
**“From the Archives:
New Narratives About Wilhelm Reich, M.D.”**

**Opening Remarks at the
2009 Summer Conference at Orgonon**

**Rangeley, Maine
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Good morning. And thank you all for coming. On October 29, 2007—five days before the 50th anniversary of Wilhelm Reich’s death—The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust posted the Index of “The Archives of the Orgone Institute” on our Museum website, a website which currently averages close to 300 hits per day. An announcement and a link to this Index was, and continues to be, prominently featured on our Home Page.

The archive Index itself is 141 pages long, and lists the contents of 282 archive boxes which contain a total of approximately 1,735 individual files, plus photographs, plus films, plus audio recordings, plus physical objects. Each one of these individual 1,735 files can contain anywhere from a single page, to dozens of pages, to hundreds of pages in just one file. These thousands upon thousands of original documents comprise a mixture of typewritten pages *and* handwritten pages in the following categories of material:

- Conspiracy
- Correspondence
- Manuscripts
- Organizations
- Orgone Institute
- Orgone Institute Press
- Personal Files
- Published Work and Unpublished Translations.

Thousands of these typed and handwritten pages are in German, and thousands of these typed and handwritten pages are in English. All of these materials are housed at “The Center for the History of Medicine” at the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard University, one of the world’s premier medical libraries. Comprising a total of 98 cubic-feet of material, “The Archives of the Orgone Institute” is one of the Countway Library’s largest collections.

Along with our website posting of the Archive Index are the “Access Policies & Procedures” through which scholars and researchers tell us about their backgrounds, about the nature of their research which warrants access to Reich’s Archives, and which specific files in the Archives they’re interested in studying. The studying of these materials takes place in the “Holmes Reading Room” at the Countway Library, where staff members bring out one file at a time of the researcher’s requested materials.

These Policies & Procedures were developed after extensive discussions that The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust had with scholars, archivists and librarians well versed in best practices governing the management of archives. Any scholar, researcher, archivist or librarian involved in serious archival work is well aware that not all archives are open to the general public, that not all archives allow anyone to simply walk in off the street to peruse original and rare and irreplaceable resources.

Any scholar, researcher, archivist or librarian knows that Access Policies & Procedures for any archive reflect the preferences of the donor of the collection *and* the facility in which the collection itself is deposited. Consequently, some archives are open to the public-at-large and many are not, and specific Access Policies & Procedures vary from one collection to another.

And so it is with “The Archives of the Orgone Institute.” The Access Policies & Procedures governing this collection are a combination of the preferences and guidelines of both the Countway Library *and* The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust. And within the collection itself there are a few additional guidelines and restrictions on certain materials. But restrictions within a collection are also standard operating procedure in the management of reputable archives.

For example, Federal regulations regarding “Protected Health Information” have established specific restrictions on the access and use of patient files, of which there are many in Reich’s Archives. So all archival collections in America containing medical patient information need to comply with these Federal regulations. Furthermore, because the Countway Library has no facilities for viewing archival films or listening to archival voice recordings, these resources in Reich’s Archives are not currently accessible.

And finally, the Trust itself restricts access to several files containing what we consider sensitive unpublished scientific materials. These sensitive materials pertain to Reich’s orgone motor research and orgonomic equations, some of which require further discussions and decisions involving patent and copyright law.

And today, more than 50 years after Reich’s death, nothing in these original materials in Reich’s Archives has been changed in any way. Nothing whatsoever in any of the archival manuscripts, correspondence, diaries and journals, laboratory notebooks, organizational materials, translations, personal papers of any kind, films, voice recordings—nothing in any of these or any other archival materials has been changed, falsified or destroyed in any way. And since November 2007, these materials have been accessible to scholars and researchers, with the exception of the films and recordings, materials containing private health information and several files containing sensitive unpublished scientific content.

Last year, instead of our regular summer conference, we held a small Archive Workshop here in the Conference Building. To this Workshop the Trust brought together a small group of scholars and researchers to peruse and discuss these sensitive unpublished materials and to identify scientific and legal issues regarding these resources.

These materials included documents, laboratory notebooks, journal entries and audio recordings of some of Reich's experiments. And we'll be presenting many of these same materials to you this week. You'll also be hearing from individuals whose specific projects require significant research in Reich's Archives:

Professor and science historian James Strick, Ph.D. is now working on a new book—his third book—this one about Reich's bion experiments in Oslo in the 1930s and how these experiments fit into the broader context of the history of science and medicine.

Professor Philip Bennett, Ph.D. has conducted archival research for two articles. One of them is a work-in-progress about Reich's concepts of "Work Democracy." The other article, "*The Persecution of Dr. Wilhelm Reich by the United States Government*", will be published soon in the *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*. It documents three overlapping investigations of Reich: by the FBI, by the Food and Drug Administration and by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, a long but little-known effort to deport Reich which Philip will speak about tomorrow.

Mary Higgins will discuss the creation of a new manuscript—the sequel to *American Odyssey*—drawn from Reich's diaries, journals and correspondence from 1948 to 1957. This represents Mary's fourth collection of Reich's diaries, journals and correspondence from different periods in his life. I will talk about my work-in-progress: a proposal I'm writing for a full-length documentary film about Reich's life and work.

While all of our projects are different, the commonality here is that we are all supplementing our knowledge of previously published materials by Reich with new information from his unpublished archives to create new narratives aimed at newer and wider audiences. It's understandable and desirable that various organizations devoted to Reich's legacy—including the Trust—have published their own journals and other publications. But the total readership of all of these publications is painfully small and comprises a huge amount of overlap among a total of perhaps several hundred people.

In essence we end up writing for ourselves and for each other, communicating among the same few hundred readers without any strategy for reaching a broader and newer audience. This need for new narratives about Reich—strategically directed at newer, wider audiences—is today more urgent than ever as a way to counter and supplant the distortions and misrepresentations about Reich that have persisted for decades and that persist to this day.

For example, in the last year-and-a-half alone we've read distorted and salacious references to Reich, orgone energy and the orgone accumulator in such mainstream publications as *Forbes Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New Republic* and a handful of newspapers.

Throughout Reich's life and up until today the voices against him personally and against his work have always spoken from platforms larger and more powerful than Reich's, and from platforms much more influential than ours: voices from psychiatric, medical, scientific, academic and government institutions; voices on radio and TV; voices in

popular magazines and books. Decades of these voices speaking from these formidable and far-reaching platforms have created a factually and intellectually dishonest narrative of Reich.

But it is a narrative of Reich told for so long and so insistently and so loudly that it has become ingrained and accepted as fact in official and public consciousness. And it is precisely this cumulative and corrosive narrative of Reich that dominates and constricts every good and honest effort that all of us make on behalf of Reich's legacy. And in terms of that legacy, the greatest casualty here is Reich's discovery of a specific biological and atmospheric energy that he called "orgone," of which the traditional medical and scientific communities are completely oblivious or completely dismissive.

In Reich's 1950 lecture "*Man's Roots in Nature*," which we'll listen to on Thursday, he declares that: "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 scientist. This interest was dictated primarily by the problem of energy."

And yet today, almost 52 years after Reich's death—with well over 7000 pages of his writings publicly available for years, comprising 21 book titles and research journals and bulletins; a year and a half after his Archives have become accessible to scholars and researchers—the narrative of Wilhelm Reich as a natural scientist is completely unknown or unacknowledged in the scientific, medical and academic communities.

Consequently, over two decades of Reich's scientific and medical research—from 1935, when he begins his bio-electrical experiments in Oslo, until late 1956 or early '57—over two decades of this work continue to be disparaged, distorted and dismissed by people who have never even taken the time to seriously study it.

To the scientific, medical and academic communities, Reich's discovery and applications of a specific biological and atmospheric energy that he called "orgone" are, quite simply, fantasy and fraud. And his principal scientific and medical tool, the orgone energy accumulator, continues to be misunderstood and ridiculed as either a salacious sexual device or as a worthless medical device that Reich was allegedly promoting as a cancer cure. None of which is true.

By contrast, the commonplace narrative about Reich's earlier work exhibits, at times, considerable admiration and intellectual honesty, including rational differences of opinion. And so, for the most part, we don't see the same scorn and ridicule heaped upon Reich for his early accomplishments as a gifted psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and clinician. There is, by and large, a more reasoned tone to discussions and criticisms, to agreements and disagreements regarding such issues as:

- Reich's repudiation of Freud's "Death Instinct"
- his elucidation of therapeutic techniques in *Character Analysis*
- his identification of character armor and muscular armor

- his political activism as a physician in Socialist and Communist organizations to counter the authoritarian institutions and governments in Vienna and Berlin
- his theories on the nature of fascism as the expression of irrational character structure.

But these are not the issues that concerned the Food and Drug Administration here in America. There's nothing about these issues in either the original 1954 Complaint or in the Decree of Injunction against Reich. These are not the reasons why Reich's books were banned and burned in the United States in the 1950s. And these are not the reasons why Reich's scientific and medical research was, and continues to be, maligned and marginalized to this day.

The Food and Drug Administration's official narrative about Reich in the 1940s and '50s was fueled by the active cooperation and resources of the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychoanalytic Association, as well as numerous state chapters and affiliations of these three professional organizations. It was a distorted narrative of Reich and his work that was, and continues to be, replicated and disseminated in hundreds of articles in magazines, newspapers and professional journals.

Boiled down to its essence the official legal narrative—as stated in the 1954 Complaint for Injunction against Reich—was this:

“...the alleged orgone energy, as claimed to have been discovered and its existence proved by the said defendant Reich as stated for the labeling for said devices, is not a powerful form of energy, is non-existent...”

—leading to the logical assertion later in the Complaint that the orgone accumulator:

“...is not a preventive of and beneficial for use in all diseases and disease conditions, is not effective in the cure, mitigation, treatment, and prevention of the diseases, conditions, and symptoms hereafter enumerated...”

And until this distorted, legal, official and public narrative about Reich begins to change significantly, Reich's reputation as a pioneering, although controversial, psychoanalyst will remain assured, while 22 years of his scientific and medical legacy—from 1935 to 1957—will continue to be misunderstood, ridiculed or rejected.

In terms of crafting new narratives about Wilhelm Reich as a research physician and natural scientist, some of the most valuable materials in his Archives are his laboratory notebooks and daily journals. These resources document contemporaneously and with raw data Reich's experiments in his laboratories in Oslo; in Forest Hills, New York; and here at Orgonon—in this very space which was the Student Laboratory—as well

as in his other laboratory up in the Orgone Energy Observatory. And last October, Professor Strick had the distinction and pleasure of being the first researcher to look at Reich's laboratory notebooks of his bion experiments in Oslo during the 1930s.

When Reich first published these experiments in the 1930s, he was publicly criticized and personally vilified. And for decades these same criticisms of his work have been regurgitated ad nauseum without any serious study and evaluation, so that today Reich's bion experiments are virtually unknown in the scientific community.

Because Reich first discovered orgone energy in a specific bion culture in early 1939, new narratives about Reich for new audiences need to clearly explain the bion experiments. And perhaps more important, to explain how these experiments are *not* the anomalies portrayed by his critics and detractors, but rather how they fit squarely into existing traditions of scientific and medical research of the time.

Without an understanding of the fundamentals and historic context of Reich's bion research, the subsequent discovery of orgone energy several years into this research cannot be grasped adequately. And if the discovery of orgone energy cannot be grasped adequately, its empirical existence devolves into the stuff of mysticism, fantasy and delusion which has been the fate and reputation of orgone energy for far too long. Furthermore, what would later become the Reich Blood Tests as diagnostic medical tools for detecting systemic disease processes cannot be comprehended by new audiences without an underlying grasp of Reich's bion experiments.

Reich's first-published results of these experiments ran to perhaps a couple hundred pages and appeared in a limited German edition in 1938 under the title *Die Bione*. The result was a massive newspaper campaign against him in Oslo that was one of the factors leading to Reich's decision to emigrate to America in August 1939. Condensed results of these experiments appeared in his early research journals in America and in *The Cancer Biopathy* in 1948. And an English version of *Die Bione* appeared in the 1970's under the title *The Bion Experiments on the Origins of Life*.

That Reich's original laboratory notebooks are now accessible, that they are completely unaltered and that Professor Strick recognizes their intrinsic value should not for a moment be taken for granted. In history of science research, *this has not always been the case with original laboratory notebooks*.

In his 1995 book *The Private Science of Louis Pasteur*, the author—Professor Gerald Geisen of Princeton—tells us this rather surprising fact: “For some reason laboratory notebooks were long overlooked by historians of science, but their virtue as a strategic site of inquiry have become evident in recent years.”

Professor Geisen then cites only four major scientific biographies from the 1970s to the and 1990s which were based on laboratory notebooks: one book about Michael Faraday, two about French physiologist Claude Bernard, and one about Robert Milliken, the American Nobel Laureate in Physics.

Geisen also eloquently describes the intellectual value of laboratory notebooks as opposed to scholars simply relying on a scientist's published results:

“... to rely solely on the published record is to distort our understanding and appreciation of science as it actually gets done. The effect is impoverishing in several respects. By making the results of scientific inquiry look more decisive and straightforward than they really are, the published record tends to conceal the pliability of nature. It eviscerates science of its most creative features by conveying the impression that imagination, passion, and artistry have no place in scientific research. It makes it seem as if scientific achievement and innovation result not from the impassioned activity of committed hands and minds, but rather from passive acquiescence in the sterile precepts of the so-called Scientific Method... The construction of scientific knowledge is a much more interesting process than its published record suggests.”

I find this eloquent passage by Professor Geisen reminiscent of what Reich himself says about the importance of understanding the research process. And I'm quoting now from Chapter One of Reich's *Ether, God and Devil*:

“It is useful not only to allow the serious student of the natural sciences to see the results of research, but also to initiate him into the secrets of the workshop in which the end product, after much toil and effort, is shaped. I consider it an error in scientific communication that, most of the time, merely the polished and flawless results of natural research are displayed, as in an art show. An exhibit of the finished product alone has many drawbacks and dangers for both its creator and its users. The creator of the product will only be too ready to demonstrate perfection and flawlessness while concealing gaps, uncertainties and discordant contradictions of his insight into nature. He thus belittles the meaning of the real process of natural research.”

Reich's open and fresh and honest attitude here is consistent with his attitudes and hopes for his archives and his directives regarding these archives for future generations. To quote from Reich's Last Will & Testament from March 1957, just three days before being taken into custody and incarceration:

“In order to enable the future student of the Primordial Cosmic Energy Ocean—the Life Energy discovered and developed by me—to obtain a true picture of my accomplishments, mistakes, wrong assumptions, pioneering basic trends, my private life, my childhood, etc. I hereby direct that under no circumstances and under no pretext whatsoever shall any of the documents, manuscripts or diaries—found in my library among the archives or anywhere else—be altered, omitted, destroyed, added to, or falsified in any other imaginable way.”

Could Reich be any more open in wanting future students of his work to study not only his accomplishments, but also his mistakes and wrong assumptions? All of which makes perfect sense today in terms of context and intellectual honesty. But history of science scholarship shows us that not all scientists feel the same way as Reich about their unpublished materials.

Returning to Gerald Geisen's book *The Private Science of Louis Pasteur*, here is the book's opening paragraph:

“In 1878, when he was 55 years old and already a French national hero, Louis Pasteur told his family never to show anyone his private laboratory notebooks. For most of a century those instructions were honored. Pasteur's notebooks—like the rest of the manuscripts he left behind at his death in 1895—remained in the hands of his immediate family and descendants until 1964. In that year, Pasteur's grandson and last surviving direct male descendant, Dr. Pasteur Vallery-Radot, donated the vast majority of the family's collection to the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. But access to this material was generally restricted until Vallery-Radot's death in 1971, and there was no printed catalog of the collection until 1985.”

And a bit later on, Professor Geisen tells us:

“... the Pasteur Papers include a meticulously preserved collection of more than 140 notebooks in Pasteur's own hand, of which more than 100 are laboratory notebooks recording his day to day scientific activities over the full sweep of his 40 years in research...Until these manuscripts are deciphered, edited for publication, and subjected to critical scrutiny, our understanding of Pasteur and his work will remain incomplete... To produce a detailed account of all of Pasteur's 100 laboratory notebooks, several decades of work will surely be required...As the contents of these once private documents find their way into public view, a fuller deeper and quite different version of the Pasteur story will perforce emerge. There is, in effect, a new history of Pasteur to be written.”

And with Reich's laboratory notebooks available now to scholars and researchers at the Countway Library, there is also a new history and a new narrative of Reich to be written. Jim Strick's skills, knowledge and commitment are critical to this effort.

A book about bion experiments published by a major academic press—as Jim's two previous books have been—and dealing with one of the major pillars of orgone research could go a long way toward correcting the distorted narratives about orgonomic science and medicine, *and* toward reaching new audiences.

Professor Philip Bennett's two articles are equally promising in crafting new narratives about Reich aimed at new audiences. Philip was the first scholar to apply for access to the Archives, although in November 2007—at the Trust's invitation—members of

Reich's family were the first to visit the Countway Library. Reich's concepts about "Work Democracy," which Philip is researching, are a crucial thread that permeates Reich's thinking about the nature of work as performed by a group of people coming together in a common task.

In Reich's own words: "Natural work democracy is the sum total of all functions of life governed by the rational relations that have come into being, grown, and developed in a natural and organic way." And Philip's scrutiny and comparison of Reich's published and unpublished materials over the years will provide a greater understanding of Reich's model for productive work in general *and* for productive work in terms of Reich's research and co-workers.

Philip's other project—the soon-to-published article "*The Persecution of Dr. Wilhelm Reich by the United States Government*"—is a true model for new narratives aimed at newer, wider audiences. First of all, it is a factually accurate and sympathetic article about Reich that is going to be published in a periodical called the *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*.

Historically and up until today, the American psychoanalytic community as a whole has been hostile to Reich. What better evidence of this than their active cooperation with the Food and Drug Administration in the 1940s and 50s, and their official approval of the legal action against him? Placing this article in a publication not specifically dedicated to orgonomy, but rather for a professional audience beyond those interested in Reich, is both strategically and intellectually appropriate.

Secondly, the subject of the article itself—three overlapping government investigations of Reich, often feeding off misinformation and distortion from one another—calls into question the methods and integrity of all three investigations. And today, in the 21st century when government misconduct is no longer the stuff of doubt or myth, perhaps the facts and themes of Philip's article will take root and resonate among that new readership, that new audience.

So this week you'll become familiar with a cross-section of the kinds of primary resources from Reich's Archives that are currently being accessed for these new narratives, as well as for new narratives by me and by Mary Higgins.

We also hope that over the next few days you all become familiar with one of the greatest primary resources of Reich's legacy which is Orgonon itself: our 175 acres of fields and forests; our waterfront on Dodge Pond; Reich's two cabins; this building, the former Student Laboratory; and the Orgone Energy Observatory on the hilltop, now the Wilhelm Reich Museum.

In terms of pioneering science and medicine, Orgonon is a unique and historic property completely unknown to the traditional scientific and medical communities. Reich moved his work here permanently because of the low humidity of the area—which was perfect for his experiments—and because the property's views of the sky, mountains and lakes were perfect for observations and measurements of atmospheric orgone energy *and* for harnessing this energy for a variety of applications.

To become familiar with Orgonon itself and its surroundings here in the Rangeley Lakes region is to appreciate yet another narrative about Reich: the narrative about the logical culmination of his work from its psychiatric underpinnings to biology to medicine and on into bio-physics.

Sixty years ago, in 1949, Reich wrote this to the physicians who were working with him:

“The plan gains momentum that I stay here at Orgonon and do not return to New York. As you well know, my work during the past few years has shifted more and more toward biophysics and physics, away from individual psychiatry. Also, the training of psychiatrists 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 is today an energy system, and not merely mind. You all know this.

You also know that during the past three years, I had to divide my activities between New York and Orgonon, doing psychiatry in New York and orgone physics in Maine. The whole biophysical and physical laboratory has been transferred to Orgonon. No work in this field can be done any longer in New York, except already established routine work such as blood tests in Dr. Tropp’s office. I must concentrate all my efforts on physical orgonomic observations. Nobody can do that for me.

My remaining years for productive work are beginning to be few. I must begin to use every minute of it.”

And likewise *we* should now begin to use every minute of our time together this week.

Once again, thank you all for being here. We realize and appreciate that your presence here represents significant expenditures of interest, time and money, especially those of you who have traveled long distances to be here. And we do not take any of your efforts to be here for granted. Thank you.

*Kevin Hinchey
The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust*