially the deep musculature of the neck, the platysma, and the sternocleidomastoid muscles.

While the hands can be used to get at the surface muscles of the neck, this is not possible in dealing with the larynx musculature. The best way to eliminate the ‘swallowing’ of emotions is to liberate the gag reflex.

Work on the neck armor by means of the gag reflex brings about a loosening of the fourth and fifth armor segments.

In other words, we do not eliminate one armor ring after the other in a mechanical and rigid manner. We work on an integrated life system, whose total plasma function is hindered by transverse armor rings.”

Of the 4<sup>th</sup> armor ring, the chest segment, Reich tells us this:

“The armoring of the chest is manifested in the elevation of the bony structure, a chronic attitude of inhalation, shallow breathing, and the immobility of the thorax. We already know that the attitude of inhalation is the most important instrument in the suppression of any kind of emotion.

All the intercostal muscles, the large chest muscles (pectoral) the shoulder muscles (deltoid) and the muscle group on and between the shoulder blades are involved in the armoring of the chest.”

The 5<sup>th</sup> armor ring is the “diaphragm segment,” to which Reich devotes nearly 10 pages, including this:

“The fifth armor segment forms a contraction ring which extends forward over the epigastrium, the lower part of the sternum, back along the lowermost ribs, toward the posterior insertions of the diaphragm, that is, to the tenth, eleventh and twelfth thoracic vertebrae.

Essentially it comprises the diaphragm, the stomach, the solar plexus, including the pancreas, which lies in front of it, the liver, and two bulging muscle bundles extending alongside the lowermost thoracic vertebrae.”

The sixth is the “abdominal segment,” of which Reich says this:

“Contraction in the middle of the abdomen represents the sixth independently functioning armor ring. The spasm of the large abdominal muscle (rectus abdominus) is accompanied by a spastic contraction of the two lateral muscles (transverses abdominus) which run from the lower-most ribs to the upper margin of the pelvis.

In the back the lower sections of the muscles running along the spine (the latissimus dorsi and sacrospinalis) corresponds to this segment.

The loosening of the sixth armor segment is easier than the loosening of all the other segments.

After it has been dissolved, it is easy to approach the armor of the seventh and last segment, the pelvic armor.”

At the conclusion of this wonderful 40-page chapter, “*The Expressive Language of the Living*,” Reich says this:

“...what we call ‘nature in man’ can be translated from the sphere of mystic or poetic fantasy into the concrete, objective, and practical language of natural science.”

Let me repeat that last phrase: “*practical language of natural science.*”

Unfortunately, today there continues to be far too much emphasis on Reich’s rich legacy as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, and not enough focus or interest in his broader legacy as a natural scientist. Today—exactly 53 years after his death—how many people here or anywhere even think of Wilhelm Reich as a scientist?

And yet, that’s precisely how Reich defined himself. In fact, at the beginning of one of Reich’s conference lectures entitled “*Man’s Roots in Nature*,”—which we have on audiotape—Reich says this:

“I am to begin with, a natural scientist. Not a psychologist and not a psychoanalyst, of course. I went into the whole field of psychiatry as a natural scientist. This interest was dictated primary by the problem of energy.”

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “natural science” as “any of the sciences—such as physics, chemistry or biology—that deal with matter, energy, and their interrelations and transformations, or with objectively measurable phenomena.”

Clearly, by that definition, Reich's legacy as documented in over 7000 published pages of research journals, bulletins and 22 books meets the criteria of natural science. Equally clear, from Reich's published documentation over 30 years, is that this legacy comprises far more than Reich's achievements and influences in the worlds of psychiatry and psychoanalysis and psychology.

And so for anyone to confine Reich to those worlds—while willfully ignoring or dismissing his documented achievements in biology, physics and biophysics—is to misrepresent and diminish the fullness of his legacy.

For example, in 1949—when Reich first published this chapter about the muscular armor segments—he was already building his Orgone Energy Observatory at Orgonon, his property in Rangeley, Maine. This building would include Reich's second scientific laboratory at Orgonon; he had already built what he called the "Student Laboratory" four years earlier.

And in that first laboratory Reich and his students and co-workers had been conducting orgone energy research using microscopes, telescopes, electroscopes, Geiger counters, oscillographs, orgone energy accumulators of varying sizes and strengths, and other equipment. And there in 1949, Reich gave his first course in "orgone biophysics"—with an emphasis on cancer research—to a group of physicians.

Reich's new building, the Orgone Energy Observatory, was completed in September of 1949. Situated on the highest hilltop of his property, it included large windows, flat roofs and observation decks for 360-degree observations of atmospheric orgone energy in the natural environment of sky, lakes and mountains.

That same month—September 1949—Reich wrote a letter to all of the physicians who worked and studied with him, announcing his intention to move permanently from his home in New York City to Orgonon. He wrote:

"My work during the past few years has shifted more and more toward biophysics and physics, away from individual psychiatry.

Also, the training of physicians and educators had to shift more and more in the same direction.

We realized, and could not fail to realize, that we had entered new, basic physical territory.

Orgone physics is the new basis of our whole, including our psychiatric existence.

Man to us today is an energy system, and not merely mind.  
You all know this."

Three months later, in December 1949, Reich incorporated The Wilhelm Reich Foundation at Orgonon in Rangeley. And in the Charter of this Foundation, Reich said that among the purposes of this organization was:

“To conduct research and teaching in cosmic orgone energy (orgone physics, orgone biophysics), and natural science generally, its medical, technical, other and all future applications.

To establish, operate, and maintain observatories for scientific purposes

To establish, operate, and maintain clinics and hospitals for organomic medical research and medical orgone therapy.”

And in March 1957, when Reich created The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust in his Last Will & Testament, this was the opening sentence of that document:

“I made the consideration of secure transmission to future generations of a vast empire of scientific accomplishments the guide in my last dispositions.”

Reich doesn't say “psychological,” “psychiatric,” or “psychoanalytic” accomplishments, although these are important parts of his legacy. He says “scientific accomplishments.”

By the time Reich died in November 1957 at the age of 60, he had spent 22 years of his life conducting scientific research, starting in the spring of 1935 at the University of Oslo. I'm referring to Reich's laboratory experiments using human subjects into the bioelectrical investigation of sexuality and anxiety.

Here Reich wanted to test experimentally a concept that Freud had once postulated and then abandoned: that the Libido is more than just a psychological or psychic idea—rather, it is a physical energy that in Freud's words is: “something which is capable of increase, decrease, displacement and discharge.”

As a young psychiatrist Reich had discovered the four-beat orgasm formula of Tension→Charge→Discharge→Relaxation that was essential to the self-regulation of sexual energy and the elimination of neuroses. And for years Reich was eager to determine, in his words:

“How deeply is the function of the orgasm rooted in biology? The tension→charge→discharge→relaxation process which has been revealed and which governs the orgasm requires extremely precise study.”

In Reich's published results of these bioelectrical experiments, he concluded that:



“The concept of ‘libido’ as a yardstick of psychic energy is no longer a mere metaphor, but applies to energetic processes.”

Furthermore, Reich considered these published results:

“...as a logical continuation of my *Character Analysis*. It is the character analysis of the areas of biological functioning, so to speak.”

But Reich’s laboratory experiments did not end there. In Reich’s words:

“Since the orgasm is an elementary phenomenon of life, the formula for expressing it should also be demonstrable in the most primitive biological functions: for instance, the vital functions of protozoa.”

This led Reich to a series of experiments, starting in 1936, using high-magnification microscopes and time-lapse filming to record the development of protozoa in water and hay, and the biological functions of tension and charge.

And in these experiments, recorded on film, Reich discovered something new in science and medicine: the development of microscopic living organisms or “vesicles” from non-living matter. Reich called these vesicles “bions” after the Greek word for “life.” And it was these vesicles, these organisms that developed into amoeba and bacteria.

Reich’s discovery of the bions led him into cellular research and, more important, into cancer research, with the discovery that certain bions could immobilize and kill cancer cells and bacteria. Reich also discovered a deadly type of bion that could cause cancer and death in mice. He called these bions “T-bacilli: after the German word “Tod” which means “death.”

And in January 1939, Reich discovered a powerful biological energy in a specific bion culture in a test-tube. This biological energy—which he later found in other bion cultures—exhibited visible radiation phenomenon. It immobilized and destroyed cancer cells, it charged organic matter and it invigorated blood and tissue.

Reich called this biological energy “orgone,” and he would devote the next 18 years of his life to the investigation of its laws and properties and uses.

To do this, Reich used existing state-of-the-art scientific equipment and apparatuses. And when necessary, he invented new scientific tools for orgone energy research. For example, his experiments and observations inside of large Faraday cages would lead, over approximately two years, to the development of orgone energy accumulators of varying sizes and strengths, first for scientific experiments and then for medical applications.

In 1940 in the Rangeley Lakes region of Maine, Reich discovered that this same energy in the bions was present in the atmosphere, that this biological energy that he called “orgone” and which seemed to exist in all living substances originated in the atmosphere as a primordial physical energy.

During the following years, Reich’s scientific and medical research continued to break new ground:

- the use of large orgone accumulators for the experimental medical treatment of cancer and other diseases
- the development and application of the Reich Blood Tests as diagnostic tools for the early detection of disease
- successfully operating a small motor propelled by atmospheric orgone energy
- testing the effects of orgone energy on radium needles, in search of a possible antidote to nuclear radiation sickness
- and using an invention called the “cloudbuster” to alter the orgone energy potential in the atmosphere for weather experimentation.

All of Reich’s orgone energy research is documented in his books, research journals and bulletins, all of which are publicly available. Reich’s legacy and the documentation of that legacy are immense. But their foothold in the world is fragile.

53 years after his death, the same distortions, inaccuracies, and slanders about Reich persist, and from voices and platforms louder and larger and far more powerful than any of ours. 53 years after Reich’s death, the official public narrative of Wilhelm Reich as a charlatan, and of orgone energy as fantasy and fraud, overwhelms and supersedes every honest effort to disseminate the facts about Reich’s life and legacy.

And his principal scientific and medical tool—the orgone energy accumulator—continue to be widely misunderstood and ridiculed as either a salacious sexual device, or as a worthless medical device that Reich was promoting as a cancer cure. Neither of which is true.

To this day, anything positive about Reich’s reputation remains largely constricted to psychiatry, psychoanalysis and psychology. So where today—if anywhere—are the young biologists, chemists, medical students, physicians and physicists reading primary materials by Reich such as:

- *The Bion Experiments on the Origins of Life*
- *Bion Experiments on the Cancer Problem*

- *The Cancer Biopathy*
- *Orgonomic Diagnosis of Cancer Biopathy* which is a laboratory manual for performing Reich Blood Tests
- *Cosmic Superimposition*
- *The Oranur Experiment*
- Reich's journal entries about his scientific and medical work in *Beyond Psychology* and *American Odyssey*
- The medical case-studies in the *Orgone Energy Bulletins* by Reich and his colleagues
- and Reich's articles about weather engineering in the *Cosmic Orgone Engineering* bulletins.

The fact that since Reich's death thousands of people have been helped by various modalities based on his psychiatric principles is something we can all celebrate and be grateful for. But it is to his larger scientific and medical legacy that more attention needs to be paid. Otherwise it will be lost forever.

In that September 1949 letter to his physicians, Reich also said this:

“As I told many of you so often, making money alone is important, but it is not the real issue.

I am very proud that my discovery can provide a good income, and I like it that so many could improve their economic situation so easily and swiftly by means of this work.

However, not to look beyond this point would be disastrous.”

*Kevin Hinchey  
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