COLIN WILSON

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Analytical Table of Contents

basic error: failure to recognize the 'feedback mechanism'. 'The ego is the puppet of the id.' What is the unconscious? The mechanism of neurosis: the feedback effect. Freud and Maslow. Viktor Frankl and the prisoners from Auschwitz. Powers of the unconscious: Coleridge and the illiterate who spoke Latin. Jean Houston and the man who conversed with Socrates. Jung causes a 'poltergeist effect'. Freud abandons the libido and invents the death instinct. Reich's fundamental optimism. How the sexual theory came about: Breuer and Anna O. The case of Little Hans. Freud and the Wolf Man. What Freud suppressed in his paper. Freud's paranoid bitterness about Adler. Freud and Jung. Freud and Thomas Mann. Karl Kraus. Viktor Tausk. Tausk's suicide.

Chapter Three

Reich on Freud. The Freud circle in Vienna. Federn, Hitschmann, Nunberg, Rank, Silberer, Ferenczi. Suicide of Silberer. Reich's self-assurance. His unpopularity among Freud's older followers. Reich's Peer Gynt paper; his denial of free will, 'the weakness that would destroy him'. Reich casts himself as the misunderstood martyr. Reich becomes a member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. Sadger's lack of tact. Federn begins to dislike Reich. 'The aggressive, paranoid and ambitious type'. Why Reich broke off three 'training analyses'. Reich and the sexual theory. Reich teaches his patients to masturbate. Case of the impotent waiter. 'Actual neurosis'. The orgasm theory. Reich marries. His work under Wagner-Jauregg. Reich's interest in psychotic patients: 'could they be right after all?' Reich's optimism. Freud invents the super-ego. Reich rejects it. The technical seminar—designed to keep Reich out of mischief. Death of Reich's brother Robert. Reich's first paper on genitality; its cool reception. Reich's conviction that patients harbour hostility to the psychotherapist. *The Function of the Orgasm:* Freud's lack of enthusiasm. The problem of 'resistance'. Freud's disagreement. Freud as Reich's father-substitute. Reich's loyalty to Freud. His rationalization of Freud's rejection. Freud refuses to psychoanalyse Reich. Reich's breakdown. His 'deterioration'. Federn 'slanders' Reich. Reich's affairs with patients. Freud's narrow-mindedness. Reich's return from the sanatorium.

Chapter Four

Was Reich's life work based on a fallacy? Freud's theory of neurosis. Neurasthenic patients. Frankl's law of reverse effort. The evolutionary view of psychology Freud's obsession with being 'scientific'. Reich's cases of cardiac neurosis. Polanyi and the problem of alienation. Split-brain research. The right and left hemispheres. Soeirv's work with epileptics. The 'ego' as the left hemisphere, the 'id' as the right. Neurosis as failure of synchronization between

left and right. ‘Absurdity’. The feedback effect. The left is always in a hurry. Stage fright. T. E. Lawrence as an example of left-brain domination. Role of the right hemisphere: to add ‘depth’ to reality. Lady Chatterley and the orgasm. Reich’s sexual theory a a partial recognition of the truth about right and left. Th evolutionary possibilities of a closer cooperation of left and right. Slowing down the left or speeding up the right. Reich’s variant of the sexual theory. Mechanism of neurosis.

Chapter Five

Reich’s return to Vienna from Davos. The killings at Schattendorff. The killers are acquitted; riots. Reich’s sympathy with the left. Reich’s working-class patient. Reich’s conversion to Marxism. Psychoanalysis as ‘bourgeois thinking’. *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*. Reich joins the Communist Party. The ideal society. The ‘compulsory sex morality’. Malinowski’s Trobrianders. Are Reich’s views borne out by modern ‘permissive societies’? Human perverseness. ‘To be free is nothing; to become free is heavenly’. Reich attempts to justify psychoanalysis to the Marxists. Reich goes to Moscow. Increasing hostility of the Freud circle. Freud’s political views. Reich’s lecture on ‘blockage’. Freud’s reaction: *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Freud abandons the sexual theory. Reich disagrees. Reich and the defensive mechanism of patients. Methods to pinpoint ‘resistances’. Reich’s new technique of character analysis. Provoking the patient’s hostility. The impotent patient: Reich’s analysis. How would Maslow or Frankl have treated the case? Reich’s psychoanalysis as a battle of wills. Another hostile patient. The ‘English lord’. Freud’s increasing impatience. Reich as Communist agitator. He decides to go to Berlin. Initial success there. The Red Block cell. Koestler’s description of the cell. Reich’s attempt to combine sexual reform and Communism. Success of Association for Sexual Politics. Why the Communists rejected Reich: their feeling that he was ‘decadent’. Reich’s quarrels with Bischoff and Schneider. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism.* Breakdown of his marriage. The Reichstag fire. The German Communists are suppressed. Reich is attacked in Nazi press. He escapes back to Vienna.

Chapter Six

The quarrel with Freud; Freud refuses to publish *Character Analysis.* Federn forbids Reich to lecture. Reich decides to go to Copenhagen. Reich’s opportunism. Analysis of his miscalculations. His determination to compromise. Reich was basically an authoritarian elitist. Arrival in Copenhagen; feelers to

Rado in New York. Publication of *Mass Psychology of Fascism.* Problem with Danish authorities. Freud declines support. Move to Malmö. Trip to London. *What is Class-Consciousness?* European tour. Expulsion from Sweden. Summer in Sletten. 13th Psychoanalytical Congress: Reich's expulsion. The Oslo period. Electric currents of the body. 'Readiness potential'. The 'breakthrough into the biological realm'. Masochism: the desire to burst. Muscular armour. Orson Bean's description of treatment. Elsworth Baker: *Man in the Trap.* Abreaction therapy: persuading patients to relive experience. William Sargant. 'The Freud of Oslo'. Fenichel's defection. Rumours of Reich's insanity. The discovery of bions. The T-bacilli. Bion research. Reich and Gerd Berger sen. Reich's orgasm theories anger the Norwegians. Scandal. The attacks SAPA bions and free orgone energy. Reich sails to New York.

Chapter Seven

The move to Long Island; marriage to Ilse Ollendorff. Cure for cancer? The orgone box. The Maine camping trip: Reich sees orgone energy in the sky. Invention of the accumulator. Experiments with mice. Cancer patients and the orgone accumulator. The 'Einstein episode'. Einstein's rejection. 'Freud's good old doctrines'. Reich's failure to recognize that the roots of psychological illness lie in the mind. The concept of 'purpose'. The rigidity of Reich's sexual doctrines. Reich's mistake in working alone. Quarrel with Gertrude Gaasland. Hostility of neighbours. Briehl breaks with Reich: 'not the same person he had known in Vienna'. Reich's increasing success. Purchase of cabin on Mooselookmeguntic Lake. Photographing orgone energy. Experiment XX. Spontaneous creation of matter. Life at Orgonon. Birth of Peter. Increasing interest in child rearing. *Listen, Little Man!*—a turning point in Reich's life. Emotional plague. The Mildred Brady 'interview'. 'The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich'. The Fake Messiah problem. John Humphrey Noyes. The FDA send an investigator. Dismissal of Reichian therapists. The 1948 Conference.

Chapter Eight

Use of the Geiger counter to detect orgone energy. Reich's interest in atomic energy. The Oranur experiment. What happened? High radiation in the Rangeley area. Deadly Orgone Radiation. The cloudbuster. Weather control. Reich ends a drought. *Ether, God and Devil* and *Cosmic Superimposition. The Murder of Christ.* The truth about Giordano Bruno. Modju. Reich's UFO phase. The cloudbuster versus the UFOs. The FDA's complaint. Reich's response. The Injunction. Reich causes snow over the east coast. Operation Emotional Plague. The attempt at Intervention. The trip to Arizona. Orgone Energy Operation in the

Desert. *Contact With Space.* UFOs over Mount Catalina. ‘UFOs cause deserts’. The Eas attack. Success of the Desert experiment. Silvert sends accumulators to New York. The contempt proceedings. Reich arms his followers. Reich appears in court. The lawyers resign. Reich is arrested. The trial. Reich is fined and sentenced to prison. The appeal. Reich is transferred to Lewisburg. His death. The Reich revival.

Postscript

Was Reich a martyr? His self-centredness. The bion experiments. Reich and flying saucers. Roerich’s sighting. Jung’s theory of ‘psychological projection’. Poltergeist phenomena. Synchronicity. Kammerer and ‘seriality’. Peter Fairley’s experiences of synchronicity and second sight. Was Reich capable of producing ‘poltergeist effects’? Reich’s masochism. His father fixation. Reich’s loyalty to Freud. His denial of free will. His attempt to escape the cul de sac. Burr and life-fields. The ‘jelly mould’. The retreat from psychology. Janet’s psychology of tension. Janet and multiple personality. Léonie and Lucie. Irene. The ‘partial mind’. Creative tension. Problem-solving: the evolutionary drive. The paradox of Reich. Reich’s theory of ‘the Fall of man’. ‘The deep experience of the self’. The re-affirmation of free will.

Bibliography

Prefatory Note

In 1973, before I began to write this book on Wilhelm Reich, I wrote to both his English and American publishers—Vision Press, and Farrar, Straus & Giroux—to request permission to quote from his books. Farrar, Straus & Giroux granted it immediately; Vision Press agreed to do a deal: they would grant permission if I would write an article on Emily Brontë, to be published in a symposium edited by Dr Anne Smith. I wrote the article, which appeared in *The Art of Emily Brontë* in 1976. And that, as far as I was concerned, settled the problem of permission to quote.

I soon discovered I was mistaken. In the course of writing the book, I entered into correspondence with the authors of various other books on Reich, and learned that final permission to quote Reich had to be obtained from his executor, Mary Boyd Higgins. And this, apparently, was practically impossible to obtain if the book contained the slightest breath of criticism of Reich. One scholar remarked that it seemed ironical that Reich, who had gone to prison to defend intellectual freedom, should have left his work in the hands of someone who seemed to take the opposite view. I find myself unable to agree. I am sure Miss Higgins is behaving exactly as Reich would have wanted her to. He took the view that all critics of his work were motivated by malice and dishonesty, and would have been happy to see them suppressed.

Predictably, Miss Higgins reacted to my own book with indignation and denunciation. It was, she said, such a travesty of Reich that it left her no alternative except to refuse the required permission.

I have therefore made very few direct quotations from Reich—no more words, by way of criticism and fair comment, than is permitted by law. Whether this is fair to Reich is a question which I must leave to the individual reader. But the story seemed worth telling as a footnote to this study of a man whose attitude towards the truth about himself was always ambiguous.

Acknowledgements

This book owes its existence to a suggestion of Bill Whitehead of Doubleday, who also commissioned it. For permission to quote from the works of Wilhelm Reich I owe thanks to Vision Press, and to his American publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.

In the body of this book I have acknowledged my deep indebtedness to Robert Ollendorff, A. S. Neill and Constance Rooth-Tracey: all, unfortunately, now dead. I also owe a debt of gratitude to: Kirstie Ollendorff, Ilse Ollendorff Reich, Peter Reich, David Boadella, Myron Sharaf, Ola Raknes, Charles Rycroft, Dr Saul Lucas, Dr Andrew Crawshaw, Dr Raymond Pietroni and his wife Jennifer, Mrs Suzanne Burford, Rudolph Nassauer and Eileen Mackrory. I wish also to thank Orson Bean and his publisher St Martin's Press for permission to quote a passage from *Me and the Orgone.* The London Library and Lewis's Medical Library have rendered invaluable assistance. Finally, my wife has patiently read this book as it came off the typewriter, and corrected spelling mistakes and grammatical and typing errors.

C.W.
Cornwall, spring 1980.

Introduction

It must have been some time in the mid-1960s that I came across a copy of Wilhelm Reich's *The Cancer Biopathy* in an Oxfam shop. Although the battered, blue-covered volume cost only a few pence, I was in two minds whether to buy it. Reich had never interested me greatly. On the fringe of the anarchist movement in the early 1950s, I had often heard him praised as a 'sexual liberator'. But I could never understand why anybody under the age of seventy needed sexually liberating; that battle had surely beer won by the mid-1920s? I could also recollect that Reich had held certain cranky views about medicine that had landed him in jail, where he died. My vague impression was that it served him right.

Still, I bought the book, and when I got home I tried looking up Reich in various encyclopedias; I couldn't locate even a reference. Then I remembered where I'd read about his downfall. It was in Martin Gardner's *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science.* I re-read the chapter in Gardner entitled 'Orgonomy', and recalled why I'd felt hostile about Reich. It seemed that he had started off as an orthodox Freudian, contributing fairly respectable work on the sexual origin of neurosis, then joined the Communist Party; then his attempts to combine Freud and Marx offended both groups, and he was rejected by both Freudians and Communists. At this point he moved to America and announced his discovery of an unknown form of energy called orgone. This was supposed to be blue in colour, and to cause the blueness of the sky. (It also causes the shimmering above roads and mountain tops that is sometimes mistaken for heat waves.) According to Reich, orgone energy permeates the universe; it is the basic principle of health in all living creatures, and lack of it causes disease. Reich devised a kind of greenhouse for trapping this energy; it consisted of alternating layers of wood and metal, and was called the Orgone Accumulator. This invention was the cause of all his troubles, for the Food and Drug Administration objected to the sale of the the accumulator on the grounds that there was no scientific evidence that it worked. When Reich declined to obey a court order that forbade him to send accumulators across state lines, he was sentenced to two years in prison, where he died more or less insane.

The thing I found most irritating about Reich was that he seemed incapable of believing in the honesty of anyone fact who didn't agree with him. He took it for granted that people who questioned his ideas must be motivated by envy or hatred. He even coined a term to describe what was wrong with these unbelievers: they were suffering from 'emotional plague', a disease that was

unbelievers, they were suffering from 'emotional plague', a disease that was supposed to be akin to hysteria. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, had invented an equally convenient explanation of the opposition she aroused: 'malicious animal magnetism'. It became such a catch phrase in her movement that it was eventually abbreviated to MAM. I have always found something peculiarly obnoxious about people who need to fall back on this kind of argument: a blanket dismissal of anyone who refuses to accept them at their own valuation. It is basically an insult to the whole concept of human intelligence.

At the same time, I caught a whiff of the same kind of thing in Martin Gardner's book. He writes about various kinds of cranks with the conscious superiority of the scientist, and in most cases one can share his sense of the victory of reason. But after half a dozen chapters, this non-stop superiority begins to irritate; you begin to wonder about the standards that make him so certain he is always right. He asserts that the scientist, unlike the crank, does his best to remain open-minded. So how can he be so *sure* that no sane person has ever seen a flying saucer, or used a dowsing rod to locate water? And that all the people he disagrees with are unbalanced fanatics? A colleague of the positivist philosopher A. J. Ayer once remarked wryly: 'I wish I was as certain of anything as he seems to be about everything.' Martin Gardner produces the same feeling.

Alerted to the difficulties of keeping an open mind, I turned to *The Cancer Biopathy*. First impressions were as bad as I'd been led to expect. There is an atmosphere of *folie de grandeur*. He seems to believe that his discoveries are not only important, but momentous and awe-inspiring. He writes: 'In time, the enormous significance of these facts begins to seem less terrifying. I believe the open-minded reader will also become less frightened of my discoveries when he considers the following ...' And one of the following considerations is that 'one gradually learns how to deal with human irrationality easily, how to better understand what is going on inside people who fall victim to mysticism or the emotional plague'. As one who has always been interested in mysticism, I found myself irritated by this attempt to equate it with emotional plague. As far as I could see, the only frightening thing about Reich's ideas was his conviction that he was right and everyone else wrong. It is easy to see that if he had achieved political power, his 'enemies' would probably have landed in concentration camps.

All the same, I still found myself unable to share Martin Gardner's deep conviction that Reich's 'discovery' is self-evident nonsense. Reich expresses his basic idea as follows: 'If cancer is to be understood in a simple way, we must finally acknowledge the existence of a new, ubiquitous *cosmic* energy that obeys functional rather than mechanistic laws.' As I had written a book on Bernard

Shaw, this notion was familiar to me; Shaw called it ‘the life force’. Bergson called it *élan vital.* The biologist Driesch called it ‘entelechy’. The philosopher Whitehead hinted at the same thing when he spoke of the universe as a single living organism.

Shaw had, in fact, advanced a theory of cancer that is startlingly close to Reich’s. He believed that the difference between living matter and dead matter is simply that living matter can *conduct* the ‘life force’ because of its molecular structure. Animal matter is more alive than vegetable matter because it is a better conductor; it carries a higher voltage of the life force, so to speak. If the structure of matter in a living body is changed—for example, by a bad bruise—it may suddenly begin to conduct a lower voltage of the force, so it becomes virtually a separate organism in the same body; this is cancer. According to Reich, cancer is caused by a blockage of vitality. The devitalized tissues begin to degenerate, in much the same way as if their blood supply was cut off. Black, elongated bodies called T-bacilli are formed, and it is these that produce cancer.

And at this point, I was suddenly struck by a disturbing thought. *Suppose he was right?* This would put an entirely different complexion on the matter. Gardner’s *Fads and Fallacies* first appeared in 1952, at the time when Reich was being hounded by the Food and Drug Administration. A preface to the next edition remarks: ‘The first edition of this book prompted many curious letters from irate readers. The most violent letters came from Reichians.’ But then, if Reich was basically correct about something as important as orgone energy, their annoyance would be understandable, for Gardner’s chapter on Reich is really a piece of slick, high-handed, deflationary journalism. If Reich was correct, his personal defects would be irrelevant. How would Sir Isaac Newton—that suspicious, bad-tempered genius—have reacted if his theories had been treated as a joke and all copies of the *Principia* burned? How, for that matter, would Einstein have reacted to public derision and legal sanctions? Can it be doubted that they would also have become a little paranoid?

I read *The Cancer Biopathy,* and was impressed. There could be no doubt that Reich was something of a fanatic; at the same time, he writes with the clarity and detachment of a true scientist. I found a paperback copy of *The Function of the Orgasm,* and experienced the same reaction. Reich’s insistence that the sexual orgasm is the key to psychological health aroused my scepticism—it sounded too much like Freud’s brand of ‘reductionism’—but the lucid, logical style compelled respect.

Although *The Function of the Orgasm* and *The Cancer Biopathy* are intended to be Parts One and Two of the same work *(The Discovery of the Orgone),* more than twenty years elapsed between them. And it is clear that he found himself

being swept against his will into the ‘mysticism’ he detested so much. In *The Function of the Orgasm* he explains why he cannot be regarded as a ‘vitalist’. A vitalist believes that living matter differs from dead matter *in kind* as well as in molecular structure. In other words, there is a metaphysical principle of life that exists *beyond* matter. This, says Reich, is a position he totally rejects. The difference between dead and living matter is simply a difference of energy. Living matter is ‘inhabited’, so to speak, by orgone energy. This energy can, according to Reich, transform a sterile bouillon culture into a living culture.

Now clearly, such a distinction is really an evasion. If the orgone energy is merely energy, then it is not alive—any more than electricity is. If it is alive, then it must be more than energy; it must be living energy, and somehow different from ordinary energy.

What was happening struck me as amusing. Reich is determined to represent himself as a tough-minded materialist, yet his own discoveries undermine his materialist standpoint. In fact, as I later discovered from Ilse Reich’s biography, Reich finally faced up to the contradictions in his position, admitted that orgone energy must be identified with love, and even agreed that this implied the existence of God. There was nothing of this in *The Discovery of the Orgone*, but long before the end of *The Cancer Biopathy* it is obvious that Reich is in severe difficulties.

I became fascinated by this enigma of a scientist turning, against his will, into a metaphysical philosopher. Whether he was right about orgone energy became a secondary issue. What I wanted to know was how this Freudian Marxist had come to abandon the scientific and political materialism of his early days.

I began trying to find out more about Reich’s life and personality, but it proved oddly difficult. His books contain fragments of autobiography, but there is a curious underlying feeling of inhibition and reticence. The standard histories of psychotherapy—like Gregory Zilboorg’s *History of Medical Psychology*—either ignored him or dismissed him in a paragraph. Ernest Jones’s three-volume *Life of Freud* hardly mentions him. This seemed odd, since Reich’s place in the Freudian movement was at least as important as that of Jung, Adler or Rank.

Then in 1969, Ilse Ollendorff Reich’s *Wilhelm Reich: A Personal Biography* appeared, and it was a revelation. Reich had met Ilse Ollendorff in New York in 1939; she was twenty-nine at the time, and Reich was forty-two. They married two months later, and remained together until 1954, when Ilse found the strain of living with this wayward and paranoid genius too much, and moved elsewhere. Ilse Ollendorff had met Reich at a crucial point in his life, when hostility to his ideas had driven him out of Europe. His sense of persecution was mounting; so was his intolerance. In Scandinavia, Reich’s relations with his co-workers had

been informal, and they called him Willy; in America, he insisted on being called Dr Reich. (He told Neill: 'In this work any familiarity with me would destroy it. They would encroach on me emotionally.') A paranoid self-assertion is characteristic of his later years, and it was undoubtedly responsible for his downfall. He consistently over-reacted to the 'persecution' of the Food and Drug Administration. Instead of appearing in court to answer their charges in a reasonable manner, he wrote the judge a four-page letter, more or less denying that the court had any jurisdiction in matters of science. Understandably, the judge granted the injunction. Reich's reaction was to compare himself to Galileo, Jesus and Giordano Bruno, and to threaten to use his orgone machine to cause storms that would flood the east. Ilse Reich's biography makes it clear that Reich's imprisonment was entirely his own fault. With a minimum of common sense, he would have had no difficulty staying out of jail.

All this fascinated me. It had not been long since I had come across A. E. Van Vogt's 'Right Man' theory, and it struck me as one of the most significant developments in psychology since Freud. I have written about this elsewhere, but its relevance in the present context is so great that I make no apology for trying to summarize it here. Briefly: in reading reports of divorce cases, Van Vogt became aware of how often they involved a personality-type that he labelled the Right Man or the Violent Man. Such men had an obsession with being *in the right;* under no circumstances could they acknowledge the possibility that they might be wrong. And if someone is tactless enough to try to force them to recognize it, they explode into violence. In the home they behave like tyrants, demanding total submission and obedience from wife and children. The least suspicion of infidelity or disloyalty, no matter how ill-founded, is enough to drive them into a frenzy. Yet they themselves are perfectly capable of sexual lapses—sexual conquest is important to their self-esteem—and expect the partner to treat these with tolerance.

In short, the Right Man is a man whose whole life revolves around his sense of his own importance; the least challenge to this strikes him as unforgivable. Since our social lives have to be governed by rules of politeness, his colleagues and acquaintances may not even notice that he is a Right Man. But those who live in close proximity to him become accustomed to having to live according to *his* rules, or to encounter the full force of his resentment.

There is, of course, a degree of Right-Mannishness in most of us; nobody enjoys having his self-esteem wounded. And a human being without self-esteem is either a saint or a useless weakling. It follows that people who are slightly above average in talent or intelligence or dominance are more likely to develop into Right Men than the rest of us. One of the commonest types is the man

whose dominance is slightly higher than his intelligence or imagination, so that he feels that his merits are not being recognized, but lacks the insight to see that this is his own fault.

Right Men with political power—like Hitler or Stalin—are terrifying. But Right Men who regard themselves as 'intellectuals' can be almost as dangerous; they are inclined to see themselves as messiahs. On a certain level, their ideas may be brilliant and perceptive—like those of Karl Marx or Mao Tse-tung. But at a certain point, the factor of resentment creeps in, and the ideas are distorted by obsessions and vendettas.

Right Men are made, not born. 'Rightness' involves a degree of self-deception; it can happen little by little, over many years: the fabrication of excuses for convincing oneself that certain painful misjudgements never happened, that it was the fault of other people ... Dogmatism is substituted for open-mindedness, bullying for persuasion. Although Ilse Ollendorff met Reich only after he came to America, it is clear from her biography that Reich was an altogether more reasonable, open-minded character in his European days. This could be because some of his associates—like Ola Raknes, Nic Waal and A. S. Neill—were also talented and strong-minded, and stimulated a certain self-appraisal. His threefold rejection—by the Psychoanalytic Association, by the Communist Party and by his adopted country Norway—seems to have produced a crisis of misery, which Reich solved by deciding to become more aloof, more suspicious and resentful. His second wife (or rather consort—they were never officially married) Elsa Landenberg decided not to accompany him to America because his temper outbursts were becoming too much of a strain. Ilse Ollendorff was to write: 'I know what Elsa must have gone through in those days, because fifteen years later I went through the same experience. No matter how much love, devotion and understanding one might bring to the situation, there was a point when it became a question of life or death, a matter of retaining one's own integrity and individuality or submitting completely to Reich.'

When Elsa Landenberg, living penniless in Sweden, later wrote to ask Reich for help, he sent her only twenty-five dollars. By that time, she was another who had 'betrayed' him.

Ilse Ollendorff's biography made it very clear that Reich became a highly developed example of the Right Man type. (She mentions, for example, his pathological jealousy: '... he would accuse [me] of infidelity with any man who came to his mind as a possible rival, whether colleague, friend, local shopkeeper or casual aquaintance.') It seemed to support Martin Gardner's theory of Reich as a crank messiah. Yet at the time I came across Ilse Reich's book, I was working on a book called *The Occult*, and was intrigued to realize that Reich's

discovery of orgone energy had several times been anticipated in the past century and a half; Mesmer believed that the universe is permeated with a kind of life-fluid, and his views gained wide acceptance in the decade before the French Revolution; in the 1840s, Baron Karl von Reichenbach renamed Mesmer's fluid 'odic force', and was convinced that it is the principle of health in human beings. Half a century later, Dr Walter J. Kilner of St Thomas's Hospital, London, rediscovered the 'fluid', which he called 'the human aura'; Kilner even invented a transparent screen, stained with special dye, which he claimed could enable anyone to see this aura. These men failed to convince their fellow scientists: but this was not the case with Dr Harold Burr of Harvard, whose experiments with trees in the 1930s established beyond all doubt that there *is* a weak electrical field associated with life, and that this field can be registered by a delicate voltmeter. In animals and human beings, this field is affected by illness, which can also be detected on the voltmeter. In recent years, the 'human aura' has again become the subject of widespread scientific research as a result of the experiments of Professor Semyon Kirlian, who believes that he has established a method for photographing the 'life field' of living creatures with the use of highly charged photographic plates.

In the light of this impressive, if controversial, body of evidence, Reich's orgone theory began to sound altogether less like the *idée fixe* of a Right Man.

It was at this point that our family doctor, Andrew Crawshaw, mentioned that his sister and brother-in-law worked in the same practice as England's leading Reichian therapist, Robert Ollendorff, whose sister had become Reich's second 'official' wife. He also pointed out that Ollendorff had been in poor health recently, and suggested that if I wanted to meet him, I shouldn't delay too long. Accordingly, I went to stay for a few days with Raymond and Jennifer Pietroni in Camberwell, and was introduced to Ollendorff and his wife Kirstie.

My first reactions to Robert Ollendorff were ambivalent. I think I had expected to meet someone rather like Reich—Germanic, impressive, rather authoritarian. Ollendorff was none of these things. He was witty, loquacious and mischievous, and I soon realized that he was determined to be liked rather than respected. He was profoundly anti-authoritarian, a born anarchist, and I think his partners in the practice sometimes found his puckish unpredictability a strain. He had a manner of dropping bombshells into the middle of abstract conversations; when we were discussing Reich's disagreements with Freud he suddenly remarked: 'Mind, even Reich was afraid to admit that a doctor sometimes has to sleep with his patients to get to know them.' I have no reason to suppose he ever did anything of the sort—he gave the impression of having a singularly happy and untroubled home life. But it wasn't entirely a perverse desire to shock. He

was raising an important and basic implication of Reichian therapy, out of a sheer Viennese passion for ideas. (He was not, in fact, a Viennese—he was born in Breslau—yet he always seemed to me such a typical example of the Jewish-Viennese intellectual that I found this hard to remember.)

That first evening at Ollendorff's, I tried out the orgone box, which was in the corner of his consulting room. It was a large box, about half the size of a telephone booth. The walls were roughly six inches thick, made of alternating layers of metal and asbestos (or other organic material). There was a large hole in the door, about a foot square, through which I could look when I was seated on the chair inside the box. Ollendorff took my temperature before I went inside; it was normal. The box itself felt oddly warm, and I wondered whether it might be standing close to a radiator. I reached out and touched the metal walls; they were cold to the touch.

It seemed an odd arrangement. I asked Ollendorff what made Reich think that alternate layers of metal and asbestos would somehow trap the energy? If it can get in, what is to stop it getting out again? Ollendorff explained that the original idea had been simply to trap the energy from 'bion cultures'—cultures that radiate orgone energy—by reflecting it back from metal walls. The culture was placed inside a large metal box, and the experimenter studied it by looking through the hole in the door. In the original box, a layer of wood was added on the outside to stop the energy escaping into the laboratory—organic material absorbs orgone energy. To Reich's surprise, the box not only trapped the energy from bion cultures, but absorbed energy from outside; even when the box was empty, they noticed the characteristic blue colour of orgone energy. The more layers they added, the better it worked ...

At this point I came out of the box again, and Ollendorff took my temperature; it had risen by 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

I was impressed. And I was surprised when Ollendorff told me that he was not convinced on the subject of orgone energy: 'I am not a physicist.' He added with a touch of malice: 'And neither was Reich.' But then, he pointed out, it made no difference whether you believed in the orgone or not, provided you accepted Reich's original hypothesis that *some* form of vital energy is discharged in the sexual orgasm. Even the most sceptical would find that hard to deny. Whether it is ordinary physical energy, or 'bio-energy', or a universal life-energy, is beside the point. Reichian therapy simply depends on the notion that some form of energy gets blocked, and that the blockage causes neurosis—another name for energy-stagnation.

What sort of a person *was* Reich? I wanted to know—and was surprised when Ollendorff said he had never met him. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the

twenty-one-year-old Ollendorff was arrested as a known Communist sympathizer, and spent nine months in a concentration camp. His sister Ilse had already left Germany to go to England; Robert himself went to Tanganyika. It was there that he came across the books of Reich, and was fascinated. Sometime around the New Year of 1940, he heard, to his astonishment, that he had just become the brother-in-law of his hero. By this time, Ollendorff had made a belated decision to become a doctor, and began his medical studies in England. When it came to studying Reich's therapeutic methods, Ollendorff studied with Reich's pupil and friend Ola Raknes. After the war, it would have been easy enough to step on a plane and visit the Reichs at the Institute in Rangely, Maine —Ilse lived with Reich until 1954. In fact, it would surely have been the obvious thing to do, since he was now practising Reichian therapy. But by this time Ollendorff had learned more about Reich's personality—from Raknes, among others—and I suspect that he realized that closer acquaintance might be a mistake. Reich was beginning to develop the authoritarianism of the typical German professor. And Ollendorff was too deeply anti-authoritarian to be anybody's disciple; he and Reich would probably have quarrelled violently within twenty-four hours. Ollendorff half-admitted as much to me one morning as we sat in the local pub: 'It is probably as well that we never met.'

So far I had met no one who had actually known Reich, and I found it difficult to get a picture of him as a human being. Then my old friend Rudi Nassauer—novelist and wine merchant—mentioned that he knew an ex-patient of Reich who lived in London. Her name was Constance Rooth-Tracey. I lost no time in writing to ask if I could go and see her. And a couple of weeks later I called at her flat in a quiet road to the north of Regent's Park. She proved to be a lady of independent means, now in her sixties, who had gone to Reich in 1936 to be treated for depression. The treatment lasted for three years, and although it was unfinished when he left for America, she had no doubts about its success.

It was obvious that she still regarded him with a respect verging on worship. When I asked her if it was not true that Reich had been an explosive character, she shook her head. He *could* be, with people he distrusted; but for those he liked, he had nothing but warmth and kindness. And although she told me a great deal about Reich's personality and his methods of treatment, she omitted to mention that when she went to see Reich in Maine, they had a blazing row and parted on hostile terms. (I learned this a few years later from her daughter, Mrs Suzanne Burford.) I am inclined, in retrospect, to believe that she preferred to remember the benefits and kindness she had received from Reich, and to forget that, by 1948, he had become an altogether more prickly and difficult character

I asked her about Reich's therapy, and she surprised me by saying that the

most important thing he taught her was how to breathe. She explained that Reich had noticed that people under tension inhibit their intake of oxygen. Conversely, the first thing we do when we feel relieved or happy is to take a deep breath and relax. According to Reich, people with psychological problems breathe shallowly in order to create less vital energy, which in turn makes their impulses easier to master; it could be compared to deliberately playing a scratched gramophone record at low volume so as not to be upset by the scratch. This shallow breathing eventually becomes a vicious habit. So Reich insisted that the first step towards overcoming nervous tensions is to learn to breathe deeply, using the stomach and solar plexus as well as the chest.

At this point she told me to lie flat on the carpet, and to breathe 'normally'. Apparently my breathing demonstrated that I was experiencing nervous tensions (which was true; I felt silly lying there). What I had to learn was to breathe *out*, because it is out-breathing—the sigh of relief—that relieves nervous tensions. Reich, she said, repeated over and over again the phrase: 'Out-down-through'. 'Out' referred to the lungs, 'down' to the stomach, and 'through' to the genitals. Correct breathing should go all the way to the genitals, producing deep relaxation... I did my best, but I have never felt at home in situations like this; I think she regarded me as a poor student. When I left that afternoon, I had no doubt that Reich had been a man who could command enormous loyalty, and who felt at home in the role of a father-figure to his female patients. But I still had no idea of what Reich had been like as a person.

Some weeks later, Robert Ollendorff wrote to say that his sister Ilse was coming to stay that month—August 1972; if I wanted to meet her, I could go and stay overnight. I immediately bought her book on Reich—so far I had made do with the London Library's copy—and reread it. Again, I was struck by the lack of actual personal description of Reich. She tells of her first meeting with him in October 1939: 'He was a striking figure with his grey hair, ruddy complexion and white coat.' That is all. Most women, writing of a famous man they had been married to, would try to convey some basic impression: 'I was struck by his eyes, that looked as if they were laughing at some secret joke,' or 'He had an odd way of chuckling suddenly from the depths of his chest.' But not Use Ollendorff. I wondered if she ended by disliking him so much that she couldn't bring herself to give any personal details. The photograph of her on the book jacket made her look rather formidable, like a strong-minded headmistress.

When I met her, I realized how misleading a photograph can be. Ilse Reich was a slim, attractive woman whose hair was still black, although she was in her sixties. She was one of those lucky women who are not much affected by age—in whom a teenage girl seems to lurk just below the surface. I could see why

Reich lost no time in grabbing her. She was gentle, intelligent and rather shy. (Before she came into the room Ollendorff told me: 'I have always been in love with my sister.') Such women seem to be made to be carried off by dominant males. What puzzled me was why Reich had not stayed married to her.

She responded with frankness to most of my questions. The marriage had been successful for many years; it began to go wrong after the Oranur experiment, when a tiny quantity of radium placed in an orgone accumulator made everyone sick. Reich believed that it was not ordinary radiation sickness; the emanations of the radium somehow combined with orgone energy to produce a deadly negative energy. Ilse became seriously ill; Reich had a heart attack after it. Under increasing pressure from the FDA, Reich was becoming pathologically suspicious, and began accusing Ilse of infidelity with all and sundry.

I accepted this explanation with my own reservations, recalling A. S. Neill's comment that Reich had become distinctly more aggressive and thin-skinned when he visited him in 1947. It was also while talking to Ilse that it suddenly struck me that Reich was a typical example of Van Vogt's Right Man. What she said about his fits of jealousy—always totally unfounded—confirmed this. I was unable to bring myself to ask her whether Reich himself was unfaithful. But on my way back to Cornwall on the train, I found the answer in her book. When she came back from a holiday in England in 1947: 'Reich put me through a third degree questioning ... He asked especially if I had been faithful to him during those two months. I almost had to take an oath of fidelity before he would be satisfied ... I was not allowed to question his faithfulness to me during that period, but I was quite certain that he did not apply to himself the same standards that he expected of me. In fact I knew that he had had an affair ...' She adds that by 1952, Reich's persecution mania had increased to an extent where he made her write periodic 'confessions' of her dislike of him and antagonism to his work —a technique, she remarks, reminiscent of Stalin.

The jealousy was confirmed by A. S. Neill, whom I met at about the same time, on a trip to East Anglia. Apart from Raknes, Neill remained Reich's closest friend, one of the few with whom he never quarrelled. Yet in spite of his trust in Neill, Reich could not prevent himself from asking his second 'wife', Elsa Landenberg, if she had ever slept with Neill.

Neill also had strong feelings of loyalty towards Reich; he even described him to me as 'lovable'. He made me begin to wonder whether I was not being hasty in concluding that Reich was an out-and-out Right Man. Obviously, Reich could inspire great affection and devotion, and such men must radiate human warmth as well as dominance. Neill spoke of Reich's relationship with his son Peter—the obvious love and trust between them. But then, Reich could take his son's total loyalty for granted.

total loyalty for granted.

I could also see exactly why Reich was so fond of Neill, and why the two had never quarrelled. If I said that Neill was a born flatterer I would be putting it too strongly, and perhaps implying a weakness of character that was certainly not present in him. At the same time, he had a charming tendency to belittle his remarkable achievements (including some skilful novels), and to imply that other people were in every way more brilliant and perceptive. (In this respect, he reminded me strongly of Henry Miller, whose charm was also based on a combination of modesty and a capacity to radiate admiration.) After all, Neill had no need to be charming to me. I was there as a kind of journalist, researching a book on Reich, intruding into the private life of an old man in poor health. If he knew anything about me at all, it was probably based on newspaper publicity from the days when I was inappropriately labelled an 'Angry Young Man'. Yet he somehow managed to imply that it was entirely his good fortune to be questioned by such an important and brilliant writer on the subject of his important and brilliant old friend ... Understandably,I found him delightful. More important, I could see why Reich had felt so warm towards him. Who could resist a man who could write in a letter: '[Your book] shows me so clearly the gulf between the man of talent (me) and the man of universal insight (you)'.

Still, it struck me later that this sentence from Neill also pinpoints why his opinion of Reich is not entirely to be trusted. It occurs in a letter about Reich's *Murder of Christ,* which Neill goes on to describe as 'the most important book I have ever read'. Now, like *Listen, Little Man! The Murder of Christ* is one of Reich's later attempts at self-justification. His thesis is that mankind is so rotten with 'emotional plague' that the healers and preachers of universal love are automatically murdered. Neill told me a story of how Reich, at a party, overheard a woman say that Krishnamurti was the most Christ-like man she had ever met. 'Then why hasn't he been murdered?' asked Reich.

What Reich was trying to do, of course, was to explain why he himself encountered so much hostility and misunderstanding. His answer is: Christ encountered the same kind of thing. Like Christ, he (Reich) is attacking the anti-life armouring of modern man, and hatred is the natural reaction of the sick to those who want to bring them health.

The trouble with this explanation is that it is downright untrue. It is untrue in the case of Jesus, and particularly untrue in the case of Reich. Jesus was disliked by the Romans because he represented a political threat, and by his own people because nations with strong religious traditions detest upstarts who want to alter things. For the Romans, he was a religious nut; for the Jews, an irreligious rebel. As to Reich, he aroused hostility because he seemed to be what he was: a

paranoid egoist. The only thing Reich and Jesus have in common is that they were both widely regarded as cranks and charlatans. It is simply not true that mankind murders its saints as a matter of course; a glance at any volume of *Lives of the Saints* will show that the majority of them died surrounded by weeping disciples.

Because of his deep loyalty—his feeling of being one of Reich's few friends in a hostile world—Neill overlooks this element of self-deception in Reich. This is probably what friends are for. But I am less happy about Neill's tendency to deceive himself. He writes: 'In 1947, and again in 1948, when we walked through the Maine woods together, he would suddenly stop and fire a question at me: "... Do you think I'm crazy, Neill?" My reply was always the same: "... Crazy as a coot!" I can still see his warm face at times like these and the visual memory brings me utter sorrow. I cannot think that Reich became crazy. He may have showed himself to be capable of illusion. We all have more or less paranoid fantasies ...' (Quoted from David Boadella, *Wilhelm Reich—The Evolution of His Work*.) But Reich was not, as Neill here implies, a nice, reasonable man with a touch of persecution mania. *The Murder of Christ* and *Listen, Little Man*! reveal massive self-deception and full-blown paranoia. Again, Neill's answer 'Crazy as a coot' implies: 'Just as I am myself'. But this is an evasion. Reich did not mean 'Am I a revolutionary eccentric?' He meant 'Am I mentally unbalanced?' Neill is not to be blamed for trying to reassure his old friend; but that is no reason why his readers should allow themselves to be taken in.

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When I tried to write up my notes on my meetings with Ollendorff, Constance Rooth-Tracey, Ilse Reich and A. S. Neill, it struck me that I was still as far as ever from the 'truth about Reich'. Was he, as Ollendorff and Neill believed, a typical 'Outsider', a man driven by a peculiar kind of honesty, an inner vision of truth, which he had to pursue even at the cost of health and sanity? Or was he merely an egoist tormented by a desire for 'recognition', by the hunger for self-esteem?

I had to admit that what intrigued me about Reich was that there was no simple answer to the problem. Reich *was* a misunderstood man of genius; he was also a touchy egoist who became his own worst enemy. He was a man of profound and important insights who was also capable of embarrassing intellectual naivety (such as his notion that human aggressiveness could be blamed on the desire for private property). He was a complex human being who craved simple answers to the mysteries of the human mind. There is something

almost Shakespearian about the tragedy of his life—the flawed strength that became self-destructive, the powerful spirit undermined by rage and suspicion.

In short, what kept drawing me back again and again to Reich was the fascination of the strange no-man's-land between genius and insanity, greatness and paranoia, self-belief and self-deception. For the same reason, I have always been fascinated by that other paranoid man of genius, August Strindberg—and, to a lesser extent, by the brilliant and vitriolic Frederick Rolfe who. with typical self-aggrandizement, preferred to be known as Baron Corvo.

While I brooded on this, and tried to get it down on paper, it struck me suddenly that I had stumbled on an important basic insight, one that applies to all human beings, not just the dominant few. It is this: that every one of us is a mixture of two elements, which could be labelled 'personality' and 'impersonality'; but in each one, *the proportions are different.* We are all interested in ourselves, in achieving our ambitions. But we all have other interests that attract us for nonpersonal reasons: ideas, music, poetry, books, nature, science. We say they take us 'out of ourselves'—meaning out of the *personal* self. Even the least intelligent human being has certain nonpersonal interests—if only a newspaper crossword puzzle, or the fortunes of the local football team. But in men and women of talent, the dichotomy is particularly obvious because talent involves self-expression—that is, expression of the two aspects. We could picture them as the dark and light side on one of those Chinese symbols of yin and yang. The dark side is yin, the impersonal, the receptive; the light side is yang, the personal, the ambitious, the self-assertive.

If we think of various men of genius, we can see that the two sides can be found in different proportions. The greatest self-expression springs out of impersonality—what Keats called 'negative capability'. We can see this in Dante, Leonardo, Shakespeare, Mozart, Goethe, Einstein. The very fact that we know so little about Shakespeare is a proof of his self-effacement. His friend Ben Jonson, an altogether more dominant man, made sure posterity would be familiar with his own biographical details.

In Beethoven, we can see the personal element becoming dangerously enlarged; his bitter quarrels sprang out of touchy pride, not from any sense of lack of recognition. Nevertheless, he maintained his creative balance, and produced works of impersonal genius. It is when we descend to men of lesser genius that ego begins to tilt the balance on the side of the personal. The result is usually disaster.

There is an anecdote about Poe that perfectly illustrates the two elements; it can be found in Hervey Allen's *Israfel.* A female admirer, Mrs Gove Nichols, describes how Poe confided in her one day: 'I write from mental necessity—to

satisfy my taste and my love of art. Fame forms no motive power for me ...' He insisted that he had absolutely no interest in 'the plaudits of the mob'. On her next visit, as they walked along a hilltop, Poe said suddenly: 'I can't look on all this loveliness till I have made a confession to you. I said to you, when you were here last, that I despised fame. It is false. I love fame—I dote on it—I idolize it —I would drink to the very dregs the glorious intoxication. I would have incense ascend in my honour from every hill and hamlet ... Fame! Glory!—they are life-giving breath, and living blood. No man lives until he is famous! How bitterly I belied my aspirations when I said I did not desire fame ...'

In saying 'I write from mental necessity', Poe recognizes that great literature springs out of the impersonal. But 'No man lives until he is famous' is his admission that he had not achieved that level of impersonality. This can be seen in his work in a constant straining for effect. His most ambitious attempt at an 'impersonal' book, *Eureka* —a kind of philosophy of the universe—is almost unreadable, simply because we sense that it is a fraud, a piece of overblown sham-profundity, a frantic bid for fame. It was this unsatisfied craving for fame that turned Poe into an alcoholic and eventually destroyed him; the alcoholism was a response to the feeling: 'I deserve some compensation ...'

In general, then, craving for 'recognition', for ego-satisfaction, is a hindrance to genuine creativity. And there are many men of talent, even of genius, who arouse in us an instinctive distaste because we sense that their 'impersonality' is a pretence, that their 'desire for truth' is really a desire for fame. When grape-seeds are crushed inside the grape, the wine has a bitter flavour; too much 'personality' has the same effect on a work of art.

All of which, I believe, explains why Reich arouses such ambivalent feelings. No one who reads his books can regard him as a downright fake; the mind behind them is too powerful and analytical—he is too obviously 'on to something'. But he is always stepping beyond the justified self-belief of the scientist who knows the importance of his own work into the shrill self-assertion of a recognition-starved ego. Even Neill noted the ambivalence in him. 'I think he deceived himself when he reiterated his desire to be free from recommendation' (i.e. from the acclaim of fellow writers). If Reich was really so unconcerned, why, Neill wondered, did he send him two dozen copies of the English translation of *The Function of the Orgasm?* What use could Neill possibly have for them except to send them to people who might use their influence? Ilse Reich also noticed her husband's dualism about recognition. 'Although he chided Neill about the importance of world recognition, he was very pleased—and wrote to his friends about it—when in 1944 his name appeared both in the *World Almanac* and in *American Men of Science.* I have

often wondered about his clinging to these straws of official recognition despite his denial of their having any real value.' She was also amused to observe that when Reich gave an appointment to a stranger, 'he always went through the same routine ... playing the great scientist. He would be in his study, deeply engrossed in writing, wearing a freshly laundered laboratory coat. He would give the visitor the impression that he did him a great favour by interrupting such important work to see him.' Einstein, on the other hand, struck people with his complete naturalness, the total lack of desire to impress; he once remarked to Leopold Infeld: 'I appear to myself as a swindler because of the great publicity about me without any real reason.'

It is true, of course, that Einstein achieved a secure celebrity at an early age. But the real difference between them lies in that inner balance between personality and impersonality. In Reich, personality, hunger for recognition, outweighed the impersonality of the scientist; therefore he was vulnerable to snubs and disappointments that would have glanced off Einstein with no effect.

In short, it boils down to a question of self-discipline. That is to say, to a factor that is almost totally ignored in the psychology of Freud and Reich: human freedom. Chuang Tzu remarked: 'Those who follow the part of themselves that is great become great men; those who follow the part of themselves that is small become small men.' The more we study the downfall of Reich, the more we realize that *this* is the problem: that tendency, in moments of crisis or emotion, to give way to the 'small' part of himself.

That is to say, Reich's tragedy was avoidable. And this is the source of his fascination. He was not a stupid and pig-headed monomaniac whose self-destruction was inevitable. He was a highly intelligent and perceptive man who might, with different tactics, have ended by achieving world renown. The fascination lies in that odd tendency to make the wrong choice and ruin his own chances.

Yet was Reich entirely to blame for ruining his chances? The more I studied the development of his ideas, the more I became convinced that most of the blame should be placed elsewhere: on the sexual theory and its originator. Freud insisted that all mental illness is sexual in origin. Any follower who showed any tendency to question—or broaden—this view was promptly expelled from the movement. Reich was in no such danger; he embraced the sexual theory with a total commitment that must have been gratifying to Freud. Even when Freud himself began to dilute the theory—first with the concept of the death-urge, then with a more specifically social theory of neurosis—Reich remained inflexible, convinced that Freud was becoming senile ...

But supposing the sexual theory was fundamentally wrong? I had never been

particularly happy with Freud's type of 'reductionism'—the tendency to explain the genius of a Leonardo or Dostoevsky in terms of sexual repressions—but had never doubted that Freud was one of the great scientific emancipators. But when I began to read Freud systematically, and the major books about him, my misgivings became insistent. It was not simply that Freud was a neurotic bully, an intellectual dictator with certain affinities with Stalin, that bothered me. It was the recognition that the sexual theory was Freud's attempt to explain certain observations that he made while working with Breuer in Vienna, and studying with Charcot in Paris. And when I came to look closely at this evidence, it struck me, quite simply, that Freud was totally mistaken. On the basis of this evidence, the sexual theory was nonsense. A study of some of Freud's best-known cases—like Little Hans and the Wolf Man—deepened this conviction. (The reasons are set out at some length in the second chapter of this book.)

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But if Freud's fundamental concept is unsound, what justification can there be for writing a book about Reich—except, perhaps, to dismiss him as a man who based his life-work on an erroneous theory? Why, for that matter, did I continue to find Reich as interesting as ever? The answer struck me as I attempted to apply some of the results of 'split-brain research' to the Freudian theory of the unconscious mind. If Sperry and Ornstein are correct in asserting that we have *two* people living inside our heads, then the sexual theory becomes doubly unnecessary. But here it proved that Reich's instinct—so closely related to that of D. H. Lawrence—had been absolutely sound. Where he differed from Freud about the role of sex, I felt that Reich was correct. I have to admit that the sudden intellectual vistas that opened up when I reached this conclusion struck me as a revelation. It all required another lengthy chapter of exposition. But there was no help for it; either it had to be said, or I had to abandon the book. I can only advise readers who want to stick to biographical details to skip Chapters Two and Four, and return to them when they have time. An alternative plan would be to read them first for I have a feeling they are the core of the book.

It should hardly be necessary to add that this is not intended primarily as a biography of Reich. As soon as I began to study the available material, I formed the impression that Reich had no intention of allowing anyone to write a frank and fully documented biography. Possibly this view is unfair; but my overall impression is that Reich was determined to be in charge of his own 'public image'. He certainly felt that his ideas were more important than his personal

history. But the real reason, I believe, is that he was obsessed by the idea of achievement—staking his claim to be a great discoverer—and had no wish for the world to know about his failures, his compromises, his moments of self-doubt. He spent his life trying to impose his view of himself on his contemporaries.

Inevitably, he failed. I am not now speaking of his failure to establish the importance of his discoveries; history may yet prove him right. But it is impossible for a man who has written a dozen or so books, and made a wide impact on his contemporaries *not* to leave behind all the necessary clues for an assessment of his personality.

In fact, before I had written more than a few dozen pages, I had ceased to regret the gaps in the biographical information. The book became a quest for the real Wilhelm Reich, and I became fascinated by the game of hide and seek.

I doubt whether Reich would have been pleased with the result. But it demonstrates, I think, that he was right about one thing. His ideas *were* more important than his personal history.

Chapter One

For seven hundred years, the great Austrian empire under its rulers the Habsburgs, dominated the politics of Europe. In April 1897, a month after Wilhelm Reich was born, that empire slid into the first stages of its final disintegration. The events of that month doomed Europe to the First World War. And, coincidentally, they doomed the unborn child inside Frau Cecile Reich to a lifetime of frustration and failure.

Since Reich's own career is so closely bound up with that anarchic new world that emerged from the war, we should begin by examining how the great collapse came about.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian empire had spread itself too far. It had too many ill-assorted subjects—Austrians, Italians, Poles, Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, as well as half a dozen other minor nationalities. And great social changes were ripping apart the old fabric. The revolutions of 1848 had shaken everybody. The young Emperor Franz Joseph came to the throne determined to show Europe that all this revolutionary nonsense was just a passing fad. Instead, he watched the empire undermined by military defeat, then by the revolutionary mutterings of his own subjects. And a things went from bad to worse, the ageing emperor made a mistake: he decided that the answer lay in finding a Strong Man and making him Prime Minister. He chose Count Casimir Badeni, a Polish nobleman who was also the governor of Galicia. Confronted with so many squabbling nationalities, Badeni thought he would try improving the situation with a few concessions all round.

On 5 April 1897, he brought into effect the Badeni Language Ordinances, which declared that from now on, German would no longer enjoy an unfair advantage as the bureaucratic language of any given area; minority languages—like Czech and Hungarian—would also be permitted in the Civil Service. It sounded, as everyone will admit, a harmless and sensible measure.

A few weeks later there occurred another event that made the future look even more promising. For a long time now Russia had been making threatening noises about the Balkans, and the Austrians had been making allies wherever they could find them. And now, quite suddenly, the Russians experienced a change of heart, and offered peace. They had their eyes on the Far East, and wanted to avoid problems at home. Austria could hardly believe its good fortune, and lost no time in signing an *entente cordiale*, agreeing to forget the Balkan problem until a later date.

Now these two events, both of which occurred just before Reich was born

Now these two events, both of which occurred just before Reich was born, should have ensured a long period of peace and prosperity. In fact, they turned Austria into a powder barrel. Without the Russian threat to hold them together, Austria's dissatisfied nationalities could begin to squabble in earnest. And the German-speaking Austrians were angrier than the rest. It was all very well giving rights to the Czechs and Poles and Hungarians, but that meant eroding the rights of the Germans. The Austrian bureaucracy was practically run by middle-class Germans, and it was their jobs that were being threatened by all this irritating liberalism. They rose up as one man and protested loudly; their Members of Parliament even threw inkwells at the Speaker. Of course, nobody really expected the government to take any notice. In imperial Austria, the ruling classes made the decisions, and the middle classes did as they were told. And then, to everyone's bewilderment, the Emperor gave way, and dismissed Badeni. The middle classes, rather startled and dismayed by their own power, relapsed into astonished silence.

These events, which took place during the first months of Reich's life, were really the beginning of the end. The German middle classes wanted the old imperial Austria back again, but it was dead and waiting to be buried. The Czechs and all the smaller nationalities wanted a new democratic Austria, with equal chances for all. So the Germans pulled one way, and the Czechs pulled the other, until eventually the empire tore apart down the seams. Those small Balkan states, which had always been so much trouble, also began protesting about their rights; when Serbian patriots assassinated the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo in June 1914, the powder barrel finally exploded, and the seven-hundred-year-old empire crumbled like a demolished building.

Wilhelm Reich was born on 24 March 1897, in Dobrz-cynica, in the province of Galicia. Count Badeni, the ex-governor of Galicia, was still Prime Minister, and no one yet realized the extent of the troubles that were about to descend on him.

The Reich family was Jewish, and its various branches were well established in Austro-Hungary; some were even Members of Parliament. A mere half century before, that would have been unthinkable—Austria, like Germany and Russia, has a powerful tradition of anti-Semitism. But the revolutions of 1848 had changed all that, and in Germany and Hungary as well as Austria, Jews had their civic rights like anyone else.

The Jews themselves had also made concessions. The Reich family, for example, which numbered a famous rabbi among its ancestors, was now thoroughly assimilated into the Austrian state. Reich's father, Leon Reich, had abandoned his Judaism, and his two sons were given a secular education. He was a wealthy farmer, who supplied beef to the German government.

The few comments Reich made about his father make it clear that he was an extremely dominant and bad-tempered individual, who ruled his farm despotically, and expected total obedience. There is nothing very surprising about this; anyone who has read Austrian novels about the period—for example, Joseph Roth's *Radetsky March*—will know that the Austrian landowner was still regarded as a feudal baron. But Reich's comments also suggest that his father was a fairly typical 'Right Man'; Ilse Reich speaks of him as 'rather brutal', with a feudal attitude towards his family and employees, and intensely jealous of his wife, Cecile. She, on the other hand, seems to have been a placid and sweet-natured woman who took her husband's dominance—and violent temper—for granted. Ilse says of her: 'She is reported as having been rather unintellectual and not very clever, a good housewife, and her own mother, Grandmother Roniger, is known to have talked about her as *das Schlaf* (the lamb) which in German very definitely has the connotation of "the dumb one".' Cecile Reich bore her husband only two children: Wilhelm, and a younger brother, Robert, born in 1900. Wilhelm seems to have inherited his father's disposition; Robert was more like his mother.

There was still plenty of anti-Semitism in Austria in the late nineteenth century; but Wilhelm and Robert would not have noticed it. Leon Reich had bought a large farm at Jujinetz, in Bukovina, where the chief language was Little Russian (or Ukrainian). There were Jewish children in Jujinetz, but they spoke Yiddish. In any case, Willy and Robert were not allowed to play with them. The Reich family was 'rather stuck-up, and put a very pronounced stress on German culture'.

So the Reich boys had a Ukrainian nursemaid, then private tutors. Presumably the farmhands regarded them as 'the young masters'. Like any children of a rich landowner, both went in for hunting, shooting and fishing. Neill told me Reich was an excellent horseman and a crack shot. The descriptions of his early life quoted by Ilse make it sound idyllic, like something out of Turgenev's *Sportman 's Sketches.*

Then, when Reich was thirteen, a curious event occurred, about which, unfortunately, we have practically no information. Neill told me that Reich had 'caught his mother in bed with his tutor', but that may only have been a manner of speaking. What seems quite clear is that Reich somehow discovered that his mother was having an affair with his tutor, and betrayed her to his father. As a result, his mother committed suicide.

This event is enough to make us realize why Reich was so silent about his early years. Yet although we know so little about it, it is important to try to

understand it more fully. And again, the concept of the Right Man provides some vital clues. Van Vogt observed that the Right Man expects total fidelity from his wife, although he is frequently unfaithful himself. The faithful wife is an important part of his psychological foundations. It enables him to see himself as he wishes to—as the patriarchal figure who deserves universal respect. He is capable of beating her black and blue if she even smiles at another man. To actually *know* that she has permitted another man to possess her is enough to dislocate his apparatus of response. If she deserves thrashing for smiling at another man, what does she deserve for ... for ... the idea is unthinkable, enough to threaten madness.

It is necessary to try to envisage what happened during the next days or weeks. She would probably be locked in her bedroom, and the servants given orders not to go near. And Reich's father, trying to soothe the hurt by talking about it—still hoping, with some irrational corner of his mind, that he will wake up and find it was all a nightmare—shouts at her for hours at a time, asking how a respectable woman could do anything so wicked, so unutterably evil. Some morbid element in him wants to know exactly how it all came about. When did the tutor first indicate that he was attracted by her? When did he first kiss her? Terrified of provoking him further, she sobs and protests that she cannot remember. But he *has* to know. He even speaks softly and reasonably, giving her the hope that if she only tells him everything frankly, they might attempt a reconciliation. And as she finally begins to tell him in detail, he listens silently and intently; for a few minutes, they are almost close again. When she comes to the admission of infidelity, of how the man helped her unbutton the dress and pull it over her head, he feels himself engulfed in a kind of blackness; again, it has passed beyond the bounds of his response. He is sorry now that he only threw the man out; he has visions of torture, of flaying alive, of disembowelling. At the same time, there is an obscure pleasure buried in the torment; he could almost wish that he had been in the next room, spying on it all through a hole in the wall ...

Finally, after days, perhaps weeks of this third degree, he has made his point; she is utterly convinced that she is evil, that she is a nobody, a nonentity, who ought to wither away under this burning glare of her husband. She is amazed that he has taken it so badly, that she has hurt him so deeply; she never realized that she was taking such an irrevocable step. If she was a woman of more spirit, she would leave him and try to start her life over again. But she is crushed, and the realization that this place can no longer be her home, that things can never be the same again, fills her with a sense of total defeat. All she can do is to weep, and hope that it will melt him as it has in the past. And even now, her helplessness

produces an automatic response of tenderness, the desire to take her in his arms and tell her that everything is all right. But it would not be true. What she has done is as unforgivable as murder. She has literally divorced herself from him. He feels an utterly implacable sense of hatred and rejection.

And so finally, incapable of further response, she makes the ultimate act of contrition, and takes her own life. Oddly enough, the effect on her husband is not to produce remorse or self-condemnation. He still feels that she committed an unforgivable crime. But she has now compounded the offence by finally deserting him. While he could see her weeping, he could feel that there was some normality in the situation. But now she has gone, it has become a confused dream. She has committed the ultimate infidelity ... Perhaps Van Vogt's most interesting observation about the Right Man is that although he is capable of deserting his wife and leaving her penniless, he can be totally shattered and undermined if she leaves him. A Right Man in this situation may experience nervous breakdown, or commit suicide. In the case of Reich's father, the breakdown took the form of a loss of the will to live. A sense of duty towards his sons kept him from committing suicide. But he did the next best thing, and deliberately contracted pneumonia by standing in a freezing pond for hours in cold weather, holding a fishing rod. The aim of the stratagem was to ensure that his sons would be able to collect his insurance. It failed in its purpose; for some reason, the company refused to pay up.

From our point of view, the main question is what effect all this had on Reich. Ilse Reich speaks of it as 'the most severe trauma of his early years' and leaves it at that. But it is necessary to realize that Reich had much in common with his father, and that, consequently, his own reactions to his mother's infidelity and suicide would be very similar to those of his father. Why *did* he feel impelled to tell his father that she was having an affair? Ilse Reich tells us on his own authority that he admired his mother and felt little love for his father; so why betray her? The answer is surely that Reich was as deeply shocked by her infidelity as his father was. He *also* felt betrayed. He felt that in this matter he was on his father's side. She deserved the most severe punishment. But then, Reich was only thirteen; his capacity for vindictiveness was not as developed as his father's. The suicide would be a greater shock to him because by that time he already regretted the misery he had caused her. And undoubtedly, he would never cease to regret the incomprehensible rage that had made him tell his father what he had discovered. Six years later, when he met Freud, he would suddenly understand the precise nature of that rage ...

Before we leave this subject of Cecile Reich's suicide, it is worth raising one interesting question. Why *should* a man like Leon Reich experience such hard,

unforgiving rage at his wife's infidelity? Of course, all men would prefer their wives to be faithful, as a matter of emotional security. But the majority of men, like the majority of women, can forgive a lapse. So why should a 'Right Man' treat it as a crime?

This is not the place to explore the problem. But it is worth bearing in mind that Reich's later psychology was partly an attempt to explain the origin of what we would now call 'male chauvinism'.

The death of Leon Reich—from tuberculosis, which developed from the pneumonia—took place four years after his wife's suicide, in 1914. By that time, Willy was attending a school in Czernowitz (Chernovtsy), the capital of Bukovina, returning to the farm at weekends to help his father. After Leon's death, he continued to run the farm while working for his exams, which he passed with honours in 1915. In 1916, Reich joined the army while his brother went to live in Vienna with relatives. The farm, apparently, was lost, although none of the fragmentary accounts of Reich's early life explain how this came about. What *is* clear is that the Reich brothers had now lost the financial security which they had taken for granted from childhood.

Reich apparently enjoyed army life. He became a lieutenant, and fought in the Italian campaign. (A young American named Ernest Hemingway, also a lieutenant, was fighting on the other side at the time.) Admirers of Reich may find it difficult to understand how such a passionate critic of human aggression could enjoy the army; but Ilse Reich clearly has no such problems. She writes: 'He was not a pacifist by nature, and the responsibility for a group of people was much to his liking.' What she is saying, clearly, is that Reich was a highly dominant and aggressive young man, who thoroughly enjoyed being in command and giving orders. He probably thought and behaved very much like those young officers portrayed by Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina*, or like Robert Musil's Ulrich, the 'man without qualities', who felt that civilians are spineless and undisciplined, and that army officers are the world's natural elite. She mentions that he always wore spurs, although he was in the infantry, and that when he was on leave in Vienna he went riding at its exclusive Reitschule. It seems that Reich's values were those of any other dominant, upper-class young officer in imperial Vienna.

But then, of course, Reich was not upper class; he was middle class. Moreover, he was Jewish. Worse still, he was penniless. So although he must have been tempted by the idea of an army career, he must have realized it was out of the question.

The alternative was some sensible, middle-class occupation. Reich decided on the law—or perhaps had it decided for him by the relatives who had been

looking after Robert. Exams were never a problem for him; he matriculated at the Faculty of Law—in the University of Vienna—in 1919. But legal studies bored him; he may also have reflected that even after taking his degree, he might spend years waiting for his first big case. In mid-term, he switched to the Faculty of Medicine. War veterans were permitted to reduce a six-year course to four, presumably to compensate for the two years wasted in the army; Reich's natural brilliance ensured that he had no difficulties in compressing six years' work into four. He and Robert shared a small apartment with another student; the rent, apparently, was paid by Robert, who had a job. Their agreement was that when Willy had graduated, he would support Robert during his studies. They were half-starved much of the time, and this may have contributed to Robert's early death at twenty-six. Photographs of Reich at this period show a thin young man of unprepossessing appearance, whose set face displays nervous tension. Ilse says that he was 'an outstanding student, a leader in student discussions, liked by many, but disliked by others because of his brilliance'. But people are never disliked for their brilliance; only for the bumptiousness and conceit that so often go with it. So we have to envisage Reich as an intense, impatient young man, distinctly humourless—as he remained all his life—who struck many people as self-obsessed. People who liked him were impressed by the quickness of his mind. People who disliked him probably referred to him as a 'clever Jew-boy'. He was half-starved, had no parents, and we are probably justified in assuming that the relatives who had looked after Robert had now lost all interest in the Reich brothers; or perhaps, like so many Viennese after the war, they themselves were starving. In any case, it was now 'Reich against the world'.

And at this point, the outward events of Reich's life become less important than the ideas that began to possess him. Historically speaking, he was lucky; he was a naturally brilliant young man who found himself suddenly in the centre of a whirlpool of new ideas. For psychologists, Vienna meant Freud, Jung and Adler. For musicians it meant Schoenberg and his school. For painters, Klimt and Egon Schiele and Richard Gerst and Oskar Kokoschka. For architects it meant Adolf Loos and the building without ornament. For philosophers, it came to mean 'the Vienna school'—when Reich came to Vienna, Wittgenstein was training there as a schoolmaster.

In *The Function of the Orgasm* Reich tells how, one day in January 1919, a note was passed surreptitiously around the class. Someone felt that it was time that sex came out into the open at the medical school, and suggested a seminar on the subject. A group of students argued that sex was being neglected at the university, and that there ought to be a course in 'sexology'. Thirty or so students supported the idea, and the course ran throughout 1919. By the autumn,

all but eight of them had lost interest and dropped out. And Reich had become the leader of the group. He had also discovered the subject that was to absorb him—in fact, obsess him—for the rest of his life.

Modern readers will assume that a course in sex meant a course in the ideas of Freud. This is untrue. Freud was a fairly latecomer to a field that had already been exhaustively explored by writers like Krafft-Ebing, Hirschfeld, Forel, Bloch and Ellis. In fact, one of the earliest systematic works on the human sexual impulse—and its deviations—was written when Freud was only eight years old. This was *The Psychology of Human Drives* by Jacob Santlus (1864), which argued that human drives can be divided into the psychological and the spiritual, and that it is the interaction of the two that produces sexual deviations. Twenty-two years later came the first great classic in the field, Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis,* in which he coined the terms sadism and masochism. (The book became an immediate best-seller, with the result that the British Medico-Psychological Association debated whether to cancel his honorary membership.) In 1899, Dr Magnus Hirschfeld, himself a homosexual, launched his *Yearbook of Sexual Deviations*, and later founded the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, specifically for studying sexual illness. In England, Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* caused widespread scandal in the late 1890s; the English, unlike their continental neighbours, believed that sex should be discussed only by doctors behind locked doors. The classic history of English sexual morals had to be written by a German, Ivan Bloch.

Most of these writers were inclined to approach the subject in a pragmatic, almost mechanistic manner. Masturbation and *coitus interruptus* were supposed to cause nervous illness. They argued a great deal about whether sexual perversions were inborn or acquired. Krafft-Ebing is always falling back on phrases like 'hereditary mental disease', 'congenital psychopathic disposition' and 'defective moral sense'. The matter was further complicated by a vague general assumption that sex was something that made its appearance at puberty, in the form of a drive called 'the libido', a scientific euphemism for lust. Since sex was basically the procreative impulse, the task of the sexologist was to explain how it became perverted into homosexuality, sadism, fetishism and so on. At times it sounds almost as if they suspect that sexual deviations are caused by different types of germ.

This was the kind of topic discussed at early meetings, and Reich's reaction was one of positive and instantaneous distaste. He commented that Krafft-Ebing and the rest 'made sexuality seem bizarre and strange'. He goes on irritably (in *The Function of the Orgasm*): 'A natural sexuality did not seem to exist. The unconscious was full of nothing but perverse impulses.' Reich was basically an

idealist and—oddly enough—something of a puritan. And to understand what disturbed him so much, one has only to open Krafft-Ebing or Hirschfeld at almost any page. This, for example, from Krafft-Ebing:[1]

'Case 39. X, merchant ... He would accost some prostitute and ask her to go to a shoe shop with him, where he would buy her the handsomest pair of shoes made of patent leather ... When this had taken place, she had to go about in the street, walking in manure and mud as much as possible, in order to soil the shoes. Then X would lead the person to a hotel, and, almost before they reached the room, he would cast himself at her feet, feeling an extraordinary pleasure in licking them with his lips. When he had cleaned the shoes in this manner he paid her and went his way.'

As one turns the pages of *Psychopathia Sexualis* one glimpses typical phrases: 'Without any teaching he began to masturbate, and always during the act there were mental pictures of bleeding women'; 'Later the mere idea of old, ugly women's heads in nightcaps was sufficient to induce an erection'; 'From the age of twelve, there was masturbation with the employment of furs, or by means of taking a furry dog to bed'; 'By means of large sums of money he would induce prostitutes to lie on their backs and allow him to urinate and defecate in their mouths'; '... visited prostitutes, had them purchase a living fowl or rabbit, and made them torture the animal'; 'She likes best to perform anilinctus on old men ... ' As the grisly procession of freaks winds on over hundreds of pages, it begins to seem that half the human race is sexually twisted, and that even 'normal sex' is rather disgusting. Understandably, the 22-year-old Reich, himself highly susceptible to the attractions of the opposite sex, felt that all this had little to do with the mystical force that binds Tristan to Isolde or Faust to Marguerite.

It was not all that much better when they invited a Freudian to come and talk to them. 'He spoke well and interestingly, but I instinctively disliked his way of dealing with sexuality. This in spite of the fact that I was very much interested and was learning many new things. Somehow the speaker did not seem to be the right person to be speaking on the subject.' In other words, the lectures were too coldly clinical, like a discourse on poetry by someone who is interested only in its grammatical structure.

But Freud differed from Krafft-Ebing and the rest in one fundamental respect. At least no one could accuse him of not seeing the wood for the trees. Freud went behind the rather pathetic manifestations and spoke about the hidden power that produced them. For this he borrowed the ready-made term 'libido'; but it meant something completely different from the sex-drive of the early sexologists. Freud's libido was an immense force, perhaps the greatest of all natural forces. When frustrated, said Freud, it turns into anxiety and neurosis.

Now Reich was also less interested in human sexual peculiarities than in the force that lay behind them. And Freud's concept of the libido produced on him an effect of revelation. What excited him so much was his feeling that this libido was nothing less than the force of life itself.

If so, this concept could unify all the 'vital sciences'—biology, psychology, zoology—as Newton's concept of gravity unified the physical sciences. It would be nothing less than the key to the mystery of life. In a lecture to the seminar in the summer of 1919, Reich compared the libido to electricity, which can never be observed directly, but only through its manifestations—light, heat and so on. One day, Reich said, it should be possible to measure the libido as directly as we can measure electric current with a voltmeter ... His fellow students were so impressed that they voted him leader of the seminar for the following autumn.

The irony is that Reich's conversion to Freudianism was based on misunderstanding. By the time Reich came to Vienna, Freud had long ago abandoned the idea of the libido as a hidden force that could explain neurosis. He had never really been happy with it—he tended to use it as a convenient label for various unknown psychic factors, rather as old map makers labelled certain regions *'terra incognita'*. Freud's approach was basically far more pragmatic than Reich's. It is true that in a very early paper, written a quarter of a century before, Freud had attempted to construct a kind of working model of the mind as a piece of 'neurological machinery', driven by a kind of nervous energy (called 'quantity of excitation'). But he abandoned the paper almost as soon as it was finished, and the 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' remained in manuscript until after his death. Freud's biographer Ernest Jones said he was ashamed of it.[2] In fact, Freud was never much interested in theories and working models; he liked to observe neurosis at first hand in the consulting room, and then—very cautiously—try to draw conclusions. In 1926 he entirely abandoned the libido theory.

Now Reich's approach was as far from this cautious pragmatism as it could be. Basically, he was interested in the idea of a meaning and purpose in nature. He read Auguste Forel's book *The Sexual Question* because it was one of the key works on sexology; but he was more interested in Forel's early work on ants, in which Forel pointed out the highly *purposive* nature of ant organization. It is almost as if the ant colony is a single organism, directed by some purpose that is greater than any individual. From Forel, Reich turned to the work of the vitalist philosopher Hans Driesch, who had abandoned biology when he became disillusioned with the 'machine theory of life' that was current in the 1890s. Driesch had become convinced that life is basically purposive. For example, if he destroyed half a sea urchin's egg with a hot needle, the remaining half

developed into a perfect but half-sized embryo—not, as one might expect, into a half-embryo. So a living organism could be constructed out of one of its parts. On the other hand, no one would expect to construct a machine out of a single screw.

But while Reich found Driesch's disproof of the 'machine theory' convincing, he was unable to accept the next stage of the argument: that the 'purpose' of living organisms exists beyond nature, outside space and time. Driesch called this purpose 'entelechy', but Reich was intelligent enough to see that he was really letting in God by the back door: 'It gave me the feeling that a gigantic problem was being evaded by means of a word.'

He found the ideas of Henri Bergson more satisfying than those of Driesch, largely because Bergson plays his cards more cautiously. He rejects mechanistic materialism without taking flight into metaphysics or religion. Yet Bergson's *élan vital* is basically the same thing as Driesch's entelechy. Bergson may be more 'scientific' than Driesch, but his arguments lead to the same conclusion. Which is plainly inevitable; for life must either be a product of matter—as fire is of coal—or it must have an independent existence *beyond* matter. The first view leads to materialism, the second to vitalism—or religion. And although Reich claimed to reject Driesch's vitalism—he dismissed him with the sneer: 'He later found refuse among the spiritists'—he himself remained fundamentally a vitalist. He even admits, in *The Function of the Orgasm*, to being impressed by the principles of Buddhism, and of Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. He nevertheless looked for scientific justification for his vitalism, and found it to some extent in the work of Paul Kammerer, a biologist who believed that the will plays a fundamental part in evolution. There was a point when it looked as if Kammerer had proved his case through his experiments on midwife toads. Reich was also excited by the work of Eugen Steinach, who showed that animals—and people—can be rejuvenated by means of sex hormones. Old rats on which he performed an operation to increase their output of sex hormone became as virile and aggressive as young rats—for a short time. It seemed to demonstrate a direct connection between the sex drives and the force of life.

Reich took the opportunity to visit Kammerer, Steinach, Adler, Freud and Stekel (one of Freud's leading disciples). He found all but Freud disappointing. Kammerer was a charming, upper-class Viennese, something of a Don Juan, who struck Reich as 'not particularly interested'. This kindly and elegant man may have found the young Reich a little too intense. Steinach was exhausted, and complained about the persecution to which he was being subjected by his academic colleagues. Reich's own persecution mania was not yet sufficiently developed to enable him to sympathize. Stekel impressed Reich unfavourably

because he seemed anxious to please. This seems to fit with the little we know of Stekel's character; he was one of the more lightweight of Freud's followers, and one historian of psychoanalysis has remarked that 'his interest in sexuality remained quasi-pornographic'.[3] As for Adler, he had broken with Freud, and spent most of his time railing against him.

Freud himself was a different matter. 'To begin with, he was simple and straightforward in his attitude. Each one of the others expressed in his attitude some role; that of professor, that of the great *Menschenkenner* [judge of human nature], or the distinguished scientist. Freud spoke to me like an ordinary human being. He had piercingly intelligent eyes; they did not try to penetrate the listener's eyes in a visionary pose; they simply looked into the world, straight and honest.'

What emerges clearly from this description is that Reich believed that he had encountered in Freud a completely balanced and healthy man. The comment about the others 'playing roles' is significant, for Reich later developed the notion of 'character armour', which the weak develop to cover their insecurity. Freud alone seemed above this need. And, oddly enough, this still seemed true to Reich thirty years later, when he tape-recorded a series of interviews that have been published as *Reich Speaks of Freud.* Reich told the interviewer—Dr Kurt Eissler—that he considered that most psychoanalysts were 'genitally disturbed', and that this was why they hated his orgasm theory of sexuality. Eissler asked him: 'You think that extends to Freud too?' and Reich hastened to say: 'No, I don't. That's the point. When I met Freud, I saw that he was a very alive, strong-willed person. He couldn't possibly have been disturbed.' But this remark was made before the publication of the first volume of Jones's life of Freud in 1954. When Reich read this, it apparently struck him as a revelation, and he wrote a letter to Eissler admitting that he now realized that Freud was not a 'genitally healthy man'. 'The biography reveals what I had not known, that he suffered, under familial and religious pressures, from severe sexual stasis during the nearly five years of his betrothal to a girl who, quite obviously, was deeply spellbound by a neurotic mother. This might seem unimportant had it not forced Sigmund Freud to hamper all further developments concerning genitality.' This, says Reich, is why Freud found it impossible to accept his own orgasm theory.

Reich was not entirely incorrect in supposing that Freud had his sexual problems. Ernest Jones writes that 'the more passionate side of married life subsided with him earlier than it does with many men'. The evidence suggests that he became impotent, or simply lost interest in sex, before he reached his mid-forties.[4] On the other hand, Reich's explanation of Freud's hostility has an

air of rationalization. The truth is that the two men were so totally unlike that it would have been impossible for them to remain on friendly terms for any length of time. Freud required disciples rather than followers; and when the disciples showed the slightest tendency to think for themselves, he felt betrayed and rejected them violently. In his book on Freud's relations with his disciple Tausk, Paul Roazen points out that Freud only felt comfortable in the role of father-figure; yet his theory of the Oedipus complex implies that there is a deep, unconscious hostility between father and son. He expected to be stabbed in the back, and reacted to any sign of supposed hostility with ruthless and total rejection. He threw out his disciples like an angry father disinheriting his sons. Such a rejection brought Jung to the brink of mental breakdown in 1913, and actually drove Tausk—a rather self-pitying character—to suicide in 1919. In matters involving loyalty, Freud had more than a touch of paranoia. But then, so had Reich. And with two such powerful characters, the relationship was bound to end in mutual rejection.

Chapter Two

If we are to understand the developments during those crucial years, 1920 to 1927 (when Reich clashed with Freud), it is necessary to speak of the history of psychoanalysis.

When Freud was studying medicine, in the late 1870s and early 1880s, it was still generally accepted that mental illnesses were physical in origin. ‘Mental diseases are brain diseases,’ said Wilhelm Griesinger, the dean of nineteenth-century psychiatrists. And in his comprehensive history of psychiatry, *The Discovery of the Unconscious,* Henri Ellenberger remarks: ‘Occasionally a physician was appointed medical director of a mental hospital, his only qualification being that he was a good student of brain anatomy.’ This mechanistic theory of mental illness was known as ‘organicism’ and, as we have noted, Freud himself was inclined to accept it in his early days. His teacher in Vienna was Theodor Meynert, one of the leading figures of the organicist school.

In 1869, an American named George M. Beard introduced an interesting change of emphasis when he suggested that mental illnesses were diseases of the nervous system due to a lack of such chemicals as phosphorus. This caused nervous exhaustion, or ‘neurasthenia’. Beard’s neurasthenia immediately became a fashionable disease. In that age of masculine men and womanly women, it was regarded as shameful to be nervous or hypersensitive; now Beard had shown that neurosis was no more degrading than catching cold.

Beard was anything but a dogmatic mechanist. He recognized that in America, the problem of neurasthenia was due mainly to the increasing pressures of a competitive society. He was also acute enough to see that freedom itself—religious and political—can raise its own distinct problems and add to the tension of everyday life; for a man with no idea of how to use it, freedom can be destructive. Beard also produced simple comparisons to explain his concept of nervous exhaustion and nervous energy; human beings can be likened to storage batteries, charged with a certain reserve of nervous force; people with low reserves are prone to breakdown. He also liked to compare this nervous force to money; a man of high vitality is a kind of millionaire; a man who overdraws his account goes into nervous bankruptcy.

Little by little, psychology was moving away from pure ‘mechanism’. But the process was painfully slow, since the alternative—what might be called ‘dynamism’—aroused such intense hostility among men of science. The man who was almost entirely to blame for this was Franz Anton Mesmer, the

Who was almost entirely to blame for this was Franz Anton Mesmer, the discoverer of ‘animal magnetism’, whose revolutionary ideas had electrified Europe in the 1770s and 1780s. Mesmer was detested because he was regarded as a kind of mystic or occultist. (We have already noted the remarkable resemblance between his ideas and Reich’s.) And for most of the nineteenth century, the medical profession continued to regard his name as a synonym for charlatanism.

Unfortunately for the progress of psychiatry, the same judgement was applied to the discovery of Mesmer’s pupil, the Marquis de Puységur: hypnosis. Puységur and his brother were treating a young peasant named Victor Race for asthma, and one day, as Race was being ‘magnetized’, he fell into a trance. And although ‘asleep’, he was able to obey simple orders and answer questions; he actually seemed more intelligent in this state than when awake. Other hypnotized patients could not only diagnose their own illnesses, but could also describe their future developments. Hypnotism also became a sensation in Europe in the late eighteenth century, but fell into disrepute with the downfall of Mesmer. When the brilliant young doctor E. J. Georget defended mesmerism (already confused with hypnosis) in front of the French Academy of Sciences in 1826, he was interrupted by cries of ‘Charlatan!’ In England, pioneers of hypnosis like John Elliotson, James Esdaile and James Braid met with bitter opposition that damaged their careers. No amount of medical evidence could convince doctors that hypnotism was not some disguised form of ‘occultism’. It was widely believed that hypnotized people had second sight[1]—in fact, there is some impressive evidence for the theory—and an erudite English lady named Mary Ann South even tried to prove that it was the basic secret of the alchemists. So where hypnotherapy was concerned, it was a matter of guilt by association.

For the advocates of hypnosis, the year 1882 was the turning point. This was due to the work of two men, one famous, one unknown. The unknown was a French country doctor named Auguste Liébault. As a medical student in the 1840s, Liébault had come across an old book on ‘magnetism’; he tried it out and found that it worked. Because his patients—mostly poor peasants—were suspicious of the method, Liébault offered hypnotic treatment free. He even wrote a book about it, but it sold only one copy in ten years. For forty years, Liébault cured all kinds of illnesses by soothing the patient into hypnotic sleep, and then suggesting that he would wake up feeling better. In 1882, he tried the method on a patient of the successful neurologist Hippolyte Bernheim, and succeeded in curing a case of sciatica that had failed to yield to Bernheim’s methods. Surprisingly, Bernheim did not follow the usual medical precedent and denounce the ‘magnetist’ as a fraud; he went to study Liébault’s methods at his country surgery, was impressed by them, and decided to adopt them. He and

country surgery, was impressed by them, and decided to adopt them. He and Liébault became known as the founders of the 'Nancy school' of hypnotherapy.

Bernheim's discovery of hypnosis had been anticipated by his colleague—and rival—Jean-Martin Charcot, the most celebrated doctor in France. As a young intern, Charcot had been appointed to the Salpêtrière, a hospital that was basically a poorhouse for old women; there he had been fascinated by cases of hysteria—that is, by patients who might exhibit anything from hysterical convulsions to hysterical pregnancies; some even performed the apparently impossible feat of bending backwards until their heads touched their heels. Charcot left the Salpêtrière and slowly gained celebrity as an expert on geriatrics, kidney diseases and disseminated sclerosis. At thirty-six, he was appointed chief physician at the Salpêtrière, and set out to solve the mystery of hysteria. In 1878, he discovered that some of his most spectacular hysterics were deeply susceptible to hypnosis, and proceeded to study the subject with his usual obsessive methodicalness. And in February 1882—the year that Bernheim was convinced by Liébault—he succeeded where so many others had failed, and persuaded the Academy of Sciences to listen with serious attention to a paper on hysteria and hypnosis. It must be stated immediately that he succeeded largely because he had made a fundamental error that took the sting out of his advocacy. He was convinced that hypnosis is itself a pathological condition—a form of hysteria—restricted to the mentally ill. Bernheim flatly opposed this view, pointing out that it is easier to hypnotize a healthy and intelligent person than a mentally disturbed one. Charcot declined to believe it. Like many great discoverers, he was a less-than-satisfactory human being: dominant, egotistical, dictatorial and pig-headed. But the Academy of Sciences was charmed by his view that hypnosis is a form of sickness, and dropped their opposition to the subject. It had been precisely ninety-eight years since their colleagues had condemned Mesmer.

Charcot's trouble, quite simply, was that he tended to think in rigid categories, which meant that he saw what he was looking for. And his personality was so strong that his patients were inclined to exhibit precisely the symptoms he expected from them. In short, Charcot's mental make-up contained a great deal more 'personality' than 'impersonality'. Fortunately for himself, he was highly successful, and had plenty of opportunity to indulge his craving for applause. His lectures were virtually stage performances:

> [His patients] were always ready to ... exhibit his famous three stages of hypnotism: lethargy, catalepsy, somnambulism, all invented by the Master, and hardly ever observed outside the Salpêtrière. Some of them smelt with delight a bottle of ammonia when told it was rose water, others would eat a piece of charcoal when presented to

> them as chocolate. Another would crawl on all fours, barking furiously when told she was a dog, flap her arms as if trying to fly when turned into a pigeon, lift her skirts with a shriek of terror when a glove was thrown at her feet with a suggestion of being a snake ... [2]

But Charcot's great achievement was to make the medical profession aware of the basic similarity of hypnosis and hysteria. Many patients suffered from hysterical paralysis of the limbs or speech muscles. Charcot hypnotized a man in front of the audience, then told him that when he was slapped on the back, his arm would become paralysed. Charcot woke him up and slapped him on the back; instantly, the man's arm became paralysed.

Unfortunately, the tendency to think in rigid categories made Charcot miss the true significance of his demonstrations: that hysteria and hypnosis were both *forms of suggestion.* According to Charcot, hypnosis *is* hysteria, a pathological condition. As to how hysterical patients became 'hypnotized' in the first place, Charcot had an ingenious answer: the original trauma produced a condition of shock which was, in fact, a 'hypnoid state'; and in this state, any suggestion of paralysis could lead to the real thing ...

Bernheim was less inclined to allow his preconceptions to distort his observation. Yet absurdly enough, he went on to make the opposite error. He saw clearly that both hypnosis and hysteria were due to suggestion, which led him to wonder whether suggestion would not be equally effective when the patient was wide awake. He found that it was. So Bernheim came to place increasing emphasis on the waking state, which in turn led him further and further from those strange mysteries of hysteria—and the unconscious mind—that had so intrigued Charcot. Bernheim, like Charcot, failed to make the tremendous discovery that was staring him in the face.

The man who made it was, of course, Sigmund Freud, who spent some time studying with Charcot while the latter was still conducting his experiments in hysteria and hypnosis. What struck Freud, with the force of revelation, was that if the 'unconscious mind' can produce the phenomena of hysteria and hypnosis, *then it must be far more powerful than the conscious mind.* Freud was the first to grasp the full significance of that word 'unconscious'.

His mind had already been prepared for the discovery by a case with which he had been concerned in 1881, four years before his visit to the Salpêtrière. His friend and colleague Josef Breuer had been treating a young girl named Bertha Pappenheim, who was suffering from periodic hypnoid states, and paralysis of her right arm. Bertha's everyday self alternated with a semi-conscious self who spoke only English, and suffered from various hallucinations. Perhaps the most curious thing about this trance-state was that it caused Bertha to re-live events

that had occurred precisely one year earlier—even to the exact day and hour. She also spoke sentences that seemed confused and meaningless, sometimes in a mixture of four or five languages. She periodically exhibited other hysterical symptoms: deafness, dumbness, a squint, and an inability to swallow food or drink:

One day as the girl lay in her 'absent' state, muttering occasional words, someone in the same room repeated one of her phrases. The girl took up the phrase and began to tell an imaginary story. The longer she talked, the more fluent she became. Finally, she woke up, feeling calm and relieved. The inference seemed to be that talking had helped her to get something 'out of her system'.

Breuer now tried questioning the 'absent' girl about her hysterical symptoms; she would describe what had originally caused them, and woke up feeling better. For example, she explained her inability to drink by telling how she saw a dog drinking from a glass of water. Having said this, she demanded a drink, swallowed it down, and woke up cured of this particular symptom. She eventually described how the original trauma had been caused as she sat by the bedside of her dying father. She had fallen asleep with her arm over the back of the chair, and her arm went to sleep. In this state she had a waking dream, or a nightmare, in which she saw a black snake writhing towards her father; she tried to drive it off, but the arm was paralysed. She tried to pray, but could only remember some verses in English. A train whistle woke her up. The next day the sight of a bent branch in the garden reminded her of a snake, and her arm became paralysed; she also found she could only speak in English. The same thing would occur at intervals whenever some snake-like object triggered the hallucination. After telling Breuer about this dream of the snake, she woke up cured.

What Charcot had to say seemed to throw a great deal of light on the case of Bertha Pappenheim (or 'Anna O.', as she became known in the annals of medicine). The original trauma occurred in a nightmare—a 'hypnoid' state; the sight of the branch the next day was the post-hypnotic suggestion that caused the paralysis, just as Charcot had caused it by a slap on the back. It also seemed to bear out another theory of Charcot's: that certain people seem to be in a state of *permanent* 'somnambulism', and in such people, paralysis—or other hysterical symptoms—can be induced even without hypnotic suggestion. Clearly, this applied particularly to people whose vitality had been reduced by illness, or a series of shocks and defeats.

Now before Charcot, the most widely held theory about hysterics was that they were 'putting it on', exaggerating their symptoms to gain attention. Charcot

exploded this conveniently simplistic notion. What he showed, in effect, is that *hysteria is a physical symptom caused by the subconscious mind.* Everyone experiences its simpler forms every day. We know that talking about itching can make us itch. Every schoolboy has felt his handwriting ‘freeze up’ when the schoolmaster peers over his shoulder. We can be put off our food if someone talks of something disgusting.

Symptoms like this hardly suggest the enormous power of the unconscious mind. But it is a different matter when a woman’s stomach swells up with a ‘phantom pregnancy’. Or when a hypnotist causes a wart to vanish by hypnotic suggestion, or a blister to appear by telling the subject that he has touched him with a red-hot iron. These effects are far beyond the power of the conscious will. And it was Freud whose intuition went to the heart of the matter. The unconscious must be somehow far *weightier and heavier* than ordinary consciousness. It could be compared to the ballast in a ship; no one can see it, and it has no obvious effect. Yet without it, the ship would bob around like a cork and overturn in the first high wind. Moreover, if the ballast moves in a storm, the ship may well capsize.

This idea of the unconscious had been around for more than a century, ever since Leibniz first used it in his *Monadology.* But no one had ever before grasped its full significance. Leibniz was only talking about unconscious perceptions, which he called ‘little perceptions’, meaning that they are too lightweight to make themselves felt by consciousness; he obviously saw the unconscious as a narrow, penumbral area of consciousness. In *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*, published in 1869, Eduard von Hartmann expanded Schopenhauer’s idea that *nature* is driven by an unconscious will, but he failed to apply the idea to man. As far as common usage went, to do something ‘unconsciously’ meant to do it absent-mindedly.

Freud was the first to see that the unconscious was something far more mysterious than absent-mindedness. Breuer and Charcot taught him that the basic mechanism of neurosis is *suggestibility.* That is to say that Charcot’s ‘grand hysterics’ with their strange ailments were simply an amplified version of the simple mechanism that makes us itch when someone talks about itching. The mechanism can be seen clearly in the case of Bertha Pappenheim. Breuer says of her in *Studies in Hysteria* that she was an inveterate daydreamer, and that ‘her states of feeling always tended to slight exaggeration’. That is to say, she was highly imaginative and highly suggestible. Her father’s illness plunged her into depression. From then on, the course of the illness could be likened to a game of tennis between her conscious and unconscious mind. Depressed by the illness, the conscious mind plunges into pessimism about the future. The highly

suggestible unconscious mind responds with its own sense of foreboding and misery, which in turn intensifies the depression of the conscious mind, which in turn influences the unconscious, which in turn ... And so the game of tennis continues, the depression deepening as it shuttles back and forth between the conscious and the unconscious. When the unconscious is healthy, we experience a sense of inner-support, of vitality bubbling up from the depths; when it is sick, we have a sense of inner collapse, lack of energy, a feeling like walking on thin ice. In Bertha's case, the steady leakage of vitality gradually eroded the usual difference between sleeping and waking, until dreams invaded the conscious mind, producing hallucinations.

This brings us to the oddest part of the story. In recognizing the immense power of suggestibilty, Freud had, in effect, discovered the basic mechanism of hysteria and neurosis. Yet he failed to recognize the central role of the 'tennis-playing mechanism'. What blinded him to its importance was his increasing conviction that the conscious mind is little more than a puppet of the unconscious. It may have been a disadvantage that he made his 'discovery of the unconscious' through the case of Bertha Pappenheim; for Bertha was an extreme case of its disruptive powers. She might break off a conversation with Breuer to climb a tree; moments later, brought back to her previous train of thought, she would continue where she left off, with no memory of climbing the tree. This looked remarkably like what the Church used to call 'demoniacal possession', in which the mind becomes a *slave* to 'demonic' forces. From cases like 'Anna O.' and the hysterics of the Salpêtrière, it was easy for Freud to jump to the conclusion that the conscious mind is a slave to the demonic forces of the unconscious. Free will is an illusion.

With the wisdom of hindsight, we can see that Freud was simply rushing from one extreme to another. The nineteenth century was inclined to overestimate the power of reasoning and conscious decision; Freud declared that they were practically non-existent. We can grasp the flaw in his logic if we turn to the analogy of the ship. It is true that a shift in the ballast can cause the ship to tilt or capsize. But it cannot make it turn round and go in the opposite direction; only the captain can do that. He is in charge, not the ballast.

The conclusion of Bertha Pappenheim's illness makes the same point. 'The patient had formed a strong determination that the whole treatment should be finished by the anniversary of the day on which she moved (from Vienna) into the country,' says Breuer. In other words, she made a decision, at a certain point, that it was her *conscious will* that mattered, not her unconscious terrors. In fact, she described the original trauma—the snake dream—on the exact anniversary, and woke up cured.

But Freud, dazzled and excited by his ‘discovery of the unconscious’, overlooked the significance of this kind of evidence. Instead, he pursued a rather dangerous line of argument. If the unconscious is so powerful, then surely there is reason to suspect that *it* makes all the decisions that appear to emanate from consciousness? The ‘id’ pulls the strings, and consciousness dances. This was to become one of the most fundamental assumptions of psychoanalysis.

But it raises another question. If our motivations are not what we think they are, then what are they? In other words, what motivates the unconscious?

When we look at it more closely, we can see that the question is really a linguistic misunderstanding. To say that the unconscious mind is more powerful than the conscious mind is not the same thing as saying that it is the puppet master. An elephant is stronger than a man; but it can still be controlled by him. The correct wording of the question is not ‘*What* motivates the unconscious?’ but ‘*How* is the unconscious motivated?’ Then we can see the answer quite clearly: by the suggestions of the conscious mind: pleasure and pain, excitement and boredom, desire and frustration. If I anticipate excitement, the unconscious provides me with energy; if I anticipate boredom, it withdraws energy, and I feel oddly dull and empty.

Because he failed to grasp the ‘tennis mechanism’, Freud had to find another powerful factor that could explain how the unconscious produced neurosis—a kind of hidden irritant, like the pearl in the oyster. His eventual conclusion, as everyone knows, is that this factor is sex. And in creating the sexual theory, Freud once again pushed the unconscious mind into second place. He was repeating, in a different form, the error of Charcot and Bernheim.

This point is so crucial to the understanding of Reich that it is important to grasp its full implications before we continue.

The ‘tennis mechanism’ described above would nowadays be called a ‘feedback mechanism’. Feedback occurs when part of the product of a system is fed back into the system itself, as when a businessman ploughs back some of his profits into the business. In the same way, when you drive your car, the dynamo produces electricity, which recharges the battery, which in turn is essential to starting the car. This image, in fact, describes one of the fundamental operations of the unconscious.

It might help this discussion if we try to de-mystify this term ‘unconscious’. For all practical purposes, it is simply the *mechanical* part of my being. As Leibniz pointed out, I ‘know’ many things of which I am not conscious. For example, if someone asked me to make a sketch of the keyboard of a typewriter, I would have no idea where to put the various letters. But I could soon work it out by drumming my fingers on the desk. *They* know where the keys are, even if

my ‘conscious mind’ doesn’t.

This kind of knowledge—learned knowledge—is stored fairly near the surface of my unconscious. Deeper down is the knowledge my ancestors have acquired in the past two million years of evolution; deeper still, the knowledge of our pre-human ancestors. Man has no less than three brains—what might be called the human brain, the mammal brain and the reptile brain. The whole complex, including the nervous system, could be compared to a huge computer. This computer is basically what Freud meant by the unconscious.

The ‘conscious me’ is in charge of this computer. This statement has to be qualified immediately. I cannot make my feet warm merely by wanting to. Yet I can make my heart beat faster by thinking about something that alarms or excites me. I can release sex hormones by thinking about something that is sexually exciting. With a little training in techniques of meditation, I can even make my heart beat slower. Personal evolution—‘growing up’—is largely a matter of achieving greater control over the computer. A schoolgirl cannot stop herself blushing when someone pays her a compliment, but a mature woman can. On the whole, it would be true to say that the ‘conscious me’ is intended to be the master of the computer.

But then, one of the main functions of the unconscious is to preserve our health; not merely on the level of destroying germs, but also on the psychological level of keeping us optimistic and full of energy. The unconscious is our basic life-support system.

And—here again we approach the heart of the matter—it does this according to instruction, or hints, from the conscious mind. And the conscious mind takes its own hints from the surrounding world, which it ‘scans’ like a radar saucer. When I wake up in the morning, I ‘scan’ the day ahead, asking myself how much energy I shall require to get through it. If it is the first morning of a holiday, I demand—and get—a large supply. If it is a wet December morning, with a prospect of tiresome problems, my ‘heart sinks’, and it costs me an effort to get out of bed. This explains why, after six months at work without a holiday, human beings begin to feel ‘run down’. They are not genuinely *tired*; it is simply that the unconscious mind responds to negative signals by rationing the energy supply. The ‘car battery’ fails to recharge, and we find it hard to get started. During a holiday, the unconscious responds to positive signals by releasing a flood of vitality.

In short, the chief role of the unconscious is that of a servant; it could be compared to the nurse who hands the surgeon his instruments: energy, concentration, sharpened perception, and so on. Neurosis develops when the surgeon gets at cross purposes with the nurse, and the nurse becomes

increasingly sullen and resentful. This was the aspect of the unconscious that impressed Freud: its power to cause headaches, paralysis, suicidal impulses. But he totally overlooked its positive powers. Every child has noticed that Christmas can be completely unlike other holidays, that it can have an air of ‘magic’. This is the feedback mechanism working positively; a continuous barrage of pleasant anticipation has persuaded the subconscious to release enormous quantities of vitality. A saint who is confident of the love of God may float into mystical ecstasy; he attributes this to God, but it would be more accurate to give the credit to the ‘computer.’

Anyone who has seen the old Laurel and Hardy films can understand the mechanism. When the two find themselves in some preposterous situation, Stan glances at Ollie’s face to see how he is reacting. If Ollie looks dissatisfied, Stan plunges into the depths of gloom. If Ollie looks pleased, Stan is delighted. *He always over-reacts.* And, essentially, Ollie is boss. This is also the relation of the conscious to the unconscious mind. The unconscious takes its cues from consciousness. This also explains why people whose lives are flat and dull are more prone to neurosis than busy people. The busy man may be upset by some problem or setback, but a few minutes later he is responding to another stimulus, and the tennis mechanism has no time to build up—either into despair or delight. The saint who goes into the wilderness to pray is deliberately providing himself with the conditions in which he can achieve mystical ecstasy, or plunge into a ‘dark night of the soul’. Since human beings are inclined to be pessimistic, most people whose lives are uneventful are more likely to slip into neurosis than ecstasy.

Which brings us to the major point: that the ‘feedback mechanism’ *is* within the control of the conscious mind. It is not necessary to provide the mind with a series of pleasant stimuli: *merely to think.* Wordsworth’s *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* provides a case in point. It begins with the famous lines about childhood—how meadow, grove and stream seemed ‘apparell’d in celestial light’, and how, now he is an adult, ‘there hath passed away a glory from the earth’. Yet a few lines later he explains that the fit of depression has already passed: ‘A timely utterance gave that thought relief/ And I again am strong.’ This could be called ‘the Wordsworth effect’. Instead of contemplating its problems with passive misery, the mind takes an active attitude towards them, and quickly regains a feeling of control over its own destiny.

For this is, of course, the central issue. Has the mind a degree of control over its own destiny? Or are we the playthings of forces far greater than ourselves? Freud took the latter view; consequently his psychology is basically pessimistic. On the other hand, the post-Freudian psychologist Abraham Maslow created a

basically optimistic psychology on the recognition that most healthy people experience ‘positive feedback’—which he called the peak experience—every day of their lives. The importance of his observation is that healthy people have learned the trick of regulating their vital economy to produce peak experiences. It would be missing the point to say that they have peak experiences because they are lucky enough to be healthy. They have learned the trick of causing the unconscious mind to respond to positive suggestion, which elicits a response of vital energy, but also of *meaning.* The meaning inspires the conscious mind with a sense of purpose, and there is no more certain way of ensuring a subsidy of energy from the unconscious than to possess a sense of purpose. This, in turn, guarantees physical health. The Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl made a similar discovery when he was in a concentration camp during the war: that the prisoners with a sense of purpose lived longest, while those who surrendered to despair and boredom were most susceptible to illness. For the demoralized prisoners, the unconscious had abandoned its work of ‘support’.

Frankl has an equally significant observation that makes the opposite point. When prisoners from Auschwitz were moved to Dachau, the journey took three days, during which they were overcrowded and half-starved. At Dachau they were kept standing in the freezing rain all night because someone had fallen asleep and missed the roll call. Yet, Frankl said, they were all relaxed and happy, laughing and telling jokes—*because Dachau had no incinerator chimney.*

What is significant here is the recognition that the conscious mind can *choose* to which elements in its situation it will decide to give prominence. The prisoners had *almost* every reason for pessimism: cold, damp, starvation, imprisonment, threat of death. The lack of a chimney can hardly be called a positive element. Yet when consciousness selects this one element for notice above all others, the unconscious promptly responds with a surge of sheer exhilaration. Again, we observe the vital importance of this element of freedom, the mind’s freedom to choose its attitudes.

The ‘computer’ is not simply our vital support system; it is also an immense reference library. An interesting example is cited by the poet Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*: an illiterate young woman fell into a ‘nervous fever’ and began to speak in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. It looked like some odd form of ‘demoniacal posession’ until a doctor discovered that the girl had been brought up by a pastor who spoke all three languages, and was in the habit of wandering around the house intoning his favourite passages from the classics. The girl’s unconscious mind had ‘recorded’ the words, and she repeated them in her delirium.

In a more recent case, a subject under the influence of a psychedelic drug told

the doctor, Jean Houston, that he was in ancient Athens listening to Socrates. Asked what Socrates was saying, the patient said 'I don't know—he's speaking in Greek.' The doctor had taken a degree in classical Greek, and asked him to repeat what Socrates was saying: whereupon the man repeated the words in classical Greek.[3] In this case there was no revelation of a childhood spent in the house of a Greek scholar, but Dr Houston found nothing unusual in the episode; she had studied other cases in which people gave details of life in ancient Egypt or medieval Europe, and was convinced that it was a matter of unconscious learning from television or magazines. The mind literally tape records everything it sees and hears, but the memories can only be played back if a certain part of the brain is activated.

The implications are plainly startling. In the 1880s, the Dutch psychologist and poet Frederik van Eeden performed an interesting experiment with a ten-year-old girl; he taught her French under hypnosis. When awakened, the girl had no knowledge of the language. Then one day, van Eeden told her that when she woke up, she would remember everything she had learned; to the girl's utter amazement, she was suddenly able to speak French. But Dr Houston's observations suggest that there is no need for a patient to be taught a foreign language; if a hypnotist could gain access to the out-of-the-way corners of the computer library, he would probably find that she has already picked it up unconsciously.

Freud's disciple Jung became aware of an even stranger aspect of the unconscious, and thereby earned the Master's enmity and suspicion. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* he tells how he asked Freud's opinion of parapsychology, and how Freud rejected it 'in terms of so shallow a positivism' that Jung became angry. At this moment Jung had a curious sensation 'as if my diaphragm were made of iron and were becoming red hot'. There was suddenly a loud report from the bookcase, and as Freud leapt up in alarm, Jung said: 'That is an example of a so-called catalytic exteriorization phenomenon.' Freud replied 'Bosh,' whereupon Jung asserted that there would be another report in a moment; a second loud detonation immediately sounded from the bookcase.

By 'exteriorization phenomenon', Jung meant what would be more generally called a 'poltergeist effect'. In the late nineteenth century, investigators of 'paranormal phenomena' became aware that these strange goings-on—loud bangs and raps, objects flying through the air—are not the work of disembodied spirits, but are usually due to the presence of a disturbed child or adolescent *who is totally unaware of being the cause.* Now while it is credible that the unconscious mind can produce remarkable effects on one's own body—even to religious stigmata—it is altogether more difficult to see how it could possibly

exert a direct influence on physical objects. If ‘psychokinesis’ is a genuine phenomenon, then the powers of the unconscious mind are far greater and far stranger than Freud even began to imagine.

What it amounts to, then, is that Freud’s failure to recognize the feedback mechanism of neurosis left him free to construct a theory that was a rationalization of his own pessimism and sense of insecurity. Man is essentially a creature, an animal, at the mercy of instinct. Inhibited by civilization, his sexual drive festers in the unconscious mind, producing all kinds of mental illness. Later, when Freud began to recognize the inadequacy of the libido theory, he discovered another ‘instinct’ to which he could attribute all man’s problems: the death instinct, a built-in urge towards death, which man attempts to re-direct by turning it outward towards other human beings. The ‘thanatos’ theory is the ultimate expression of Freud’s pessimism, his conviction that human beings are the slaves of forces greater than themselves. Freud was already in the process of formulating the theory when he met Reich in 1919.

All this should make us aware of the fundamental objection to psychoanalysis. Neurosis is caused by ‘negative feedback’, which produces an increasing sense of suffocation, of *loss of freedom.* Its cure entails positive feedback, which produces an increasing sense of freedom. This is closely bound up with a sense of meaning, of the value of conscious effort. Clearly, a psychotherapy based on the conviction that freedom is an illusion is handicapped from the beginning. The tracking-down of sexual traumas and repressed guilt-feelings may raise the patient’s hopes, and so improve his general outlook. But the Freudian ‘philosophy of helplessness’ ensures that his attitude remains passive, so the basic problem remains. The only true cure of neurosis is for consciousness to throw off its passivity, to become aware of its freedom. (For example, the philosopher William James began to emerge from a nervous breakdown when he decided to accept Renouvier’s definition of free-will: The sustaining of a thought because *I choose to* when I might have other thoughts.’) Freud’s basic outlook actually sustains the essence of the neurosis while attempting to cure it. This could be compared to the way that doctors, in the days before Semmelweis, used to attend women in childbirth immediately after lancing a boil or performing a post mortem, then wonder why their patients died of puerperal fever.

Wilhelm Reich was fundamentally optimistic, and—as we shall see—he instinctively recognized this self-contradictory element in Freudian psychotherapy. His later developments may be seen as an attempt to break away from this basically negative outlook, and to develop a more dynamic and creative theory of sexuality.

It is interesting to observe the way that Freud used the insights he derived from Breuer and Charcot to build up the sexual theory, and then to turn this into ‘an impregnable bulwark of dogma’ (his own expression).

Curiously enough, the first hints for the sexual theory came from Breuer himself. In describing the case of Bertha Pappenheim in *Studies in Hysteria* (which he co-authored with Freud), Breuer tactfully omitted to mention one of its more embarrassing complications: the fact that he and his patient became strongly emotionally involved. Freud later told this part of the story to his biographer Ernest Jones. Bertha was an attractive and intelligent girl, and Breuer devoted far more time to the case than most doctors would have considered appropriate. His wife became so jealous that Breuer was finally forced to tell his attractive patient that he was withdrawing from the case. By this time, Bertha had improved so much that he felt he could do this with a clear conscience. That evening he was summoned to see her, and found her suffering a particularly violent attack of her ‘secondary personality’. She lay with her legs open, apparently in the throes of childbirth (or sexual intercourse). Breuer was deeply shocked; the girl came of a puritanical family who never spoke about sex. The ‘childbirth’ was, of course, hysterical, and even Breuer could see that he had been cast in the role of father or lover. He gave way to panic, and left for Venice with his wife the next day.

After his return from the Salpêtrière, Freud himself became increasingly aware of the erotic relation that could develop between doctor and patient. Jones relates how one day a female patient flung her arms around Freud’s neck; fortunately (he adds), they were interrupted by the entrance of a servant. The episode apparently came as a revelation to Freud, who suddenly recognized that a successful cure might even depend on the patient falling in love with the doctor. Freud called the phenomenon ‘transference’; twenty years later, he made the significant remark that it proved to him that the origin of all neurosis is sexual. This seems to be a curious piece of reasoning. After all, ‘transference’ can happen to anyone in the field of medicine, or even education. If a tubercular woman falls in love with her doctor, or an economics student with her professor, does this also prove that tuberculosis and economics are sexual in origin? The plain fact is that love springs out of admiration, and that therefore any relationship between mentor and pupil, or healer and patient, provides the basic situation.

After the episode of the enamoured patient, Freud began questioning other patients about their sex lives—to the detriment of his practice. He became increasingly convinced that all neuroses could be traced back to an early sexual trauma. Many female patients obligingly furnished details of how they had been

seduced by their fathers at an early age, and for a while Freud actually held the view that the majority of neuroses were caused by such seductions. His willingness to entertain such an untenable view indicates his determination to create a ‘sexual theory’. By 1897, two years after the publication of *Studies in Hysteria,* he had come to recognize that the majority of these accounts were fantasies. Far from persuading him that he had been pursuing the wrong line of reasoning, it only confirmed his belief in its correctness. Why should they lie about being seduced by their fathers, unless they harboured a secret wish to be seduced? Freud quickly generalized this notion into the Oedipus complex: that the daughter has a secret desire to replace her mother, the son, his father. It also followed that the son must harbour an unconscious enmity towards his father—a desire to kill him, and a fear of being killed by him (or, at the very least, castrated).

Breuer sensibly felt that all this was going a little too far; he probably suspected that Freud was becoming a crank. He could accept that sex might be the origin of some neuroses—but surely not *all*? Freud, by now totally committed to his sexual theory, accused Breuer of betraying him, and broke off the relation. Even Jones has to admit: ‘The scientific differences alone cannot account for the bitterness with which Freud wrote about Breuer in the unpublished Fliess correspondence in the nineties. When one recollects what Breuer had meant to him in the eighties, his generosity to Freud, his understanding sympathy, and the combination of cheerfulness and intellectual stimulation that radiated from him, the change later is indeed startling.’ And he excuses Freud by suggesting that Breuer had a certain small-mindedness that was ‘very alien to Freud’s open-hearted and generous nature’. To anyone who has read his account of the relation between Freud and Breuer, this conclusion will seem an inversion of the truth.

In retrospect, we can see that ‘the sexual theory’ was a logical outcome of Freud’s failure to grasp the ‘feedback’ mechanism of neurosis. By totally disregarding the role of the conscious mind. Freud threw all the emphasis on the unconscious. He saw the unconscious as a kind of oven that incubated the neurosis. But in that case, what does it incubate? Freud’s answer was: repressions. ‘Obsessional ideas are invariably self-reproaches which have re-emerged from repression in a transmuted form and which always relate to some sexual act that was performed with pleasure in childhood.’ The idea of repression also enabled him to explain Charcot’s grand hysterics; they were simply diverting the energy of repression into physical channels, as a kind of safety valve.

This reasoning led Freud to the next stage in the theory. If the unconscious is a

kind of oven that incubates the repressions and causes them to fester, then it is essentially passive. And the job of the psychotherapist is to try to dig into it to remove the festering splinter. How can he do this? At first, Freud believed that the answer lay in hypnosis. This dissatisfied him because he was unable to hypnotize a large number of patients. But again, Breuer had provided him with the vital hint: the 'talking cure' that had worked so impressively with Bertha. By 1895, Freud had developed the famous free-association technique: asking the patient to lie down on a couch, and to tell the psychiatrist everything that came into his head. In effect, Freud had now taken the same step as Bernheim: that of shifting the emphasis back from the unconscious to the conscious mind. But in so doing, he was also shifting his attention from the phenomena that had so impressed him at the Salpêtrière, as well as losing sight of the significance of suggestibility.

For more than half a century, the 'sexual theory' remained one of the unquestioned dogmas of psychoanalysis; anyone who questioned it was likely to find himself vigorously ejected from the movement. Freud's leading followers—Jones, Melanie Klein, Karen Horney, Helene Deutsch, A. A. Brill, H. W. Frink—shared his conviction that the early rejection of the sexual theory was due to some survival of Victorian prudery, and to unconscious dishonesty on the part of its opponents. The cautious reservations of Breuer, Jung, Adler and the rest were somehow mythologized into underhand attempts at counter-revolution, a kind of psychological Trotskyism.

Yet now that all the major figures in psychoanalysis are dead, it is possible to look back on its early history with a certain objectivity. It seems clear that most of Freud's major cases can be interpreted without the sexual theory. And since a conviction as important as this demands justification, I propose at this point to devote a certain amount of space to it. We may begin by considering the case of 'little Hans'—regarded by Freudians as one of the most striking applications of the theory of childhood sexuality.

At the age of four, not long after the birth of a baby sister, Little Hans developed a phobia about going outdoors; he said he was afraid of being bitten by a horse. This detail struck Freud as highly significant, since he regarded the horse as a symbol of male sexuality. From Little Hans's father—who was an enthusiastic disciple—he elicited the following facts about the child's sexual development. At the age of three, Hans had shown an unusual interest in his 'widdler'; when his mother caught him holding it one day, she threatened to cut it off. Hans replied that he would widdle with his bottom. When his mother undressed, Hans looked at her intently, and asked if she had a widdler,

commenting: ‘I thought you were so big you’d have a widdler like a horse.’ On holiday with his parents, Hans slept with them—which, Freud assured them, aroused sexual feelings in him. At four and a half, when his mother was bathing him, he asked her why she was so careful not to touch his widdler; she said it would be ‘piggish’. ‘But great fun’, said Little Hans.

He seems to have been an affectionate child, initially jealous of his baby sister, but soon becoming fond of her. (Freud himself had, as a child, wished his baby brother Julius dead-: when the baby died. Freud experieneed strong guilt feelings. He was now convinced that all children harbour these homicidal feelings.) Little Hans also put his arms round a boy cousin and developed a crush on a seven-year-old playmate.

When Hans began to exhibit reluctance about going into the street, explaining that he was afraid of being bitten by a horse, Hans’s father, who had attended Freud’s lectures, decided that the horse symbolized a large penis, which had frightened the child at some stage. Freud instructed the father to tell Little Hans that he really wanted to sleep in his mother’s bed, and that he was afraid of horses because he took so much interest in their widdlers. Predictably, Hans got worse.

The child explained that his fear of horses was due to an episode at Gmunden, when a friend’s father had told her: ‘Don’t put your finger near that horse; it could bite.’ The father rejected this straightforward explanation, and told Hans that he thought it was a widdler he was afraid to put his hand to. ‘But widdlers don’t bite,’ said the puzzled child. ‘Perhaps they do,’ said his father cryptically.

The following day, Hans admitted that he still put his hand on his widdler every night. Later he told his father that he no longer held his widdler, but agreed that he still wanted to. His father suggested he should sleep in a sack with his hands outside.

On a visit to the zoo, Hans showed fear of the elephant and the giraffe; his father told him that this was because large animals had big widdlers. Hans denied this. When Hans subsequently dreamed of two giraffes, Freud explained that it was ‘a matrimonial scene transposed into giraffe life’. Hans really wanted to sleep with his mother and satisfy his curiosity about her genitals. He also came to the conclusion that Hans really hated his father and wanted to kill him; horses, he said, symbolized the father.

In the event, Little Hans’s phobia vanished of its own accord. The case is nevertheless regarded as one of Freud’s major triumphs; one psychoanalyst speaks of it as ‘a remarkable achievement ... one of the most valued records in the psychoanalytical archives’. But unless one is already totally convinced by the sexual theory, it is difficult to endorse this assessment. In fact, it seems to be an almost grotesque example of Freud’s tendency to impose his sexual obsessions

almost grotesque example of Freud's tendency to impose his sexual obsessions on any problem that came to his notice. Anyone who has male children knows that they take an interest in their sexual organs, and in any others that present themselves for inspection. Unwise parents may threaten to cut off their penises, but it seldom causes any deep disturbance; children know that grownups are always making threats they don't mean. On the other hand, the idea of unknown danger causes deeper worry: the thought that if they touch a certain wire they may be electrocuted, that if they reach out to stroke a dog or a horse, it might bite off a finger. In nervous children, such fears easily turn into phobias. All the evidence suggests that it was not his father Hans was afraid of, but real horses. Freud's explanation that Hans's fear of 'black things' on horses' eyes and nose were based on his father's glasses and moustache proved to be another bad guess; it turned out that Hans meant ordinary blinkers and harnesses. Looking over Freud's account of the Little Hans case, it seems clear that he complicated the problem by assuming that the child's fear of real horses was somehow connected with his interest in his penis. Fortunately, Hans seems to have been healthy enough to throw off the effects of his father's attempts at psychoanalysis.

One further example will serve to illustrate the Freudian method. The case of the 'Wolf Man' is regarded as one of the most significant in the history of psychoanalysis, and various documents relating to it have been collected into a full-length book.

The 'Wolf Man' was a young Russian, probably called Sergei Petrov, who came to Freud about 1910 in a state of deep depression. His vital powers had reached such a low ebb that he was unable to dress and feed himself; he suffered from permanent constipation so that he needed enemas twice a week. These symptoms immediately indicate a typical case of 'life failure'. Because the unconscious mind has withdrawn all inner support, life seems permanently grey and meaningless; the eyes can see that something is beautiful, but there are no feelings to respond. The state has been portrayed by many Russian novelists—Russians seem particularly prone to it—and Dostoevsky's Stavrogin (in *The Possessed*) is a penetrating analysis of the condition.

What emerged in Freud's analysis was that Petrov was jealous of his elder sister, who took pleasure in teasing him, particularly showing him pictures of a wolf in a story book, which terrified him into screams. At the age of six, Petrov had a nightmare of six motionless white wolves sitting in a tree outside the bedroom window; hence the nickname.

Where sex was concerned, the story sounded fairly promising. The Wolf Man had a sister who was two years his senior, and who had a thoroughly sensual nature. She played sexual games with him when he was about three and handled

nature. She played sexual games with him when he was about three and handled his penis. The precocious child waved the organ at his nurse, who told him that children who did that kind of thing were likely to have it cut off. Such threats are, according to Freud, a fundamental cause of neurosis. Petrov's adult sex life was also rather odd; he was sexually obsessed by servant girls who were on all fours scrubbing the floor; he liked to have intercourse with them in this position.

After some years of analysis, Freud explains, he came to an interesting conclusion: that the basic trouble lay in a 'primal scene' witnessed by the Wolf Man at the age of eighteen months. He had wakened up in his cot, says Freud, to see his parents, both in white nightshirts, making love 'in the animal position'. This, Freud believed, led to a homosexual fixation on the father and a desire to be beaten by him. Hence the wolf nightmare, and the obsession about servant girls on all fours. The wolf dream had somehow reversed the 'primal scene'; instead of waking suddenly and seeing his father engaged in coitus, he wakened and saw white wolves looking in passively at the window ...

After many years of treatment, the Wolf Man was much improved, though by no means cured—he continued to have nervous troubles, and to be a thoroughly inadequate human being, to the end of his life. Nevertheless, Freudians have always regarded the case as a convincing proof of the theory that the cause of neurosis lies in childhood traumas.

Freud himself wrote an impressive paper about the case shortly after it was concluded in 1914; it was called 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', and has become a classic of psychoanalytic literature. But there is one point that is less than satisfactory; Freud never actually tells us how he found out about the scene witnessed by the eighteen-month-old baby. He simply states it as a fact. 'I have now reached the point at which I must abandon the support I have hitherto had from the course of the analysis. I am afraid it will also be the point at which the reader's belief will abandon me. What sprang into activity that night out of the chaos of the dreamer's unconscious memory-traces was the picture of copulation between his parents, copulation in circumstances that were not entirely usual ... ' But from this point on, he refers to the 'primal scene' as an established fact. A page later he admits that he is inclined to be critical 'towards the acceptance of this observation of the child's'. And in the next paragraph, he explains that the wolf picture that used to terrify Petrov so much showed it standing upright with its hands stretched out, and that his patient 'thought that the posture of the wolf in this picture reminded him of that of his father during the constructed primal scene'. Here the use of the word 'constructed' seems odd.

When the Wolf Man was eighty-three, he wrote an autobiographical memoir, which was published, together with Freud's original paper, in a book called *The*

Wolf Man and Sigmund Freud.[4] It also contains essays by other leading Freudians who had dealings with the Wolf Man. Oddly enough, the vital question of whether the child actually saw the primal scene, and later described it to Freud, is left in misty ambiguity.

The problem is solved by consulting the second volume of Jones's *Life of Freud*; it contains the throwaway admission: 'The patient could not recollect the incident ... but the mass of converging evidence was so convincing that in Freud's judgement the reconstruction reached the same degree of certainty as an actual memory.' Which leads one to wonder why, in that case, Freud failed to tell the reader about this 'mass of converging evidence'.

It is the memoirs of the Wolf Man that make clear just how far Freud has, once again, imposed his own preconceptions on the case, and how, in doing so, he has completely overlooked the obvious explanations of the Wolf Man's mental troubles. The Wolf Man explains that there was a long history of mental illness in his family—a detail that Freud has unaccountably forgotten to mention. His paternal grandmother committed suicide; his grandfather became highly eccentric; his paternal uncle suffered from severe obsessional neurosis; his own father was a manic depressive, his sister committed suicide, his mother was permanently ill. The Wolf Man himself emerges as an intelligent but extremely weak and self-pitying character; when he lost his fortune in the Russian Revolution, he expected Freud to support him; and in fact, Freud collected sums of money for him for many years. In 1938, after the suicide of his wife, he told a Freudian analyst with characteristic self-pity: 'I have always had bad luck. I am always subject to the greatest misfortunes.' The rest of the book makes it clear that it was his own weak and rather unpleasant character that was largely to blame.

The most interesting fact to emerge from the book is one that Freud completely suppressed: that the origin of the illness lay in his sister's suicide. Freud not only plays down the suicide: he insists that the Wolf Man was rather pleased and relieved by it. 'When the news of his sister's death arrived, so the patient told me, he felt hardly a trace of grief. He had to force himself to show signs of sorrow, and was able quite coolly to rejoice at having now become sole heir to the property.' What the Wolf Man himself says could hardly be more different. 'After the death of Anna, with whom I had had a very deep, personal, inner relationship, and whom I had always considered as my only comrade, I fell into a state of deepest depression. The mental agony I now suffered would often increase to the intensity of physical pain. In this condition I could not interest myself in anything. Everything repelled me and thoughts of suicide went round in my mind ... I had fallen into such a state of melancholy after Anna's death that

there seemed to be no more sense or purpose in living, and nothing in the world seemed worth striving for. In such a state of mind one can hardly interest oneself in anything.' He was, in any case, of a romantic and pessimistic disposition; he identified himself closely with the romantic poet Lermontov, who died in a duel. Now, with the complete collapse of all sense of purpose, his inherited melancholia caught up with him. 'My thoughts and feelings seemed to be paralysed. Everything that went on before my eyes was unreal to me; it all seemed a bad dream.' Again and again he makes it clear that he was suffering from dissociation from reality that comes with complete collapse of the will. 'I experienced everything as unreal and dreamlike.' And the fact that he was wealthy, and could travel around Europe with a valet and personal physician, gave him no incentive for effort. He could indulge his misery and self-pity.

In the course of the long analysis, Petrov must have told Freud these things. Why, then, does he fail to mention them? Because he is intent on imposing his own purely arbitrary notion of the 'primal scene', and establishing this as the cause of the Wolf Man's chronic depression. To mention Petrov's own account of his early life and his sister's suicide would render his own sexual explanations superfluous.

Understandably, then, Freud regarded the sexual theory with jealous concern, and became deeply resentful and suspicious of anyone who questioned it. In a footnote to the Wolf Man paper, he comments that at the time of writing 'I was still freshly under the twisted reinterpretations which C. G. Jung and Alfred Adler were endeavouring to give to the findings of psychoanalysis.' The bitterness of the comment seems out of place, since Jung and Adler were not denying the sexual theory: only attempting to broaden the scope of psychoanalysis. And as late as 1937, the comment he made on the death of Adler revealed that the almost paranoid bitterness was still there: 'For a Jew-boy out of a Viennese suburb a death in Aberdeen is an unheard-of career in itself, and a proof of how far he had got on. The world rewarded him richly for his service of contradicting psychoanalysis.' Something of the attitude behind these comments is revealed in a passage in Jung's autobiography: 'I can still vividly recall how Freud said to me, "My dear Jung, promise me never to abandon the sexual theory. That is the most essential thing of all. You see, we must make a dogma of it, an unshakeable bulwark." He said that to me with great emotion, in the tone of a father saying, "And promise me this one thing, my dear son: that you will go to church every Sunday." In some astonishment I asked him, "A bulwark —against what?" To which he replied, "Against the black tide of mud"—and here he hesitated for a moment, then added—"of occultism."' To understand this remark we must bear in mind that Freud's psychology had its roots in Mesmer,

and that because of this association, hypnosis had been discredited for almost a century. Freud was determined that none of this 'occultist' mud should stick to psychoanalysis. Yet Jung is strictly fair when he adds: 'To me the sexual theory was just as occult, that is to say, just as unproven an hypothesis, as many other speculative views.'

The standard histories of psychoanalysis have created the legend that it had to overcome the frenzied resistance of puritans. There was, of course, a great deal of resistance; Professor Raimann, of the Psychiatric Clinic in Vienna, was expressing a widely held view when he declared: 'Any man who concentrates his attention so exclusively on sex must be some sort of pervert ... ' But it was not because Freud spoke openly about sexual matters that he was so passionately condemned; we have seen that sexual psychology was widely and openly discussed on the Continent long before Freud came along. What aroused the hostility was the widespread feeling that Freud was propounding a theory of neurosis that was *fundamentally untrue*: the notion that it was *always* due to sexual repressions. Much of the opposition came from sensible people, like Breuer and Jung, who felt that the sexual theory was arbitrary and unbalanced. Bernard Shaw put his finger on the problem in the preface to his novel *Immaturity:* 'As I write, there is a craze for what is called psychoanalysis, or the cure of diseases by explaining to the patient what is the matter with him: an excellent plan if you happen to know what is the matter with him.' Freud's notion of what was the matter with his patients seemed to be based on purely arbitrary interpretations of their dreams or admissions to the psychoanalyst. The kind of inferences that Freud drew in cases like the Wolf Man and Little Hans give the impression that psychoanalysis is more akin to palmistry or astrology than to the science of psychology.

All this has considerable relevance to the relationship between Freud and Reich. What becomes clear, from a study of Freud's relations with his leading followers, is the intensity of the conviction that 'he who is not with me is against me'. When anyone showed the least sympathy for his ideas. Freud was immediately willing to treat them as friends and allies. If this friendly attitude had the desired effect of turning the sympathizer into a wholehearted partisan, Freud was satisfied. During the probationary period the admirer was allowed to raise questions and doubts, and even to think for himself. But this was only so that the ultimate triumph of the psychoanalytic doctrine would be the more complete. If it finally became clear to Freud that there was still a basic difference of outlook, and that the admirer was not willing to be received into the church of psychoanalysis with all the sacraments, patience gave way to hostility; clearly,

the disciple was perverse and unworthy, flying in the face of his own salvation—not to mention that he was a potential danger to the salvation of others. In effect, if not in fact there was a ritual of excommunication, not unlike that applied by the Jewish faith to its heretics. The unbeliever was solemnly anathematized and placed on a list of 'prohibited persons'. The intention was to break his spirit to make him feel cast into the outer darkness.

For those less totally involved in psychoanalysis—or whose support was too valuable to throw away—less than total submission was demanded. Freud remained a life long friend of the novelist Thomas Mann, and one result of this strange alliance was Mann's essay 'Freud and the Future', a speech made in Vienna on Freud's eightieth birthday, in which Mann skilfully avoids the real issues by treating Freud as a descendant of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and generalizing about his courage in the face of 'persecution'. But the story of Freud's relationship with the great satirist Karl Kraus is rather more characteristic. Kraus was the editor of the leading satirica magazine *The Torch (Die Fackel)*, and in 1904, Freud made the first friendly overture in a letter, congratulating him on his 'perceptiveness and courage'. For a while they remained on cautiously friendly terms, regarding one another as two revolutionaries. But as Kraus became more aware of the implications of psychoanalysis, he found it basically detestable. He wrote perceptively: 'Psychoanalysis is the disease for which it claims to be the cure', recognizing that the whole Freudian attitude encourages dependency, self-pity and sickness. He also reacted strongly against Freud's attempts to explain the genius of men like Leonardo and Dostoevsky in terms of penis envy and Oedipus complexes.

The Vienna Psychoanalytic Society finally decided to retaliate, and in January 1910, a disciple named Fritz Wittels read a paper called 'The Fackel Neurosis'. Its main point was that Kraus's longstanding enmity to the conservative newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* was due to the fact that Kraus identified the *Presse* with the father's large penis, which corrupts (or pollutes) the world, while Kraus's own *Fackel* was a small penis, which was nevertheless capable of destroying the father's large penis. Wittels explained Kraus's hatred of cheap journalism as another form of his Oedipus complex. The comments of the rest of the group—as recorded by Otto Rank—make it clear that they regard this tissue of humourless absurdities as a serious defence of psychoanalysis. Freud expressed himself as being in agreement with Wittels's paper, and thanked its presenter for his 'many sacrifices'. He appears to mean that Wittels has stuck out his neck and exposed himself to attack in *Die Fackel*, a position that he, Freud, would be unwilling to take.[5]

The only member of the group who had anything to say in favour of Kraus

was Viktor Tausk, who was himself noted for his biting wit and the sharpness of his tongue; Tausk commented that the conservative press was vulgar, and that Kraus was right to do battle against it. Tausk was one of Freud's most brilliant and trusted disciples; but his comment suggests—to anyone who knows Freud's character—that this is not a position he will be able to hold for long. In fact, the story of Freud's subsequent relation with Tausk—which finally came to light half a century after Tausk's death—is a striking example of Freud's pitiless hostility towards anyone he felt to be drifting away from total allegiance. In this case, the problem was not that Tausk came to have doubts about the sexual theory, but that his brilliance became a threat to Freud. Lou Salome, the woman who had once rejected Nietzsche, and who later became Tausk's mistress, wrote in her *Freud Journal* that the tragedy of Tausk's relation with Freud was that 'he will always tackle the same problems, and the same attempts at solution, that Freud is engaged in'. And according to Paul Roazen's account of the relation[6], Freud was always afraid that Tausk would anticipate some of his own discoveries. In the early days of their relationship, Tausk was emotionally dependent on Freud, towards whom he felt immense gratitude for directing him into psychoanalysis. As Tausk's self-confidence—and prominence in the movement—increased, Freud began to experience his usual misgivings. During the war, Tausk was away from Vienna, and his independence increased; yet his personal attachment to Freud remained as strong as ever. Like so many of Freud's male disciples, Tausk found it hard to realize that the act of thinking for himself—even along strictly Freudian lines—was enough to arouse Freud's desire to get rid of him. Roazen comments: 'Freud's male pupils wanted his love, but he gave it only if they came close to castrating themselves as creative individuals.'

Tausk, for all his intellectual vitality, had one basic flaw: he was a pessimistic romantic, with a strong vein of self-pity. With ruthless calculation, Freud used this weakness to undermine and destroy him. When Tausk returned to Vienna after the war, he had financial and emotional problems, including troubles with women. He asked Freud for psychoanalysts—at that time the group held the theory that all psychoanalysts should be psychoanalysed—and Freud coldly and decisively refused him. Nevertheless, he recommended him to be analysed by one of his female students, Helene Deutsch, who was herself being analysed by Freud. The gesture was clearly intended as an attack on Tausk's self-esteem—the implication being that not only was he Freud's inferior, but even the inferior of one of Freud's female students. The arrangement also had the cunning advantage of allowing Freud access to Tausk's inmost thoughts via Helene Deutsch, who had no hesitation in repeating them. Tausk pleaded that surely

Freud's reasons for refusing him did not apply to a son? The comment was naive; Freud told others that Tausk was a 'dog on a leash', implying that he might bite; besides, Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex meant that his objections applied *especially* to a 'son'. Freud had the upper hand, and he had no intention of showing mercy. Roazen remarks: 'Freud was through with Tausk, no matter how difficult it might prove for Tausk to accept the rejection.'

On 3 July 1919, Tausk wrote two letters, one to Freud and one to his mistress, while he sipped slivovitz; then he tied a curtain cord round his neck and shot himself through the temple. He blew off part of his head, and strangled as he collapsed. When Tausk's son went to see Freud two days later, he found him 'formal' and 'standoffish'. There is no other record of Freud's reaction to the suicide. He probably felt that Tausk's downfall was entirely his own fault, and that he had got what he deserved.

Tausk's suicide in 1919 left an obvious gap in the ranks of the disciples, most of whom were now past middle age. That gap was to be filled by Wilhelm Reich. Unfortunately for Freud—and also, it turned out, for his new disciple—Reich also lacked the temperament to become a voluntary eunuch.

Chapter Three

More than three decades after that first meeting with Freud, Reich told Dr Kurt Eissler: ‘When I first met Freud, there was immediate contact—immediate contact of two organisms, an aliveness, interest, and going to the point. I had the same experience with Einstein when I met him in 1940. There are certain people who click, just click in their emotional contact ... I knew Freud liked me. I felt it. I could see it. I could talk to him straight. He understood what I meant in an immediate way.’

There is no need to doubt Reich’s claim that Freud took an instant liking to him. He even put his finger on the reason, with characteristic lack of modesty: ‘You see me now? I am quite alive, am I not? I am sparkling, yes? He had the same quality. He had an aliveness which the usual human being didn’t have ... ’ That is to say, Freud, like Reich, was a man of genius, and men of genius usually have a discernibly higher voltage than mediocrities. Roazen has commented that Freud preferred people with less formality and more sparkle; Reich certainly fitted into this category.

In view of Freud’s unfortunate experience with disciples like Adler, Jung and Tausk, it may seem surprising that he accepted Reich so easily. But Reich himself offers an important clue when he says: ‘In 1919, there was a very small circle. There were only about eight men. At the Psychiatric Clinic, they were laughed at. In the medical school, they were laughed at. Freud was laughed at.’ Even in his mid-sixties, Freud had still not gained general acceptance. As a consequence, he and his disciples had developed a kind of siege mentality: the faithful band against a hostile world. Reich came to him as a brilliant young medical student and ex-army officer. Freud could not afford to reject such potentially valuable support. Neither was there any reason why he should—he had not yet achieved the world fame that was to arrive in the last decade of his life. According to Reich, Freud was a lonely man who had little social intercourse with his followers.

The followers were—inevitably—a rather uninspiring group; inevitably because Freud, as we have seen, always managed to break with his more interesting admirers. Ernest Jones writes uncharitably: ‘The reader may perhaps gather that I was not highly impressed with the assembly. It seemed an unworthy accompaniment to Freud’s genius, but in the Vienna of those days, so full of prejudice against him, it was hard to secure a pupil with a reputation to lose, so he had to take what he could get.’[1] And ‘what he could get’ included, in those

early days, Jung, Adler and Stekel. By 1919, even Stekel was classified with Jung and Adler as a traitor. Oddly enough, the break had occurred on account of Tausk. Stekel and Adler were editors of the psychoanalytic journal *Zentral-blatt,* and in 1911 Freud tried to induce them to accept Tausk as a supervisor of book reviews—in effect, a third co-editor. Stekel dug in his heels, and Freud tried to persuade the publisher to sack him. When this move failed, Freud set out systematically to persuade every other member of the staff to resign, then helped to found another journal, *Internationale Zeitschrift.* It was typical of Freud that, when his authority was defied, he would move heaven and earth to punish the offenders.

At the time Reich joined Freud's circle, the 'senior disciple' was Paul Federn, a talented and compassionate analyst whose qualities were personal rather than intellectual; he was romantic, idealistic, and notoriously absent-minded. Next to Federn in order of seniority came his friend Edward Hitschmann, whom Federn had introduced to the group as long ago as 1905; he was a worthy but dull character who admired Freud to the point of worship; Freud found his plodding intellect mildly irritating. These were the 'elder statesmen' after the departure of Jung and Adler. Younger followers included Karl Abraham, Otto Rank, Theodor Reik, Herbert Silberer, Herman Nunberg, Hanns Sachs and Sandor Ferenczi. The Welshman Ernest Jones, a disciple and founder of the British analytical movement, also spent much time with Freud in Vienna. Ferenczi, based in Budapest, was one of the most charming and talented members of the Freud circle, and Freud had a deep personal liking for him. Hanns Sachs was a plump, lively bachelor who loved attractive women and good wine; he went to Berlin in 1920, leaving the group considerably duller. Karl Abraham was a dedicated psychoanalyst with a precise and formal manner; his scientific abilities were highly regarded, and he was not above exploiting petty jealousies within the group. Herman Nunberg, a man of sour disposition, was another systematic intellect who tirelessly arranged and rearranged Freud's ideas. Theodor Reik, later well known as a popularizer of psychoanalysis, is described by Roazen as 'a heel-clicking admirer of every word Freud wrote'—a description that applies to most of the group. Ernest Jones later became Freud's biographer; Paul Roazen, whose *Freud and His Followers* is based on interviews with people who knew Freud, devoted many pages to correcting Jones's distortions of psychoanalytic history. He describes Jones as 'spiteful, jealous and querulous'—qualities that frequently emerge in Jones's treatment of rivals in the Freud biography.

Of all the group, only three could be described as having ideas of their own: Paul Federn, Otto Rank and Herbert Silberer. Federn was a socialist who

believed that psychoanalysis would one day free man from his mental chains. His writing style lacks Freud's clarity; Roazen speculates that this was because his ideas differed from Freud's, but as he was anxious not to bring this into the open, he wrote obscurely to hide the differences. Otto Rank was an ugly, withdrawn little man, who had remained a loyal Freudian throughout the period of the defection of Jung and Adler. In the early 1920s he was, next to Ferenczi, Freud's favourite disciple, a position that aroused the envy of Abraham and Jones. His break with Freud was to be slow and painful; but in 1919 he was still a 'heel-clicking admirer'.

Apart from Rank, the most potentially brilliant and original of Freud's followers was Herbert Silberer; he was a man of independent means and the only member of the Vienna group who was non-Jewish. At the time Reich met Freud, he was already under a cloud, and scarcely ever came to meetings. Roazen offers the suggestion that this was because the other members were suspicious of gentiles. But a far more important reason can be found in Silberer's book *Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbols*, published in 1917.[2] It deals with the interpretation of dreams and myths from a Freudian standpoint. But this is a deeply Jungian work—in fact, more 'Jungian' than anything Jung himself had written up to that date. (In his autobiography, Jung mentions that it was Silberer's book that sparked his interest in alchemy.) It frequently quotes Jung with approval, and this in itself would have been enough to explain Freud's increasing hostility towards Silberer. But there is an even deeper cause for offence. Silberer has no doubt that the various myths of alchemy and mysticism can be interpreted according to the sexual theory; but he also insists that they can be interpreted 'anagogically'—that is, allegorically or mystically—as evidence of man's striving for spiritual fulfilment. In short, Silberer takes the view that man's higher needs—for example, the need for God—are as fundamental and instinctive as the need for sex and dominance. Silberer must have recognized that in these matters he was in fundamental opposition to Freud's pessimistic reductionism. But he made the curious mistake of thinking that their grounds for disagreement were unimportant when balanced against his wholehearted admiration and devotion, and his support for the sexual theory. He was genuinely hurt and mystified by Freud's increasing rejection of him. In April 1917 he proposed calling on Freud, and received the following note:

> Dear Sir,
> I request that you do not make the intended visit with me. As the result of the observations and impressions of recent years I no longer desire personal contact with you.
> Very truly yours,
> Freud

Freud.

Silberer, like Jung and Tausk before him, had been ‘excommunicated’. And the rejection had on him the same effect as on Jung and Tausk—Freud undoubtedly had some curious power of arousing a sense of guilt and unworthiness in those he rejected. Silberer sank into a state of depression verging on mental breakdown. At the age of forty—in January 1923—he hanged himself from the window bars in his home, leaving a torch propped in such a way that his wife would see his face when she came in.

Reich’s own account of the immediate rapport between himself and Freud needs to be supplemented with the information that Roazen gleaned from people who knew them both (see *Freud and His Followers).* ‘Even as a relative newcomer to psychoanalysis in the early 1920s, Reich seemed excessively self-assured; at any rate, Freud would not countenance his arrogance. At one of the private meetings at Freud’s home he said to Reich: “You are the youngest here, would you close the door?” Freud kept his distance from Reich ... ’

Whether or not Freud had his reservations about Reich, the older disciples certainly had. Reich’s temperament would now be described as ‘pushy’; it seems that he enjoyed emphasizing that he was one of the few members of the group with a training in biology and science. Reich obviously found it hard to dissemble his impatience. ‘It was plain dull,’ he told Eissler. ‘Everybody had an opinion about this or that ... and somebody said this, and somebody said that.’ He added complacently: ‘I acted like a shark in a pond of carps.’ But there could be no doubt about his brilliance, and the insight he showed in diagnosis. ‘I was a clinician. We agreed that speculation had no meaning. It was easy to put up a theory about a case. I, however, appealed to facts, to the development of the case. And that’s what Freud loved. So he had great hopes.’ Freud told a friend of his daughter Anna that Reich was ‘the best head in the Association’.

According to his own account, Reich’s rise in the Freud circle was astonishingly swift. He called on Freud for the first time around February 1919, soon after the commencement of the first sexology seminars. (This was also the period when he called on Adler, Stekel, Kammerer and Steinach—a circumstance that suggests that he was anxious to make as many distinguished contacts as possible.) By March of 1919, he told Eissler, Freud was already sending him patients. This speaks well for his persuasiveness and charm—he was, after all, a medical student who had received only a few months’ training, with four years of study still ahead of him. In the following year he became a fully fledged member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.

It is a pity that there are so few personal accounts of Reich in those early days.

In later years, the break with Freud, and his own highly unorthodox views, raised a cloud of hostility that colours nearly all references to him by his contemporaries of that period. And even these references are so infrequent that they point to a conspiracy of silence—or at least, a reluctance to increase his importance by discussing him. But there is a chapter in *The Function of the Orgasm* that can help to fill in the gap by making it possible to understand why he made such an impact on the Society. It is based on the first paper he ever wrote under the influence of psychoanalysis, 'Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Libido Conflicts and Hallucinations',[3] and it has a vigorous directness that suggests the work of a young convert. It begins:

> The subject of psychoanalysis was great and moving. To the thought of the average man, it came like a slap in the face. You imagine that you can determine your actions by your own free will? Indeed not! Your conscious actions are only a drop on the surface of an ocean of unconscious processes of which you can know nothing, and besides, you would be afraid of knowing them. You pride yourself on the 'individuality of your personality' and the 'breadth of your mind'? Naive! Really, you are only the plaything of your instincts, which do with you what *they* want. Of course, this offends your vanity, but—you were just as offended when you had to learn that you had evolved from the monkeys, and that the earth on which you crawled was not the centre of the universe, as you once believed. You still believe that the earth is the only star among billions of stars which is inhabited. In brief, you are conditioned by processes which you do not control or even know, and which you fear and misinterpret. There is a psychic reality that reaches far beyond your consciousness. Your unconscious is like Kant's *'Ding an sich'* [thing in itself]: it cannot itself be apprehended, it can only be recognized in its manifestations ...

These last two sentences help to explain the tone of sheer joyous delight in which Reich explains that human beings have no free will and are really the playthings of their instincts. When he says: 'There is a psychic reality that reaches far beyond your consciousness,' he sounds like a Christian speaking of the Vicarious Atonement, or a Spiritualist referring to the realm of the supernatural. Freud has produced upon Reich the same effect that Charcot earlier produced on Freud. He has discovered the unconscious, and glimpsed its tremendous implications. He sees it as a realm of mystery, the source of all life, the great Unknown. (In German, *unbewust* means both unconscious and unknown.) This is why he can feel so cheerful about informing human beings that they are mere insects on a second-rate star. Like a religious convert, he feels that the unimportance of man is a small price to pay for the reality of God.

Yet this same chapter on Peer Gynt also points to the basic flaw in Reich's make-up, the weakness that would destroy him. There is ominous significance in the lines: 'The world was in a state of transition and uncertainty at the time when

I read and understood *Peer Gynt,* and when I met Freud and grasped his meaning. I felt an outsider, like Peer Gynt.[4] His fate seemed to me the most likely outcome of an attempt to step out of line with official science and traditional thinking ... ’

Reich is already casting himself in the role of misunderstood martyr. And in this same chapter he also reveals a slightly paranoid tendency to see the world in terms of the lost and the saved. Schizophrenics, he explains—patients who have lost touch with reality—have no sense of the boundary between the ego and the universe, the inner and outer worlds. But they at least are better off than the ‘Babbitts’—the self-centred bourgeoisie—who ‘have no idea of this harmony, feeling their beloved egos, sharply circumscribed, to be the centre of the universe. The profundity of some mental patients makes them more valuable, from a human point of view, than the Babbits *[sic]* with their nationalistic ideals.’ One senses danger in this identification with mental patients and hatred of the Babbitts (after all, Sinclair Lewis’s character, whose name has become a synonym for bourgeois mediocrity, is basically a naive and warm-hearted person, for whom the novelist clearly feels affection). And Reich’s further comments on Peer Gynt suggest that he has become entangled in some singularly muddled thinking. Ibsen’s play is about ‘the misery of the unconventional individual’ who refuses to compromise, to knuckle under to the boredom and narrowness of everyday life. ‘[Ibsen’s] drama ... is not going to be out of date until the Peer Gynts are shown to be right after all.’ But anyone who has ever read *Peer Gynt* knows that it is the story of an over-imaginative but basically worthless individual, a dreamer who can never come to terms with reality, and whose life is a failure. It seems curious that Reich should choose to identify with this particular ‘outsider’. And it is even more dangerous to assume that the Peer Gynts are surrounded by impotent midgets who feel an instinctive hostility to all dreamers and idealists. Reich seems to be deliberately setting the stage for his own tragedy.

The original Peer Gynt paper was instrumental in gaining Reich the status of a guest member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society—a remarkable achievement for a 23-year-old medical student. With a paper on hysterical conversion symptoms, read before the Society on 13 October 1920, Reich was received into full membership.

Current psychoanalytic practice dictated that Reich himself should be psychoanalysed. But three attempts were unsuccessful, all broken off by Reich himself while still unfinished. In her biography of her husband, Ilse Reich clearly feels that there is something of a mystery here—or at least, an interesting revelation of Reich’s inner conflicts. ‘The reason for the failure of all Reich’s

attempts at personal analysis will have to be discovered at some future date, if at all, by a person trained in the field of depth psychology.' But closer analysis can suggest more straightforward motives. The first person to make the attempt was Isidore Sadger, an undistinguished member of the circle whom Jones describes as 'a morose, pathetic figure, very like a specially uncouth bear'. Sadger's lack of tact and social polish were awe-inspiring. At one social gathering, he opened a conversation with a distinguished literary lady by asking abruptly: 'Have you ever occupied yourself with masturbation?' Reich himself may have been arrogant and tactless, but his family background and his training in the officer corps had given him a certain polish and finesse. It is easy to see that he would have found it difficult to open his soul to a man like Sadger. The next analysis was undertaken by the generous and good-natured Paul Federn, who even brushed aside the question of fee. As the senior disciple, Federn could probably afford to regard Reich's youthful aggressiveness with a tolerant eye. But this tolerance seems to have been eroded fairly quickly, and even as early as 1923 (according to Reich), Federn had come to share the general view of him as a troublemaker. No details are known, but a letter written by Reich to Federn in 1926[5] offers certain clues. Reich is protesting at having been overlooked for the office of secretary of the Society, and seems anxious to convince Federn that his complaint is not prompted by 'petty personal feeling'. He says that when he was previously rejected for the post, 'you did not find a vestige of frustrated ambition on my part', and that 'I, the "aggressive, paranoid and ambitious" type, forgot the whole affair without being in the least upset by it.' This makes it fairly clear that it was Federn who had used the words 'aggressive, paranoid and ambitious', and who had accused Reich of frustrated ambition. This seems to suggest that Federn had a very clear insight into Reich's shortcomings, as well as into his basic motivations.

The third analysis was undertaken by the brilliant Hungarian, Sandor Rado, a friend of Ferenczi. This was in later years, after Reich's final meeting with Freud —by which time Reich's own views were highly developed. Reich's only comment is that 'Rado was very jealous, awfully jealous.' Again, there is no need to look for deeper motivations. Most of the Freud circle detested Reich, and he returned the feeling. It was not in his nature to lie down on a couch and pour out his inmost thoughts. The only man to whom he would have been willing to open up his soul was Freud, and Freud was not interested.

The patient whom Freud sent to Reich in March 1919 was a youth suffering from obsessive symptoms—the chief of which was a compulsive need to hurry. Reich proceeded according to the Freudian rule book; the patient lay on a conch, and the analyst sat by his head (so he could not see the analyst's face); the

patient was then asked to talk—to say anything that came into his head. Reich soon uncovered the cause of the neurosis: as a child, the patient had committed a theft from a big store, and run away in panic, afraid of being followed. The memory had been repressed, according to Reich, and now made its reappearance in this inability to walk at the normal pace.

The diagnosis seemed to verify Freud's theory about the repression of deep anxiety. But what about the sexual element? Freud had stated dogmatically: 'Obsessional ideas are invariably self-reproaches which have emerged from repression in a transmuted form, *and which relate to some sexual act that was performed with pleasure in childhood.*' Reich had no difficulty in getting around this problem. 'In this connection,' he explains in *The Function of the Orgasm*, 'his infantile fear of being caught masturbating could easily be demonstrated.'

In short, Reich, like Freud, accepted the sexual theory as an 'unshakeable dogma'. The solution of the problem of mental illness consisted quite simply in probing around until the repressed sexual trauma was located. If there was no sign of a specifically sexual trauma, this was only a proof of how deeply it had been repressed. In *The Function of the Orgasm* Reich expressed his confidence that 'the neurotic symptom is the expression of a repressed drive ... Provided the procedure was correct, the symptom would be shown to contain the unconscious sexual wish as well as the moral defence against it. For example, a hysterical girl's fear of being attacked by a man with a knife is the wish for coitus which has become inhibited by morals and has become unconscious through repression. The symptom owes its existence to the unconsciousness of a forbidden impulse, such as to masturbate or have intercourse. The man who chases her represents her conscious anxiety ... '

The passage is important, not simply as an expression of Reich's orthodox Freudianism, but because it reveals something fundamental about Reich's whole approach: his extreme *literal-mindedness.* It is a characteristic that remained with him throughout his life, and which throws an important light on his development. He craved the kind of down-to-earth certainty that a mathematician would find in a table of logarithms or an engineer in his slide rule. He wanted one explanation, and one only. This can be seen in the case cited above. The story about the patient stealing and hurrying away provides an adequate explanation of the neurosis. The masturbation theory is superfluous and unlikely. Fear of being caught masturbating would hardly cause someone to walk faster, even if he made a habit of masturbating while walking. But if the theft story provided an adequate explanation, then the Freudian theory became unnecessary—and such a possibility had to be avoided at all costs. And then, the theft story would also give rise to some awkward questions. Why should he have

repressed the memory? It is surely more likely that he would have brooded on it and become the victim of a guilt neurosis? And then, neurotic symptoms seldom appear out of the blue, without some background of guilt and depression. This can be seen in the case of Anna O. Her inability to swallow was caused by seeing a dog drink out of a glass; but this was only the *secondary* cause. The primary cause was the depression, *the stagnation of vital energy*, that resulted from watching her father die slowly. And if Reich's patient suffered from guilt feelings—either about masturbation or theft—there must have been also a more immediate cause of vital-stagnation—domestic tensions, adolescent sexuality, educational problems. By choosing to accept the Freudian view, Reich had solved the problem by slide rule. The method ignored all inconvenient complexities.

Yet for a man of Reich's temperament, the Freudian method also had frustrating drawbacks. To begin with, there was the old problem of how to gain access to the patient's unconscious mind. In the 'talking cure', the patient disgorged vast heaps of disconnected fragments, through which the analyst had to search for months or even years. It was a slow, frustrating business, unsuited to Reich's impulsive temperament. But there was an even more embarrassing problem. Freud's original theory declared that once the repressed symptom had been located, the cure was virtually complete. Once the problem had become conscious, it would vanish. But what if this failed to happen? Shortly after Reich became a full member of the Society, Freud sent him a patient who was suffering from general neurasthenia—headaches, back pains, lack of concentration—and compulsive masturbation. Oddly enough, the masturbation failed to provide much relief. Reich's analysis uncovered an incest fantasy—he does not state whether the person concerned was the patient's mother or sister—and, for the first time, the patient masturbated with satisfaction. According to Freudian theory, this should have solved the problem. The patient was now admitting his incestuous desires and using them as masturbation fantasies. And in fact, the symptoms vanished—for a week. 'Finally,' says Reich, 'it was possible to analyse his guilt feelings about masturbation and to correct some practices and attitudes which interfered with complete gratification. After that his condition improved visibly. After nine months of treatment, he was discharged, considerably improved and able to work.' Yet although Reich had taught the patient to improve his masturbation techniques, there was still no complete cure. What had gone wrong? Why did the admission of the incest fantasy to consciousness fail to cure the neurosis? Was it, perhaps, not the true cause of the problem? We might raise the equally interesting question: what had gone right? Why did Reich's lessons in masturbation improve the patient's

condition? No subtle Freudian theory is needed here. One of the original symptoms was lack of concentration. The patient was masturbating—as he was living and feeling—half-heartedly. Reich taught him to put his mind to it, to *focus* the imaginary source of his gratification, and there was an improvement. This seems to suggest that the lack of concentration was a *cause* as well as a symptom. And this view is in accordance with the 'feedback theory' of neurosis outlined in the last chapter. Practical problems produce a sense of impotence, the futility of effort. The unconscious mind responds to this sense of futility by constricting the energy supply, which increases the feeling of impotence. 'He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence,' said William Blake, putting his finger on the root cause of all neurosis. If the conscious mind can be persuaded to focus, then the vicious circle of impotence and lack of concentration can be broken. The unconscious responds by supplying more energy. And the stagnating marshes of neurosis are irrigated by a sense of purpose.

If Reich glimpsed this explanation, he instantly rejected it. It would have contradicted his premise that man has no free will, that he is the 'plaything of his instincts', 'a little worm in the stream of his own feelings'. But there *was* another explanation that was altogether more consistent with Freud's sexual theory: that the patient had improved because he had achieved a *satisfactory orgasm.* There was, admittedly, nothing in Freudian theory about satisfactory orgasms; but at least Reich's idea was in the basic Freudian spirit.

Another case seemed to point to the same conclusion a young waiter who had never, in all his life, experience an erection. His penis remained permanently flaccid. The treatment continued, without success, for three years. By the end of that time, all Reich had discovered was that at the age of two, the waiter had glimpsed his mother giving birth, and received the impression of a large bloody hole between her legs. Apart from his impotence, the waiter showed no sign of serious disturbance; he was good-tempered, well-balanced, able to cope with everyday problems. Here again, if Freud was correct, the discovery of the 'primal scene' should have brought about a cure. In fact, it made no difference whatever. There was clear a *blockage* of some kind, a failure of vital energy to achieve its proper discharge. Yet this insight was of no use to the patient; he had to be discharged uncured. The chief lesson that Reich drew from this case was that the patient was *too* well adjusted.

Freud himself had already reached the conclusion that certain neuroses had their cause in blockage of sex-energy. He called these 'actual neuroses'—a neurosis that was caused by some everyday sexual problem, such as *coitus interruptus* or excessive masturbation. (This was supposed to produce headaches, back pains, etc.) Unlike 'psychoneuroses', actual neuroses were not

caused by childhood guilts or traumas; in fact, they were semi-physical in origin. One of Freud's earliest insights into the sexual theory came in Paris, when he overheard Charcot telling a colleague about a young woman whose hysteria was due to her husband's impotence. 'In these cases,' said Charcot, 'it is always the genital thing.' And those words—'*la chose génitale*'—struck Freud as a revelation. A year later, another colleague confirmed the insight when he told Freud that a female patient suffering from anxiety neurosis needed 'repeated doses of a normal penis'. Freud concluded that in these cases, the patient's system becomes poisoned with stagnant sexual energies—perhaps some actual chemical substance that needs to be metabolized by normal sexual outlet, as food needs to be digested. By labelling such problems 'actual neuroses', he was able to keep them in a separate compartment, and turn his clinical acumen to the more interesting riddle of the psychoneurosis.

Some of Freud's colleagues—Stekel, for example—were inclined to reject this notion of 'actual neurosis'. After all, it was almost non-Freudian to believe that there are neuroses that are not due to repressions and buried traumas. Reich, as usual, went to the opposite extreme. It seemed to him far more likely that *all* neuroses are due to 'the genital thing'. In *The Function of the Orgasm,* he claims that 'among the hundreds of patients I observed and treated within a few years, there was not one woman who did not suffer from complete absence of vaginal orgasm. Among the men, roughly 60 to 70 per cent showed gross genital disturbances, either in the form of erective impotence or premature ejaculation. This inability to obtain genital gratification—which should be the most natural thing in the world—thus proved a symptom which was never absent in female patients and rarely absent among the males.' When an elderly lady came to Reich with a tic of the diaphragm, Reich taught her to masturbate, and the tic vanished. This, he felt, proved his point. He later formulated his basic conviction in the following uncompromising words: 'My contention is that every individual who has managed to preserve a bit of naturalness knows that there is only one thing wrong with neurotic patients: *the lack of full and repeated sexual satisfaction.'*

During these first few years in the psychoanalytic movement, Reich seems to have had no suspicion that he was moving swiftly towards heresy. He even seems to have been unaware of the amount of hostility he aroused. He told Eissler: 'When I came in, everything somehow began to stir, and that was very good. People liked it.' In *The Function of the Orgasm* he compares himself to the baby elephant in Kipling's *Elephant's Child,* always rushing around full of 'satiable curtiosity', getting spanked by the grown-ups, and almost ending up as a crocodile's dinner. The 'grown-ups' of Freud's circle had much the same

attitude to Reich in those early years—tolerance mixed with irritation. And between 1919 and 1922—when he obtained his degree—the time during which he could make a nuisance of himself was limited. Life was exceptionally full. In 1921 he was working in the Vienna University Hospital. It was in this year that he married a fellow student, Annie Pink, described by Ilse Ollendorff as ‘one of the most attractive, brilliant and sought after of the girls at the university’. Now that Reich had a considerable psychoanalytic practice, his finances had begun to improve, and his wife’s father eased the burden by contributing to her support. Life was not all work and study. Reich was musical and played the cello and piano. In music, as in science, he was attracted by Vienna’s revolutionaries, and joined the Schoenberg Society. Some of Schoenberg’s early works—like the ‘monodrama’ *Erwartung*— are positively Freudian in content.

After graduation, Reich took a two-year post-graduate course in psychiatry—the study of serious mental illness—at the Neurological and Psychiatric Clinic of the university. His chief, Wagner-Jauregg, was Austria’s most eminent neurologist, a remarkable clinician who had made the discovery that cretinism is due to iodine deficiency, thus ending the disease almost at a stroke. At the time Reich became his student, he was working on a cure for general paralysis of the insane with malaria therapy—a discovery for which he would receive the Nobel Prize in 1927, the first psychiatrist to do so. Wagner-Jauregg and Freud had been students together, and addressed one another with the familiar *du*; but while Wagner-Jauregg liked and respected Freud, he regarded the sexual theory as nonsense, and, according to Reich, lost no opportunity to poke fun at Freud’s obsession with sexual symbols.

It was here that Reich had the opportunity to study psychotic patients—that is, patients who were insane rather than merely neurotic. No attempt was made to cure them—except by chemicals, such as bromides. Reich was touched by the predicament of these patients. ‘This or the other was “crazy”, they said, and that was that. When, as a medical student, I became acquainted with the questionnaire for mental patients, I felt ashamed. I wrote a little play in which I pictured the desperation of a mental patient who cannot master the surging forces of life in himself and who looks for help and clarity. Consider the stereotypes of a catatonic patient, such movements as pressing a finger against his forehead, as if in an effort to think; or the deep, searching, far-away look of these patients. And then the psychiatrist asks: “How old are you?” “What is your name?” “How much is 3 times 6?” “What is the difference between a child and a dwarf?” He finds disorientation, splitting of consciousness, delusions of grandeur, and that’s that. The “Steinhof” in Vienna contained about 20,000 such individuals. Each one of them had felt his world tumbling down and, in order to

hold on to something, had created an imaginary world of his own in which he could *exist.'* Here we glimpse the essential Reich, the psychologist and artist, who has the power to see the world through the eyes of a psychotic patient. This insight into the *existential* world of the psychotic not only distinguishes Reich from clinicians like Wagner-Jauregg, but also from psychologists like Freud. And yet again, the remarks carry with them a sense of danger—a feeling that Reich understood the psychotic mentality a little too well for his own good.

Working under Wagner-Jauregg and Paul Schilder, Reich once more became convinced of the correctness of the sexual theory. It struck him that the neurotic disguises the cause of his illness, while the psychotic expresses it openly. 'Ideas of sexual intercourse, even with father and mother, all kinds of perverse behaviour, like having faeces smeared over the genitals, fantasies of sucking, etc, flood consciousness.' According to Reich, the psychotic has admitted his repressed sexuality into consciousness, while at the same time preserving his defences against it. So he must place the 'blame' on the outer world. He is sane; it is the world that is mad.

Here again, we feel that Reich's insights into the processes of madness are profound; but he is determined to fit them into a rigid Freudian framework. It is not necessary to be a psychiatrist to know that all madness is *not* sexual in origin. Insanity is the mind's response to a sense of overwhelming discouragement, inability to deal with the problems of existence. This discouragement was expressed by Van Gogh when he wrote: 'Misery will never end' just before he committed suicide. We can detect the same sense of futility and despair in many other men of genius who became insane: John Clare, Swift, Hölderlin. Kleist, Schumann, Semmelweis. Reich himself, like Semmelweis, finally became insane because he felt the odds against him were too great. In such cases, insanity is the mind's surrender to despair and exhaustion—the equivalent of an overworked housewife bursting into tears, or having hysterics. But then, Reich preferred to accept the sexual theory because it provided him with ammunition in his own private war against society. One senses a certain confusion between Reich's clinical observations and his personal convictions. 'The psychotic individual ... is likely to see straight through the sexual hypocrisy of his environment... He experiences realities, not fantasies ... People are "polymorphously perverse", and so are their morals and institutions. They have erected powerful dams against this flood of dirt and the antisocial: internally, their moralistic attitudes and inhibitions; and externally, the vice squad and public opinion. In order to exist, man must deny himself, must adopt artificial attitudes and forms of living of his own creation. The very thing that is really alien to him and a constant burden, he now considers as innate, as the "eternal

moral essence of the human being", as the "truly human" as contrasted with the "animal".' Here Reich is anticipating the doctrine of the later Freud—of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, with its message that man and civilization are hopelessly at odds. But while Freud accepts this situation with grim stoicism, Reich obviously feels that it can be altered. Like Rousseau, he feels that man is born free but is everywhere in chains; the answer is to get rid of the chains. And, as far as Reich was concerned, this was fairly simple. The trouble lay in man's attitude towards sex, his feeling that it is 'dirty' and forbidden. 'The average normal [person] also thinks of sexuality in terms of unnatural, perverse concepts, as evidenced by such expressions as "screwing", "laying a woman", "making a man" ... ' Reich had been strongly impressed by the way that most of his sexually sick male patients seemed to regard sex as an aggressive act. 'The penis was a murderous weapon, or it was a means of "proving" potency ... Only a fantasy of rape would bring about an ejaculation ... ' If only, therefore, man could learn to regard sex as a wholly natural act of tenderness, the problem would vanish ...

The 'elephant's child' could be stimulating and amusing, but his sheer uncontrolled vitality could be exhausting. Roazen begins his brief account of Reich with the comment that he was 'too undisciplined (and original) to stay permanently within the psychoanalytic orbit'. One has the feeling that the adjectives have been carefully chosen.

Even as early as 1922, it must have become apparent to many members of the Society that there was a basic divergence of opinion between Reich and Freud. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) Freud had postulated the idea of the 'death instinct' to explain human self-destructiveness. In 1922, Reich attended the International Psychoanalytic Congress in Berlin, where Freud spoke on the Ego and the Id. This introduced a new and bewildering complication into psychoanalysis. Freud had explained neurosis as the ego's defence against the dangerous forces of the id—that is, against repressions. But then, what happens, for example, if a man becomes impotent because he harbours unconscious incest wishes? Clearly, there is no *conscious* wish to become impotent. But neither can the id be responsible, since it lacks all moral feeling. So what *is* responsible? Freud solved the problem by inventing another part of the mind: the super-ego. This, said Freud, is an unconscious part of consciousness, and it plays the role of policeman and guardian of public morals. In old-fashioned terminology, it was known as conscience. Like all moralists, it can be cruel and ruthless. The super-ego also explained why some patients only got worse under treatment. They didn't *want* to get better; the super-ego was determined to inflict punishment ...

This ingenious idea made an immediate appeal to psychoanalysts—even to

those who had been dubious about Freud's earlier idea of the death-instinct. The super-ego seemed an altogether better explanation of human self-destructiveness than the death-instinct. The idea was accepted more or less unanimously. But Reich was not entirely happy. These new theoretical formulations were very interesting, but the real work continued to be done in the laboratory. In fact, the movement was too prone to lose itself in theory. What was needed was a revival of interest in the practical side of psychoanalysis. Reich was already assistant director of the Psychoanalytic Polyclinic, in which free treatment was offered to working-class Viennese. In the train on the way home from Berlin, Reich suggested to some younger colleagues that what was needed was a 'technical seminar' to supplement the work of the Polyclinic—regular meetings of psychoanalysts to thrash out better techniques. The idea was applauded. Back in Vienna, Reich tried it out on his older colleagues, and was delighted when they also seemed to find it exciting. Roazen remarks cynically—evidently quoting some of these older colleagues: 'A continuous case seminar at the Institute in Vienna was partly invented as a way of keeping Reich within bounds; he was asked to show, as the clinical material came up, where the standard technique was misguided.' If this is true, the 'elephant's child' had no suspicion that their enthusiasm was basically a desire to keep him out of mischief. Hitschmann, the director of the Polyclinic, was appointed head of the seminar. Reich was regarded as too inexperienced for such a post, but he became the most enthusiastic contributor to the seminars. In 1923, Nunberg replaced Hitschmann; then, in 1924, Reich finally reaped the reward for his eagerness, and became seminar leader—a position he held until 1930. The group met once a week, to discuss actual cases and the methods they were using to deal with them.

Life was treating Reich well. In 1924 his first child, Eva, was born—she would always remain his favourite. He had acquired the reputation of the most brilliant of the younger psychoanalysts, and his practice—and income-increased accordingly. At this point, it would probably have been easy to settle for respectability and comfort. But Reich's driving energy and unsatisfied ambition kept him from being contented with this kind of success. The spectacle of his brother Robert's failure may have provided another incentive. The hardships they had endured as students led Robert to develop tuberculosis. He had spent some time in Romania, where he married; by 1925 he was back in Vienna, with his wife and child. Reich helped provide for them until 1926, when Robert died; but after this, he declined all help to the widow. Ilse Reich explains that this was probably due to his loathing for 'bourgeois parasitism'. Reich was, apparently, a completely unpredictable mixture of generosity and meanness.

But the success was not unmixed. It seems to have been during the first year

of the technical seminar—1923—that the older members began to feel strong misgivings about Reich, which were probably a reflection of Freud's own changing attitude. In January of that year, he delivered a lecture about the elderly lady whom he had taught to masturbate, and it seems to have been well-received. So was another paper he gave in October about a woman with delusions of persecution; Reich emphasized the role of her genital problems. But in November, when he delivered a paper on the theme of genitality, he was surprised by the coolness he encountered. 'While I was talking, I became increasingly aware of a chilling atmosphere ... When I finished, there was an icy stillness in the room.' The old guard was deeply, if politely, resistant to Reich's new idea that mental illness was due to lack of adequate orgasms. Two of them told Reich that they knew of any number of female patients with normal sex lives. And Reich himself had to admit that he knew of many male patients who were neurotic *and* capable of orgasm—sometimes several in one night. But the more he thought about it. the more convinced Reich became that the orgasm lay at the root of the problem. After all, a satisfactory orgasm was more than a mere physical discharge of sperm; it should also be a discharge of emotional tension, resulting in total relaxation. And the same should apply to women; neurotic patients might be able to achieve clitoral orgasm, but not the more deeply satisfying vaginal orgasm.

In his enthusiastic innocence, Reich seems to have been unaware of how far these views would grate on his colleagues—and particularly on Freud. At the beginning of his career, Freud had embraced the simplistic view that most disturbed patients had been sexually assaulted by parents in early childhood; he soon recognized the absurdity of this opinion, but it remained a source of reproach—and derision—on the part of his enemies for many years. His belief in unconscious repression was a great deal more convincing—and easier to defend. The years had seen a gradual refinement of the Freudian position, with the emphasis slowly shifting from sex and the unconscious to the ego and the death-wish. Now only the most hostile of Freud's opponents would accuse him of being a sexual pervert. And intellectuals like Thomas Mann classified him with Nietzsche and Schopenhauer as an explorer of the unconscious. And just as he was receiving the recognition—and respectability—that were his due, here was this tactless iconoclast reducing the whole thing to crudely simplistic terms and threatening to bring the whole sexual theory into disrepute. How could State Counsellors and University Chancellors take psychoanalysis seriously when it proclaimed that mental health depended on achieving satisfactory orgasms? How could the general public come to terms with a theory that taught elderly ladies to masturbate?

What was happening, of course, was that the Freud circle was reacting to Reich's orgasm theory in much the same way that the psychiatrists of the older school had reacted to Freud's early theories. They were inclined to look for purely personal motivations—that is, to Reich's own psychological problems and peculiarities. As a young man, he was bound to exaggerate the importance of sexual potency. (Freud called the orgasm theory 'Reich's hobby horse'.) And then there was Reich's aggressiveness and ambitiousness; he was determined to attract attention at all costs, and what better way to do so than by proclaiming half-truths in a loud and confident voice? Reich later told Eissler that it was in 1923 that Paul Federn began to speak against him to Freud. The precise date can probably be pinpointed as that day in November 1923 when Reich read his paper on genitality to the Society.

Reich's development of his ideas during the next two years tended to confirm his colleagues in their low opinion. He was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the problem of 'sexual stasis'—patients like the waiter who experienced a deadness in the genitals. Reich was convinced that the cooperativeness and politeness of such patients was a defence mechanism, an unconscious resistance to the psychotherapist. But how could it be broken? He was impressed by a case he observed at the clinic, when a catatonic patient suddenly exploded into excitement and rage, then became 'normal' for a time. Catatonia is a kind of stupor, and the rage had dissipated the stupor. The patient told him that the explosion had given him pleasure. It had somehow 'unfrozen' his vital energies. There was an obvious parallel between a case like this and that of the impotent waiter. The waiter was also sunk in a kind of stupor, and his politeness was really a form of resistance. If he could have been provoked into an attack of rage, might that not have been the beginning of a cure ... ?

This again struck the circle as highly unorthodox. Nunberg felt that the analyst's job was to win the patient's trust and cooperation. Reich's attitude seemed to be the opposite: that it would be better for the analyst to uncover the patient's latent hostility and bring it into the open. It was easy to feel that this was just another symptom of Reich's own aggressiveness.

Freud himself was far from happy, either with the orgasm theory, or with Reich's preoccupation with latent hostility. When Reich brought him the bulky manuscript of *The Function of the Orgasm* in 1926, Freud winced at the title, then commented pointedly: 'That thick?' Since the book was dedicated to Freud, Reich understandably felt this to indicate a lack of enthusiasm. This was confirmed by the length of time Freud took to read it—two months or so (he was usually a quick reader); and his final comments were only politely encouraging. Reich sensed a distinct coolness towards him. Then, in December 1926, Reich

gave a talk to the circle on the problem of ‘resistance’. He raised the question of which should be tackled first: the neurotic symptoms, or the ‘latent negative attitude’ towards the analyst. Freud asked irritably whether it would not be better to ‘interpret the material in the order in which it appears’. He was, in effect, telling Reich not to split hairs. ‘The atmosphere of the meeting was unpleasant,’ says Reich. ‘My opponents in the seminar gloated and pitied me. I remained calm.’ The real cause of Freud’s increasing hostility was simple, although Reich was too absorbed in his own ideas to recognize it. Reich was developing the libido theory just as Freud was abandoning it. At a fairly early stage, Freud had, in effect, replaced the libido with the ‘pleasure principle’—the desire of the id to have its own way. And now he had gone ‘beyond the pleasure principle’, the libido had almost vanished from his theories. For Reich, the optimistic romantic, the libido remained the core of psychoanalysis, a kind of Niagara of vital energy that had to find its outlet if it was not to become completely destructive. If Reich was correct about the libido, then Freud must be wrong about the death-wish and the super-ego; there was hardly room for both. It was really a basic clash of temperaments: romantic optimist versus realistic pessimist. And the pessimist was reacting to the optimist with increasing antipathy. Without being fully aware of what was happening, Reich was drifting into the same position Tausk had occupied a decade earlier.

The odd thing is that Reich never *did* recognize it, either then or later. Where Freud was concerned, some curious compulsive blind-spot came into operation, which refused to allow him even to consider the possibility that Freud could dislike him. Reich’s first wife was convinced that Freud was a father-substitute; and this would certainly explain Reich’s lifelong loyalty to the man who finally rejected him as decisively as he had rejected Tausk and Silberer. The Right Man theory suggests a further explanation. Freud was the pivot of Reich’s self-esteem. He had, in effect, made him, treated him as a favoured son, raised him to a position of eminence in the world of psychoanalysis. There was no way in which Reich could reject Freud without disowning a part of himself. In the case of Jung and Adler it had been different; both had already formulated certain basic concepts before they met Freud, and both were able later to reject the sexual theory and return to their own original insights. Reich owed *all* his basic concepts to Freud, and the sexual theory remained at the core of his thinking for the rest of his life. So it was necessary for him to rationalize Freud’s increasing coolness, to believe that it was due to envious colleagues like Federn, who poisoned Freud’s mind against him. In the study at Organon there was a large signed photograph of Freud. In the conversations with Eissler, dating from 1952, Reich insisted on the continued warmth and understanding between himself and

Freud, although this was obviously inconsistent with his expulsion from the psychoanalytic movement. At one point, Eissler speaks of Freud's 'meanness', obviously hoping to tempt Reich into denunciation. Reich snaps: 'Meanness? Did I say that word? Did I use that word?' Eissler is forced to withdraw. 'I thought you did ... ' Reich adds immediately: 'Not meanness. Irony, a biting irony. He—how shall I formulate that? I think the following happened: You see, every pioneer has to have friends and co-workers to carry his work. Now, what usually happens is that they are not around, or if they are around, they take advantage of the pioneer. That's a very dreadful truth, but it is truth. He waits and waits and waits for somebody to come around, to help, to do things and to go along with him. But they are just dead. You see, *the pioneer somehow jumps out of the present-day biological structure of humanity.* You know that? *He jumps out of it because of his aliveness. But humanity sits, sits, just plain sits.*'

And here we can see exactly why Reich would never hear a word against Freud. He has identified himself with Freud. He and Freud are the two great pioneers, misunderstood and reviled by mankind. In a sense, Reich has *become* Freud; the son has replaced the father. He may express pity and sympathy for Freud; but never hostility.

All this enables us to understand the traumatic nature of what occurred soon after the disastrous lecture of December 1926. Matters seem to have come to a head over the question of Reich's 'training analysis'. Reich's earlier attempts had been unsuccessful; therefore he still lacked the most crucial part of the psychoanalyst's initiation. There was something of a mystique attached to the idea of the training analysis. Freud felt that it was the only way in which the analyst could personally experience the truth of the theory that he applied to his patients. The training analysis was the equivalent of the Zen Buddhist's *satori,* the Hindu's *samadhi*; it was the 'moment of truth'. And since Freud was the father-figure of the movement, the Master, it was every young analyst's dream to receive his initiation through Freud. Understandably, Freud became more reluctant as the years went by; there were too many young analysts competing for his attention. He even made a rule that he should never be expected to treat members of the Vienna circle. But since he occasionally broke it—we have seen that he treated Helene Deutsch in 1918—disciples continued to hope for this mark of supreme distinction. Reich, like Tausk. believed that he was regarded as a favourite son. Moreover, at some point, Freud seems to have hinted that he would be willing to undertake Reich's training analysis. This would certainly have been a remarkable triumph for Reich; Freud had even refused Federn. To be analysed by Freud would have been the culmination of his brilliant rise in the movement—almost an indication that Freud regarded him as his successor.

In fact, Freud turned him down. There seem to be no details of the precise form of the rejection, but Annie Reich told Ilse Ollendorff that Reich found it intolerable, and that it plunged him into deep depression. Shortly thereafter, he developed tuberculosis, and had to spend the early months of 1927 at a sanatorium at Davos, in Switzerland. It is difficult not to conclude that this was another example of Freud's sinister power to cause self-destructive conflict in those he rejected.

But Reich, like Jung, was too self-reliant to commit suicide. He spent his months at Davos—until the summer of 1927—revising the manuscript of *The Function of the Orgasm*[6] and writing articles. It was also, clearly, a period of serious mental conflict and self-examination. Ilse Ollendorff reports: 'Annie Reich, and with her other Freudian analysts, believe that a "deteriorating process" began in Reich during his stay at the sanatorium, that he was not the same person after his return, that he must have gained new insights into some of his own problems and been disturbed by them.' She expresses her own disagreement, and says she believes this is a rationalization by Annie Reich of her own difficulties in living with Reich 'because he was a person with unusual energy'. She adds that when *she* lived with Reich she never felt that a deteriorating process was going on until 1951, three years before their separation. But this comment seems irrelevant. No one would have been better able to judge whether Reich had deteriorated than his first wife, and what Reich was like more than a decade later is beside the point. Annie Reich—and other analysts who knew Reich closely—can have meant only one thing: that Reich had lost some of his pliability, his ability to consider other points of view. It was more than a year earlier that Federn had referred to him as the aggressive, paranoid and ambitious type, and the element of paranoia was hardening. It is easy to envisage how this came about. What Reich had to face was virtually his own downfall in the movement. Clearly, Freud and his circle wanted no part of the orgasm theory, and their rejection included its originator. On a photograph taken at Davos in Feburary 1927, Reich has scrawled the words 'Conflict with Freud'. Reich glares at the camera from under lowered eyebrows, his face grim and determined. The first step in his rationalization is clear. Freud has not rejected him on personal grounds—because he is aggressive, paranoid and ambitious—but purely on theoretical grounds, because he cannot bear to follow Reich to the logical conclusion of his own theories. Therefore Reich is the torchbearer, the true Freudian, *plus royaliste que le Roi.* If he is rejected, it is for complex reasons: partly because of the machinations of the envious Federn, and partly because Freud himself has been blinkered and deceived by self-seeking parasites. Freud is Lear, and Reich is the Earl of Kent, banished because of his

honesty and loyalty. This rationalization is clearly expressed to Eissler. ‘In our discussions, it was quite clear that he was hampered by the world, which did not want him to get at the genitality of infants and children and adolescents because that would turn the whole world upside down. Yes, Freud knew that ... The sublimation theory ... was a consequence of that. It was an evasion. He had to. He was tragically caught. You know with whom? With the many students, many pupils, many followers. And what did they do? They took what he had and got money out of it ... They hampered Freud. He was hampered so he couldn’t develop further. And from there he went right into the death-instinct theory ... Now, if my theory of cancer is correct... you just give up, you resign—and then you shrink. It is quite understandable why he developed his epulis [cancer of the jaw] ... I always had the feeling he smoked [so much]—not nervousness, not nervousness—but because he wanted to say something which never came over his lips ... He had to “bite something down”.’ And what Freud was biting down, of course, was the recognition of the consequences of his own ideas—the genital theory. So there was not even a true conflict with Freud. Freud was really on Reich’s side, but dare not say so.

It is true that the fully developed form of this rationalization dates from a quarter of a century after the rejection by Freud. But it is also stated—less fully but equally plainly—in *The Function of the Orgasm.* It was the pupils who were to blame for Freud’s surrender to ‘the world’. ‘The world ... gave him a great many pupils, who came to a table all set for them ... They had only one interest: to make psychoanalysis socially acceptable as quickly as possible ... One after the other, they sacrificed the libido theory or diluted it. Freud knew how difficult it is to continue to advocate the libido theory. But the interest of self-preservation and of safeguarding the psychoanalytic movement prevented him from saying what in a more honest world he certainly would have fought for ... He knew in 1929 that in my youthful enthusiasm I was right. But to admit this would have meant to sacrifice half of the organization.’

Now all this was, as we know, flatly untrue. By 1926, Freud himself had turned his back on the orgasm theory—this is clear in a book published that year, *Inhibitions, Symptoms, Anxiety*, in which he states in so many words: ‘Anxiety never arises from repressed libido.’ If Reich had been honest, he would have faced up to the truth: that Freud found his orgasm theory simplistic and repellent. And with the advantage of historical hindsight, we can see why this was so. Freud was deeply pessimistic. More than a decade earlier, he had told Jung that human culture is a mere farce, ‘the morbid consequence of repressed sexuality’. ‘That is just the curse of fate against which we are powerless to contend.’[7] A man who held this view of the greatest achievements of the human spirit—that

is, that culture is a form of neurosis—would hardly be willing to concede that neurosis can be cured by a satisfactory orgasm.

Besides, there was another, and even more crucial, reason for Freud's increasing antipathy to Reich. Reich hints at it several times in his conversations with Eissler, when speaking about Federn's slanders, but seems deeply reluctant to state it outright. He insists several times that he has no idea of the precise nature of Federn's slanders, and when Eissler asks him outright: 'You wanted to make a statement about Federn ... Do you remember?' replies: 'I don't want to say it here.' But finally, he brings himself to say it: 'About 1926, when I published the work on the genitality in children, the first puberty, rumours came to my ears that I cohabited with my patients. I didn't. It was Federn who slandered ... ' But a page later, speaking about the 'genital frustration' of psychoanalysts, he tells Eissler: 'There were instances where psychoanalysts, under the pretext of a genital examination, of a medical examination, put their fingers into the vaginas of their patients. It was quite frequent. I knew that. You see, it happened once or twice that I fell in love with a patient. Then I was frank about it. I stopped the treatment and I let the thing cool off. Then we decided either yes or no to go to bed ... I was quite straight about it. Some psychoanalysts didn't do that. They would be hypocrites about it. They would pretend there was nothing there, and would masturbate the patient during the sessions. Now that not only created very bad situations, but it also created a bad conscience or envy towards me, who was very different in these matters. It is quite clear that the man who discovered the genitality function in neurosis ... could not himself live in a sick way ... So there was envy there.'

It is possible, of course, that Reich was speaking of a much later period; but since he is explaining why the Freud circle became hostile, this hardly seems likely.

Here, then, we have the most basic reason for Freud's change of attitude towards the one-time favourite disciple. Where 'immorality' was concerned, the founder of psychoanalysis was remarkably narrow-minded. Ernest Jones tells how Freud forbade his wife to stay with an old friend because she had slept with her husband before she was married. He even regarded references to legs as improper. Such a man would obviously be horrified at the thought that one of his most brilliant young followers was using psychoanalysis as an excuse for fornication—and, what was more, justifying his conduct by an appeal to 'the genital theory'. Freud took a narrow and rigid view of the Hippocratic oath. If Reich was really sleeping with his patients (and Freud only had Federn's word for this), then his conduct was not only dangerous to himself, but to the whole psychoanalytic movement. It could raise a scandal that would set psychoanalysis

back twenty-five years. If this was the consequence of the orgasm theory, then Freud had practical as well as theoretical reasons for rejecting it.

It now becomes possible to understand something of the nature of Reich's mental conflict during the months in the Davos sanatorium. He was emotionally dependent on Freud, and Freud had rejected him. He knew—or strongly suspected—the purely practical reason for that rejection; he had known since the previous year. What was now important was to patch up his wounded feelings, to heal the bruise to his self-esteem, and—above all—to convince himself that he was right and that his 'enemies' were wrong. In order to erect this structure of self-reassurance, it was necessary to convince himself that Freud was on his side, and that disciples like Federn were Freud's enemies as well as his own. In the conversations with Eissler, he loses no opportunity to imply that Freud really disliked Federn. ' ... Freud couldn't stand Federn's eyes. He referred to them once as "patricidal eyes" ... Wonderful! Federn really had murderous eyes.' If Freud disliked Federn, he could not be deeply influenced by Federn's slanders. Ergo, Freud's rejection was not a personal matter; it was a theoretical disagreement about the libido. Moreover, Freud was really on his side; he was simply afraid to say so ...

The Right Man has a remarkable capacity for telling himself stories and then believing them. But this kind of emotional self-repair has a basic drawback: it can be wrecked by a single blow of reality. It is no longer safe to be open-minded and flexible, to allow yourself to see the point of view of other people. Those who are very close to you are particularly dangerous, because they continue to treat you on the old footing, and assume the right to contradict or to point out your inconsistencies. They have to be regarded with suspicion and, if necessary, discarded ...

If this interpretation is correct, then Reich's months in Davos were a period of mental as well as physical recovery. Physically, Reich was as well as ever; but psychologically, there was a deterioration—an additional layer of paranoid suspicion. This was the deterioration noticed by his wife and close colleagues. But Annie Reich was mistaken to believe that he had 'gained new insight into some of his own problems and been disturbed by them'. Insight into his own problems was the last thing that Reich wanted. It would have undermined the certainties he had taken so long to repair.

Chapter Four

And now, at this central point in the book, it is no longer possible to avoid the major issue. *Was Reich's whole life-work based on a fallacy?*

In spite of his 'heresies', Reich remained basically a Freudian. He not only accepted the sexual theory; he generalized it to a point where even Freud felt it was a wild caricature of his own position. But we have seen in an earlier chapter that the original sexual theory was partly an outcome of Freud's failure to grasp the immensely *active* power of the unconscious, and the feedback mechanism that plays such a crucial part in the relation between the 'ego' and the 'id'. Does this suggest that Reich's own genital theory was based on the same misunderstanding, and that it was therefore an elaborate mistake?

The first step towards an answer is to try to grasp the essence of Freud's theory of neurosis—as it was held in 1926—and to appreciate why everyone—including Reich—regarded it as *self-evidently true.*

Fortunately, Freud himself has saved us a great deal of trouble by providing an admirable summary of his views: it can be found in a short book called *The Question of Lay Analysis*, published in 1926. He begins by explaining the kind of problems that psychoanalysis was devised to try and solve:

> A patient ... may be suffering from fluctuations in his moods which he cannot control, or from a sense of despondency by which his energy feels paralysed because he thinks he is incapable of doing anything properly ... He may one day have suffered from a distressing attack,—unknown in its origin—of feelings of anxiety, and since then have been unable, without a struggle, to walk along the street alone, or to travel by train; he may perhaps have to give up both entirely. Or, a very remarkable thing, his thoughts may go their own way and refuse to be directed by his will. They pursue problems that are quite indifferent to him, but from which he cannot get free. Quite ludicrous tasks, too, are imposed on him, such as counting up the windows on the fronts of houses ... But his state becomes intolerable if he suddenly finds he is unable to fend off the idea that he has pushed a child under the wheels of a car or has thrown a stranger off the bridge into the water, or if he has to ask himself if he is not the murderer whom the police are looking for... It is obvious nonsense, as he himself knows; he has never done any harm to anyone; but if he were really the murderer being looked for, his feeling—his sense of guilt—could not be stronger.
>
> Or again our patient—and this time let us make her a woman—may suffer in another way ... She is a pianist, but her fingers are overcome by cramp and refuse to serve her. Or when she thinks of going to a party she promptly becomes aware of a call of nature the satisfaction of which would be incompatible with a social gathering ... She is overcome by violent headaches or other painful sensations when they are most inconvenient ... And finally, it is a lamentable fact that she cannot tolerate any agitations which after all are inevitable in life. On such occasions she falls in a faint ...
>
> Other patients, again, suffer from disturbances in a particular field in which emotional

> Other patients, again, suffer from disturbances in a particular field in which emotional life converges with demands of a bodily sort. If they are men, they find they are incapable of giving physical expression to their tenderest feelings towards the opposite sex, while towards less-loved objects they may perhaps have every reaction at their command. Or their sensual feelings attach them to people whom they despise and from whom they would like to get free; or those same feelings impose requirements on them whose fulfilment they themselves find repulsive ...

What Freud has described here is basically the obsessive and neurasthenic type of patient. He goes on to explain that the psychoanalyst gets the patient to lie down, and then tries to get him to tell his innermost secrets. For there may be secrets which the patient is not only unwilling to admit to other people, *but even to himself.* The aim of Catholic confession is to get the penitent to tell what he knows; the aim of psychoanalysis is to get the patient to tell *more than he knows.*

After this admirable summary of his aims, Freud goes on to speak of the ego and the id. The ego, says Freud, is a kind of facade of the id, a 'frontage'; 'the ego lies between reality and the id, which is truly mental'.

Now the id, says Freud, is full of cravings and desires—instincts that demand satisfaction. These desires can only be satisfied through the external world. And the ego has the job of acting as intermediary between the id and the external world. The id sees a pretty girl and wants to make love to her. But if the body obeyed its demands, it would land in jail. It is the task of the ego to guard against such mishaps, to act as diplomat, to pay polite compliments to the girl, invite her to dinner, and steer her gently in the direction of the bedroom. Its job is to persuade the id to bridle its passions. In doing so, it replaces the 'pleasure principle' with the 'reality principle'.

In responsible adults, this cooperative principle usually works admirably. But what about in young people, whose ego has not yet developed enough to control the id? When the id makes an instinctual demand which it would like to resist (such as committing incest with the mother), but is too weak to control, it can only *repress* that demand—isolate it, like a telephonist pulling out the plug from a switchboard. But that still leaves an angry person on the other end of the line. Besides, the ego has shirked its proper responsibility in behaving like this, and is 'bound to suffer damage in revenge'. It has permanently narrowed its sphere of influence, turned a corner of the id into a no-go area. All this leads Freud to conclude that 'the decisive repressions take place in early childhood', when the ego is weak.

These repressions, he goes on to say, are *always* sexual in nature. 'Our opponents have told us that we shall come upon cases in which the factor of sex plays no part. Let us be careful not to introduce it into our analyses, and so spoil our chance of finding such a case. But so far none of us has had that good

fortune.’

All this enables us to see clearly how Freud came to formulate the sexual theory. He starts by trying to understand why certain patients feel a compulsion to count windows, or experience the delusion of having pushed a child under a bus. He decides that the answer lies in a festering splinter in the unconscious mind—a splinter that owes its origin to a childhood repression, invariably sexual in nature.

But we have seen, in the second chapter, that Freud’s sexual theory was *not,* as he liked to believe, a rigidly logical deduction from his clinical observations. The germ of the idea was the remark he overheard in Paris—that a certain female patient could be cured by ‘repeated doses of a normal penis’. It seemed to confirm his suspicion that Bertha Pappenheim’s problem was basically sexual—as the episode of the violent pelvic movements seemed to suggest. Bertha had lost her father, and now ‘transferred’ her emotional attachment to Breuer. Freud observed the same ‘transference phenomenon’ in his own patients; he later explained that this is what had convinced him that the origin of all neurosis is sexual. Again, when his female patients told him stories of being seduced by their fathers, he concluded that sexual abuse of children was a major cause of neurosis. But even when he decided that such stories were fantasy, this failed to undermine his belief in the sexual theory; on the contrary, it increased it: for why should they fantasize unless they harboured a secret wish to be seduced by their fathers?

All this enables us to understand precisely why Freud came to believe so whole-heartedly in the sexual theory of neurosis. But it should also be plain that, on this kind of evidence, he had no right to conclude that the basis of *all* neurosis is sexual. *Any* subject about which we feel strong inhibitions can lead to neurotic symptoms. We can induce a mini-neurosis instantaneously by solemnly warning someone not to do something. A person who believes that under no circumstances may he clear his throat instantly feels a compulsion to clear his throat. In Catholic Austria—as in Victorian England—sex was a major cause of inhibition; therefore it is not surprising that Bertha Pappenheim made suggestive pelvic movements. If she had been brought up in a nunnery, she might have uttered a stream of blasphemies; and Freud might just as well have concluded that the origin of all neurosis is religious.

How could a man of Freud’s scientific training commit such a logical error? The answer seems to be that he was startled by the originality of his insight, shocked by its heterodoxy, bowled over by its simplicity. Besides, its potentiality for creating scandal was enormous; it might even destroy his career. It was easy to exaggerate the importance of an idea so exciting and so dangerous. We should

also bear in mind that Freud had already arrived at one immensely important insight: the existence of the 'second mind' in man—the unconscious. It must have been enormously tempting to combine the two insights. This he proceeded to do, allowing the whole theory to be coloured by his natural pessimism ('Man is the helpless victim of his appetites and anxieties'). It looked logical; and—as in the case of Darwin—the scandal and controversy it aroused had the effect of establishing it as the major contender in the field.

But sooner or later, it was bound to strike psychologists that this enormous emphasis on sex was purely arbitrary. Neurosis is basically a challenge to our psychic unity, and the most obvious thing about it is its mechanism: the restriction of freedom through self-consciousness. In the late 1930s, the Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl formulated what he called 'the law of reverse effort', the recognition that if you become over-anxious about anything, you do it badly. Someone who is worried about stammering stammers worse than ever, whereas a stutterer who was *asked* to stutter in the school play found himself unable to do so. It follows that all that is necessary to produce neurosis is *any* kind of obsessive anxiety. Frankl also discovered that he could cure obsessive patients by asking them to reverse the direction of their efforts: by persuading them to do the very thing they were terrified of doing. A bank clerk whose job depended on legible handwriting found that his handwriting was getting worse; and the more he worried, the worse it became. Frankl advised him to practise *trying* to write badly, and the problem quickly vanished.

Here we can see the basic mechanism of neurosis. We can also see that, in this case, the sexual theory is superfluous; the neurosis is triggered by the man's anxiety about his job. And what happens when he tries to write badly? The need to focus his efforts on the task rescues him from his sense of passivity and helplessness. In exercising control, he becomes aware of his freedom. He ceases to 'oppose' himself, and the problem vanishes.

We can also see that if the clerk had been anxious about his sexual potency, the same mechanism would have made him impotent. This would not be because sex is the *underlying cause* of his neurosis, but because the 'interference mechanism' will operate on *any* cause for anxiety.

This also enables us to see why, to a large extent, Freudian analysis works in practice. Neurosis is due to a build up of anxiety, through a process of 'negative feedback'. Belief in the analyst reduces the pressure of the anxiety, and the patient's 'will to health' does the rest. In fact, any form of 'distraction' can produce the same effect. In 1924, Reich treated two women for cardiac neurosis —the sensation that the heart is being 'squeezed'. When the women were genitally excited, the palpitations and anxiety subsided; inhibition of genital

pleasure caused the palpitations to return. Reich concluded that cardiac neurosis is due to the blockage of sexual energy. We can see that this conclusion is less logical than he assumed. *All* anxiety produces a 'contraction' of the heart, and focusing upon the feeling of suffocation causes it to increase. (Anyone can make the heart 'contract' by thinking about it, just as we can make ourselves itch by thinking about itching.) It was as if Reich's patient was squeezing her own heart, yet was unable to stop, as an embarrassed woman is unable to stop blushing. The harder she tries, the worse it becomes. Stimulation of her genitals would have the effect of distracting her attention from the anxiety to the pleasure she is experiencing, so she relaxes. It would have had much the same effect if she had become absorbed in a good book.

All of which would seem to suggest that the answer to our original question: Was Reich's life-work based on a fallacy? is quite simply: Yes. Reich's work was based on the sexual theory, and the sexual theory is seen to be based on a fallacy. But this is to overlook an important distinction between Reich and Freud. Freud's basic outlook was negative; Reich's was positive. For Freud, sex was a mere animal instinct whose frustration leads to neurosis. But why is sex so important to us? Because, says Freud, we are nature's slaves, and nature demands procreation ... For Reich, as for D. H. Lawrence, sex was the most powerful expression of the force of life itself, man's glimpse of reality. That is to say, where sex is concerned, Freud is a rationalist, Reich a mystic.

But why should this difference in approach make any practical difference, when their actual therapeutic practice starts from the same assumption—that the root of the neurosis is sexual?

The answer to this question is, in fact, of crucial importance to understanding Reich's contribution to psychotherapy, and deserves to be considered at some length.

We have seen that one of Freud's basic misconceptions lay in his notion that the unconscious is the *controller* of consciousness, the 'puppet master'. So, according to Freud, neurosis can be compared to a volcanic eruption, an explosion that has been prepared in the underground world of the unconscious and which now bursts through the surface into consciousness. In Freud's view, consciousness plays no part in this process—except for being responsible for the original repression. We have seen that this explanation is inconsistent with what most of us know about the mechanism of neurosis: that it is a 'feedback' mechanism caused by *self-consciousness.* That is to say, consciousness, *not* the unconscious, is the villain of the piece.

The philosopher Michael Polanyi puts his finger on the central problem when he points out that, when we look *at* something, we cease to see its meaning.[1] A

pianist who looked at his hands would paralyse his fingers; in order to play well he must look *beyond* his hands to the music. When you look *at* a thing, you see it but you cease to grasp it. In order to grasp its meaning, you must cease to attend *to* it, and attend *from* it.

Why is it, asks Polanyi, that when I switch my attention back *to* something, I destroy its meaning? He suggests that 'to attend *from* a thing to its meaning is to *interiorize* it, and to look instead *at* the thing is to *exteriorize* or *alienate* it'. What he says is important and true, but it cannot be regarded as an answer to his question: why, when I attend *to* something, do I destroy its meaning? The answer is of considerable importance, for neurosis is a form of alienation, a loss of meaning. To understand the precise mechanism of this loss would be to carry psychology an important step beyond Freud.

In short, we need a more precise understanding of the 'interference' mechanism.

Such an understanding has begun to emerge in the past decade or so as the result of an apparently unrelated discipline: split-brain research. We shall see that it can, in fact, be regarded as the key to understanding the relation between the conscious and the unconscious.

For more than a century now, surgeons have known that when the left side of the brain is damaged, the speech faculties are affected, whereas damage to the right side prevents recognition of faces. As long ago as 1864, the neurologist Hughlings Jackson noted that a patient with a right-hemisphere tumour ceased to recognize people and places, and he made the suggestion that the left hemisphere governs speech while the right governs recognition. More recent researches—notably by Roger Sperry of the California Institute of Technology, and Robert Ornstein of the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute—have shown that, basically, the left cerebral hemisphere governs rational thought, while the right governs intuition. Damage to the left side impairs the verbal faculties; damage to the right impairs artistic creativity. In crudely simplistic terms, the left is a scientist, the right an artist.

In evolutionary terms, this development is fairly recent. Of man's three brains—reptile, mammal and human—the reptile brain—at the base of the skull—is the oldest, developed by our fishy and saurian ancestors. The second, which includes the cerebellum, was developed when reptiles turned into mammals. Together, these two portions constitute the 'old brain'. Our third brain is the most recent evolutionary development—the cerebral cortex, encased in the top of the skull. In man, its development has been so swift and spectacular—a mere half-million years—that some scientists like to speak of 'the brain explosion'. This is our thinking brain, the part that controls the will and our waking

consciousness. This is the ‘new brain’ that we are now discussing.

Oddly enough, the left side of the brain governs the right side of the body, and vice versa. But apart from this division of function, there seems to be close cooperation between the two halves. They are linked together by several knots of nerve fibre, the largest and most important being known as the *corpus callosum*, or cerebral commissure.

In the late 1930s, scientists discovered that if this commissure is severed, it seems to make no obvious difference to the functioning of the brain. But it appeared to benefit epileptic patients, reducing the frequency of the attacks; apparently the operation prevented some kind of electrical feedback between the two hemispheres. But in the early 1950s, Sperry and his team discovered that split-brain animals were unable to transfer learning from one side of the brain to the other; if each eye was covered in turn, the animal could learn two diametrically opposed solutions to the same problem. But it was in human beings that the most interesting results were observed. If a split-brain patient banged into some object with his left side (connected to the right brain) he failed to notice it; he paid attention only if he banged into things with his right side. Told to tap his left foot, he was unable to do so. But he had no difficulty in obeying a command to tap his right foot. He had considerable difficulty writing words with his left hand. It began to look as if the right side of the brain was deaf and dumb.

But gradually a fascinating pattern began to emerge. If a split-brain patient is shown an apple with the left side of the brain, and an orange with the right, and then asked what he has seen, he replies, ‘An apple’. Asked to write down what he has seen with his left hand, he writes, ‘An orange’. Asked what he has just written, he replies, ‘Apple’.

In fact, the split-brain experiment reveals that we have two people living inside our heads, one in the left and one in the right hemisphere. They are like neighbours whose houses are connected by a covered passageway—so they are in constant communication—but who live and sleep in their own section. Another experiment underlined the same point. If the right eye (connected to the left brain) is covered, and alternating red and green lights are flashed in the other eye, the patient has no idea what colour he has just seen. Therefore his guesses ought to be exactly what is expected from chance. In fact, the results are well above chance. The patient would make the wrong choice—‘Red’—then jerk as if someone had nudged him in the ribs and say, ‘No, green’. The ‘dumb’ hemisphere had heard the incorrect guess, and somehow managed to kick the ankle of its better half.

From our point of view, there are important advantages to be gained from

thinking in terms of these 'two selves'. It seems to correspond to a real division in the psyche, between the receptive (right) and aggressive (left), the yin and yang of Chinese mythology. At the same time, it is important not to take the distinction too literally—that is, too anatomically. Split-brain research is a relatively new field of exploration, and tomorrow's discoveries could contradict what we appear to know today. But the important revelation is that we have two people living inside our heads, and that the one who inhabits the left side of the brain calls himself 'you'. He seems to be quite unaware that, only a few centimetres away, there is another being who also believes himself the rightful occupant of your head. Once we have been handed this important clue, we can pursue it with the aid of self-observation.

We may begin by making the assumption that Freud's 'ego' is the 'self' that inhabits the left hemisphere. When a split-brain patient was shown an 'indecent' picture with the right side only, she blushed. Asked why she was blushing, she replied, 'I don't know.' It was true; her 'ego' didn't know, and her right brain had no way of telling it. This also clearly suggests that the right brain is, to some extent, what Freud meant by the 'id' or the unconscious. At least, it seems safe to assume that the 'I' that blushes is also the 'I' that stammers or faints or produces a sudden desire to rush to the toilet—like the female pianist described by Freud. For practical purposes, then, we may identify that right-brain 'I' with the Freudian unconscious; it seems fairly clear, at least, that the right brain is the gateway to the unconscious. That other 'I' is less vocal and aggressive than the rational 'I', but its roots go deeper, and its powers are far greater. In *The Dragons of Eden,* Carl Sagan calls this 'other self' 'the silent watcher', and suggests that we are often conscious of it in dreams, or in certain drug experiences. He tells how a friend became aware of the 'watcher' when he was smoking marijuana, and addressed to it the question 'Who are you?' The answer came back: 'Who wants to know?'

By simply reflecting on our mental processes, it is possible to observe the different functions of the left and right halves. The left-ego is not only the part that deals with language and everyday logic; it is also the part of me that 'copes' with the external world. Its attention is turned 'outwards'. This immediately suggests that the 'other self', in the right hemisphere, looks 'inwards'. And this again seems to be confirmed by the fact that it is the right that appreciates music. When we enjoy music, we sink 'inside ourselves'; we may even close our eyes to prevent the external world distracting us.

This observation suggests the basic relationship between the 'two selves'. They could be compared to Martha and Mary. The left is Martha, coping with the chores of everyday existence, washing the dishes, adding up the household accounts. The right is Mary, the contemplative, the dreamer. The left is rational

accounts. The right is Mary, the contemplative, the dreamer. The left is rational, the right intuitive.

The odd thing is that although the person I call 'I' lives in the left hemisphere, what might be called 'my personal centre of gravity' *can* move about to some extent. In musical appreciation, in meditation, in close contact with nature, 'I' become non-verbal. I seem to sink deep into myself, and the everyday 'me', constantly reacting to problems and anxieties, seems to be *another* person, a stranger.

I note another thing about these moods of 'inwardness'. They renew my energies. If, for example, I have done a long day's driving, my left-brain ego has been kept constantly on the alert, to prevent accidents, and I may sink into a purely 'automatic' state. I feel exhausted, yet cannot afford to give way to my fatigue until I am safely home. And even when I am relaxed in my armchair, with a glass of wine beside me, I may still be unable to 'unwind'. I am too tired to read, yet every time I close my eyes I see the road again, and jerk into wakefulness ... Yet if, as I begin to sink into that state of bored fatigue, I happen to switch on the car radio, and find myself deeply interested in the programme, I experience a magical return of my energies. I sigh and relax, and as I do so, I feel the first trickle of energy that tells me that my inner-tanks are beginning to refill. All of which suggests clearly that the right somehow 'creates' energy, while the left 'spends' it.

When we are healthy, the left and right work in harmony, like two men at either end of a double-handed saw. If, for example, I am setting out on a holiday, my mind is in a state that could be described as optimistic alertness. There is an indefinable air of *reality* about everything. As I stand on the station platform, I am aware of the sunlight, the slight breeze, the smell of paint from the bench, the glossy surface that reflects the sun, the half-dozen shades of green in the trees opposite ... In short, I am not merely seeing, but am also responding to what I see. There is no 'lag' between my perception and my response. Left and right are in harmony.

This is because 'I' am interested in what goes on around me, and my hidden partner responds by sending up energy. But if I am engaged in some routine task, and my interest flags, then a 'perception gap' appears. I no longer respond immediately. I see things, and my response comes a fraction of a second later, like a delayed echo. One interesting experiment revealed that when the left brain is engaged in routine calculation (i.e. adding up a column of figures), the right brain displays sleep rhythms—alpha waves. The right has no part to play in mechanical calculation, so it goes off-duty. In the same way, if I watch television for too long, or try to finish a long book in a single sitting, my ability to feel and respond seems to drain away. I experience a sense of unreality; I see things, but

respond seems to drain away. I experience a sense of unreality, I see things, but my ability to respond—the right brain—has fallen asleep, or become sluggish with boredom.

And this, clearly, is the basic mechanism of neurosis. If we spend too much time in a state of tension—like an overworked housewife or businessman, or boredom—like a worker on a production line, the right ceases to do its proper work of backing up the left, and the 'perception gap' widens. Our responses lose their variety, and become limited to certain habits—lighting a cigarette, watching sport on television. There is a diminution in our sense of reality. This, in turn, produces a loss of *interest* in the reality around us—the familiar feedback effect. The American neurologist J. Silverman noted that long-term patients in mental hospitals, and prisoners serving long sentences, showed 'diminished field articulation and diminished scanning'—that is, they saw less.[2] We 'scan' the world—that is, we notice things—in order to interact with our environment and to change it. If the environment remains unchanged for year after year, the need to interact vanishes. We 'put less' into perception—i.e. the right becomes bored and lazy—and so see less. In effect, the mind has become a stagnant pond, and the stagnation can breed all kinds of germs: neuroses.

It can be seen that this corresponds very closely to Freud's picture of the mechanism of neurosis. But there is a basic difference. According to Freud, it is the unconscious that incubates repressions and hatches them into neuroses. We can see that the conscious mind is as important as the unconscious in the mechanism of neurosis—*precisely* as important, since the two stand in the relation of two tennis players, each playing an equal part in the negative-feedback process. Ollie sighs and Stan groans. Ollie groans and Stan weeps. Ollie weeps and Stan has hysterics. Ollie has hysterics and Stan begins to suffer from hallucinations ... But the starting point of the neurosis is not sexual repression, but that initial failure of the right to back up the left.

All this enables us to see why, although Reich remained a lifelong Freudian, he came closer than Freud to an understanding of the mechanism of neurosis. Reich believed that neurosis is a form of stasis—sexual stasis. In fact, neurosis *is* a form of stasis—or stagnation. The ego becomes separated from its source of power and energy—just as Reich believed. Reich recognized that the central problem is to start the energy flowing again. Like D. H. Lawrence, he believed that sexual experience is one of the most effective ways of bringing this about—and again, he was correct. Human beings who have lost contact with their wellspring of vitality need to be *galvanized* by a sense of excitement or emergency; the strength of the human sexual impulse makes it a highly effective means of galvanizing the unconscious mind into a state of wakefulness.

This observation draws attention to another interesting aspect of the relation

This observation draws attention to another interesting aspect of the relation between the ‘two selves’. Sperry noted that the right hemisphere has no sense of time; it ambles along at its own comfortable pace as if clocks had never been invented. The left, on the contrary, always seems to be in a tearing hurry. Its task is to scan the world at lightning speed. In effect, it is a high-speed camera that takes a series of monochrome photographs. It is the task of the right brain to give this flat world a third dimension, to give it colour and reality. But it must be allowed to do this in its own good time. If the left is in too much of a hurry, the right shrugs and lets the distance between them increase. In effect, the left and right are like two hikers, one of whom habitually walks at twice the speed of the other.

But if we are to stay mentally healthy, they must be persuaded to walk at the same speed. And this can obviously be done in two ways: either by persuading the left to slow down to the same speed as the right, or persuading the right to increase its pace to the same speed as the left. We can do the first by relaxing, meditating, listening to music, enjoying nature—in fact, by becoming ‘absorbed’ in anything. Drugs and alcohol have the same effect, plunging us into a more relaxed world of non-verbal consciousness. The second method demands an increasing rhythm of excitement—like the ritual dancing practised by the ancient Greeks or modern African tribes. Civilized man induces excitement by many methods, from watching his favourite football team to driving fast cars; sometimes he uses the altogether more dangerous expedient of starting wars. Graham Greene has described how he used to shake himself out of moods of depression by playing Russian roulette with a loaded revolver.

Sex has the advantage of both methods. It causes excitement; but the intensity of pleasure also causes the left to ‘slow down’ in order to enjoy the experience to the full. It is therefore, as Reich realized, one of the most effective methods of promoting cooperation between the ‘two selves’.

Yet Reich’s determined reductionism diluted the value of his insight. His obsession with the sexual impulse prevented him from seeing beyond it; the result is that there is something oddly limited and disappointing about his concept of health. A healthy man or woman is free from sexual stasis. But there is something trivial about this definition. Did Leonardo have to be free from sexual stasis when he painted *The Last Supper*? Or Handel when he composed the *Messiah*? Or Tolstoy when he wrote *War and Peace* ? The human spirit is capable of so much more than mere ‘health’. And Reich’s psychology has no room for these ‘higher reaches of human nature’.

Reich’s sexual reductionism is the cause of a more fundamental error. Like D. H. Lawrence, he was inclined to see sexual release as the ultimate cure for man’s self-division—the natural antidote to what Lawrence called ‘head

self-division—the natural antidote to what Lawrence called 'head consciousness'. This seems to imply that man would be better off if he could suppress 'head consciousness' and replace it with something more instinctive and primitive—a kind of 'genital consciousness'. This attitude shows a failure to grasp the relationship between 'head consciousness'—the left hemisphere—and its instinctive partner. It is true that 'head consciousness' can lose contact with its source of vital energy. But its real purpose is to act as intermediary between 'instinctive consciousness' and the world. It does this by turning the intuitions of the right hemisphere into words, and expressing them in the form of relationships. For example, my business as a professional writer is to translate insights into language. When I first started writing—in my early teens—I found that the words often killed the insights. My clumsy attempts to express myself produced sentences that clanked and groaned like rusty armour. These struggles left me discouraged and exhausted, with the feeling that intuitions ought to be left alone, not forced into the straitjacket of language. But I persisted—largely because there seemed to be no other way. And eventually, to my delight and astonishment, I discovered that I was getting better at it. The intuitions were no longer being squashed out of shape or buried under top-heavy definitions. Moreover, if I expressed some insight with unexpected neatness and precision, the excitement would lead to a flood of further intuitions. It was as if the right brain became excited at seeing its feelings expressed so well, and shouted 'Yes, yes, that's it'; and the left, delighted with this approbation, caught the new intuitions as fast as they flew out of the subconscious and turned them into more neatly chosen words ... In moments like this, it suddenly became clear that 'head consciousness' was nothing to be ashamed about. It could, under the right circumstances, enter into a highly fruitful relationship with the intuitive-self, and open up immense new horizons of possibility.

It was then that I observed that this ideal cooperation between left and right created a deeper sense of *reality* than we otherwise experience: a sense to which I later applied the label 'Faculty X'. This refers to those curious flashes of intensity in which we suddenly become aware of the *reality* of some other time or place—one of the best-known examples being that passage in *Swann's Way* in which Proust describes how the taste of a cake dipped in herb tea suddenly brought back the reality of his childhood in Combray.

William James touches on another aspect of 'Faculty X' in the *Varieties of Religious Experience*[3] when he remarks that an athlete may play a game with technical brilliance, until one day he is carried away by excitement, *and the game plays him.* 'In the same way, a musician may suddenly reach a point in which pleasure in the technique of his art entirely falls away, and in some

moment of inspiration, he becomes the instrument through which music flows.'

These are the moments when the feedback between right and left builds up to a new intensity, and can be recognized as the basic mechanism of our mental evolution. Such insights make us clearly aware of what is wrong with the psychologies of Freud and Reich. They conceive the human mind on the model of the human body. If the balance of my physical health is upset by an infection, the doctor's task is to destroy the infection and restore my normal equilibrium. But if the balance of my mind—or emotions—is disturbed, it is not enough to restore it to equilibrium. Where the mind is concerned, equilibrium is another name for stagnation, and mental stagnation is the ideal breeding ground for neurosis. Man is only truly healthy when he is moving forward, evolving, struggling to increase the feedback between the 'two selves'. In short, the human psyche is a dynamic, not a static, system.

In theory, Reich accepted the static model. But his intuition led him in another direction: towards a dynamic—or evolutionary—psychology. And Freud's own intuition was acute enough to recognize a dangerous rebel when he saw one. This was the real cause of the breakdown in their relationship.

Chapter Five

Reich returned to Vienna in the early summer of 1927, and resumed his psychoanalytic practice and work at the clinic. Outwardly, his life was back to normal. Inwardly, everything had changed. He had lost the battle to convert the psychoanalytic movement to the genital theory. Therefore, a break was sooner or later inevitable. But Reich was not the man to stand around waiting for it to happen. He was prepared for new beginnings, new alliances.

The events that would change his life had, in fact, already taken place. In January 1927, at the small town of Schattendorf on the Hungarian border, there had been a violent clash between political opponents. Left-wing Social Democrats were holding a meeting when they were fired on by reactionary forces; an old man and a child were killed in the shooting, and three of the reactionaries were charged with murder. It was an explosive issue, for Vienna was a leftist stronghold, and the government of Austria—under the Christian Socialist Ignaz Seipel—was distinctly right-wing. For the past five or six years, the administration of Vienna had been carrying out an ambitious plan of 'soaking the rich' and using the money to finance a social revolution: workers' housing projects, adult education, health clinics. The church and the peasantry—represented by Seipel—had no patience with these attempts to Bolshevize the ancient kingdom of Austria. So the two factions observed the trial of the political killers with interest, and the government was delighted when, on 14 July, they were found not guilty and released.

The workers regarded the acquittal as a calculated insult; a mass rally turned into a riot and the Palace of Justice was burned down. The police fired on the crowds; eighty-five workers and four policemen were killed.

Reich watched the slaughter. He had followed a crowd of protesting workers to the Palace of Justice, which was on fire by the time they arrived. Mounted policemen were trying to disperse the mob, and ambulances were moving in to carry away those who were trampled underfoot. Reich rushed home to fetch Annie. If they had intended to join the marching workers, they were soon discouraged. From behind a tree, they saw a line of police advance on a crowd of demonstrators; then the officer gave the order to fire. The crowd scattered, and bodies lay outstretched on the ground. Reich decided to go home.

The following day, the Social Democrats ordered a general strike; but it only lasted four days. Seipel had achieved what he wanted—a decisive defeat for the left. It was not as decisive as the slaughter that followed the Spartacist revolution in Berlin in 1919; but it meant that the leftists were on the defensive. They

in Berlin in 1919, but it meant that the leftists were on the defensive. They remained on the defensive until they were bloodily destroyed or driven underground by the Dollfuss government in 1934.

Reich, understandably, was on the side of the leftists. It was not simply that his clinic stood to gain from their social welfare schemes; he was also emotionally involved in the plight of his poorer patients. In *The Function of the Orgasm* he describes the case of a pretty working-class girl who had become completely mute. Under hypnosis she recovered her voice, and was able to tell her story. Her husband had deserted her, and she and her three children were on the point of starvation. Ten hours work a day—sewing—brought her only just enough to live on. She began to experience compulsions to murder the children, and a desire to hand herself over to the police to protect them. Fear of being hanged made her throat constrict and made her mute.

Reich was able to help her over the worst difficulties. The eldest children were placed in a 'good institution', and Reich collected money for the mother. But it was only a partial solution; she used to come to Reich's house and make demands, threatening to murder the baby. When Reich went to see her at her home, he was horrified by the squalor. 'There was nothing, absolutely nothing, to brighten this life; nothing but misery, loneliness, gossip of the neighbours, worry about her daily bread, and in addition, criminal chicaneries on the part of landlord and employer.' Reich was faced with the problem of 'how a human organism could possibly tolerate such a life, year in, year out'. It became understandable that she should be tempted to murder the children. This girl had never had a chance. She had been an orphan, brought up in the same squalor—living six to a room. She had been sexually assaulted several times by adult males. She experienced an immense longing for a mother's protection. As an adult, she was sexually frigid—which may explain her husband's desertion. Now she saw her children condemned to the same life that she had led. Psychoanalysis might cure the constriction of the throat, but it could do nothing to make her life more bearable. Reich adds that in spite of this misery, she read books, some of which she borrowed from him.

It is easy to understand why Reich supported the left-wing government of Vienna, but rather more difficult to grasp how he came to be converted to orthodox Marxism. For Marxism is basically a form of materialism—dialectical materialism. (Dialectical means simply that matter is in a continual process of change and development, due to the clash of opposites.) Reich had started off his career by being fascinated by the vitalism of Bergson and Driesch. He was attracted to Freud because the libido seemed to be another name for this basic principle of evolution. For the Marxist, terms like 'the life force', 'spirit', 'God',

are all bourgeois misunderstandings of the dialectical process. The party line on psychoanalysis was that it was another typical product of bourgeois thinking. Society was rotten because capitalism was decadent, not because of sexual repressions. According to Marx and Engels, all ideas and beliefs have a material origin—in fact, an economic origin. There is no point in asking whether there is any 'truth' in Aquinas's *Summa Theological* it is simply a typical mental product of the monastic period, as the excreta in the monastery lavatories were a physical product. The same thing applied to psychoanalysis ...

How could Reich reconcile this kind of crude reductionism with his own psychological insights? He was turning away from orthodox psychoanalysis because he was repelled by Freud's pessimistic reductionism—his insistence that man is a helpless puppet of his subconscious urges. But Marxian materialism was even more arid and bleak. According to Marx, society is governed by the brutal push-and-pull of Darwinian selection. The capitalists own the wealth and means of production because they have taken them by force; obeying the same material law, the workers should take them back again. *This* was the force behind evolution—not the libido, the secret sexual energies that express themselves through joy and tenderness.

The answer to the contradiction, as it emerges in Reich's writings—particularly the essay *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* (1929)—is that Reich was not too concerned about these 'theoretical' disagreements between Marxism and psychoanalysis. Quite simply, he felt that Communism could become the ideal instrument for the propagation of his own views on 'sex economy'. It was clear that, where his own career was concerned, psychoanalysis had turned into a blind alley. His views might be tolerated, but they could never make real headway in the face of Freud's new theory of the death-instinct and the super-ego. In retrospect, we may feel that Reich would have been wiser to follow the example of Jung and Adler, and simply take himself off into the wilderness, to attempt to create his own variant of psychoanalysis. But then, for better or worse, Reich was never a true loner. He had the courage of the pioneer, but he liked to be surrounded by people, to feel himself part of a movement. There was a great deal of 'other-direction' in Reich (to borrow David Reisman's term); we can see this in Ilse Reich's story of the way he used to don a spotlessly white laboratory coat and play the great scientist when he had to receive a visitor. Besides, as we have seen, Reich had a powerful streak of opportunism. This is not necessarily to his discredit; a man of genius who is not an opportunist may end by being neglected. Reich had risen to eminence as a psychoanalyst; now he saw the possibility of becoming the psychological theorist of the greatest revolutionary movement in the world. It

must have struck him as entirely logical and reasonable to embrace Communism. At the very least, it was an immensely exciting gamble.

Reich lost no time in putting his new resolve into practice. The day after the burning of the Palace of Justice, he joined a medical group called ‘ Arbeiterhilfe’—Worker’s Help—which was affiliated to the Communist Party. He hurled himself into his new activities with typical dynamism, lecturing to workers’ groups, distributing leaflets, taking part in demonstrations, and devouring the works of Marx and Engels. In his lectures, he could point to Soviet Russia as an example of a society that was moving towards sexual freedom. Male dominance of the family was being undermined by new laws, divorce was easier, so was abortion; the anti-homosexual laws were rescinded (they were reintroduced in 1934). And in the new Soviet society, sex outside marriage was no longer considered immoral. All this suggested that Russia was carrying out the sexual reforms that Reich himself advocated.

Combining these observations with his orgasm theory, Reich constructed his own blueprint of the ideal society of the future. The workers, he said, were condemned to sexual misery by capitalist society. It was not simply a question of the inhibition of the sex instinct by bourgeois morality. It was also the problem of abortion and venereal disease and overcrowding. This latter, Reich emphasized, was one of the basic problems for the worker. Privacy is essential to full sexual enjoyment. Besides, when parents are forced to copulate in the same room as their children, the children are likely to develop sexual traumas, while the less sensitive ones may experiment with incest. All this is the fault of capitalism, said Reich, for it is in the interests of the bosses to encourage fertility among the workers; they need a high birth rate to ensure their control of the labour market ...

After half a century of increasing sexual freedom, this part of Reich’s argument still carries a great deal of force and conviction. No healthy society can be based on unwanted pregnancies. It is Reich’s analysis of the ‘compulsory sex morality’ that now seems altogether less convincing. According to Reich, the idea of pre-marital chastity is a bourgeois invention. It applies far more strongly to women than to men because in a capitalist society, the laws of inheritance are of enormous importance. So a woman is expected to be a virgin until she marries, and strictly faithful to her husband thereafter. But this fills society with frustrated young men, who are forced to satisfy their needs either through adultery or by turning to prostitutes. Moreover, strict sexual morality gives sex the additional allure of the forbidden, which in turn gives rise to sexual neurosis and perversion. The answer, said Reich, must lie in the rejection of the compulsory sexual morality—in regarding sex as something healthy and

delightful. When, four years later, Reich came upon the studies of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, he was enthusiastic; they provided him with just the ammunition he needed. Malinowski had studied the Trobriand islanders of north-west Melanesia, and observed that their sex lives were completely free of inhibition (the incest taboo being the only exception), and that as a consequence, they seemed to be a perfect example of mental health. Sexual neurosis was unknown among them; there was no sexual perversion, and little or no violence. Child-beating was regarded as a disgrace. In short, they seemed to be a living example of Rousseau's Noble Savage. Apply these principles to the socialist state of the future, said Reich, and we would be half-way towards a real Utopia ...

In retrospect, these arguments seem unduly optimistic. No doubt the compulsory sexual morality of the Victorians produced many unhealthy effects. But its gradual disappearance has not produced the social and psychological revolution that Reich leads us to expect. There are Scandinavian countries where sexual education in schools is detailed and precise, where pornography is openly available, where teenagers sleep together as a matter of course; but their rate of mental illness is as high as that of less enlightened countries—like Great Britain—and a great deal higher than that of Catholic countries, where the compulsory sex morality still exerts its grip. No sensible person can doubt that modern sexual freedom is preferable to the pruderies and inhibitions of the Victorians; but there is no sign that it has brought Reich's Utopia any closer. The inference seems to be that the 'compulsory sex morality' is a rather less important cause of human misery than Reich supposed—or that there are a great many other causes that weigh more heavily.

This is, of course, precisely what we would expect from the observations of the last chapter. Neurosis is basically a *strain* between the rational self and the instinctive self, with the rational self continually interfering with the natural flow of instinctive activity. It can be caused by *any* type of anxiety that leads the rational self to over-react. Sexual frustration is only one of many possible forms of anxiety. Neurosis *can* be cured by sexual satisfaction, but this does not mean that sexual satisfaction is a universal panacea, or that a sexually satisfied person is not just as subject to other kinds of anxiety.

There is another, more serious objection to Reich's 'sexual politics'; and it applies equally to his new political beliefs. One of the chief problems of human nature is a certain element of 'cussedness', what Poe called 'the imp of the perverse'. It is what Fichte meant when he said: '*Frey seyn ist nichts; frey werden ist her Himmel*' (To be free is nothing; to *become* free is heavenly). Such is the perversity of human nature that we seem to experience our freedom only

when it is threatened; in circumstances where we *ought* to feel free and happy, we often look around for minor anxieties to occupy our attention. And this odd preference for anxiety underlines a basic characteristic of human nature: that we operate at maximum efficiency only when we are loaded down by a certain *weight*—of interest, of responsibility, even of anxiety. This is only to say that man is basically a purposive animal; a man with a strong sense of purpose does not become neurotic. A man without a sense of purpose is likely to become neurotic even if he has no real problems. Any scheme for improving the human lot which merely concentrates on *removing his problems* will leave him as dissatisfied as ever.

All this is not to say that such schemes are futile; only that anyone who believes them to be an *ultimate* solution to human problems is being naive and short-sighted. And anyone who reads any of Reich's 'sex-pol' writings, from *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* to *The Invasion of the Compulsory Sex-Morality*, will see that this is precisely what he believed. The conclusion must be that Reich's belief that sexual freedom would bring some enormous basic change in human society was over-optimistic.

But then, Reich's true talents did not lie in the field of abstract thought; he was a man of action. And during the next two or three years. he was carried alone by such a headlong rush of activity that it is surprising that he found any time to write. He continued his work at the technical seminar, and remained an active member of the Psychoanalytic Association. In 1928 he also became the director of the Psychoanalytic Polyclinic, the institution that gave free treatment to workers. He continued to be a member of the Workers' Help organization, and in 1928 became a member of the Communist Party. As if all this were not enough, he formed in January 1929 a Socialist Society for Sex Consultation and Sexological Research, to give free information and advice on sexual problems. Here his attitude remained uncompromisingly revolutionary, advocating that unmarried teenagers had as much right to contraceptive advice as married couples, and that any woman who was unwilling to be pregnant should have a right to an abortion. In Catholic Austria, these views provoked understandable hostility, and this may have contributed to Reich's increasing dissatisfaction with Vienna, and his decision to move to Berlin.

The essay *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, the chief product of these years, was basically an attempt to justify psychoanalysis in the eyes of the Marxists, who still regarded it as a product of bourgeois decadence. This was not an easy task, since psychoanalysis is basically a doctrine about the mind—particularly about the unobservable 'unconscious' mind—and Marxism is basically a doctrine about matter. What Reich was attempting to do was to bend

both of them so they met in the middle. Where Marxism was concerned, this had to be done cautiously, since he had no desire to appear a heretic. Reich's line was simply that the crudest form of Marxism, which attempted to reduce all ideas to economic processes, was untrue. 'There is no question in Marx of the material reality of psychological activity being denied,' he explains anxiously. 'And if in practice the material reality of the phenomena of the life of the human psyche is recognized, then in principle the possibility of a materialistic psychology must be admitted, even if it does not explain the activity of the soul in terms of organic processes ... ' And having negotiated this major obstacle with considerable skill—and a masterly ambiguity in the use of such words as 'material' and 'organic'—he proceeds to the major task of demonstrating that psychoanalysis is a 'materialist' psychology. This is not particularly difficult, since Freud had taken so much trouble—early in his career—to place psychoanalysis on an 'objective' foundation. Reich lays all the emphasis on Freud's libido theory, and even adds that, according to Freud, 'the source of the libido is a chemical process, not yet fully understood ... ' In short, Reich presents a version of Freud that Freud himself would have indignantly disowned. In order to escape the accusation of deliberate misrepresentation, Reich offers a paragraph on the subject of the later theory of the death instinct, then goes on to dismiss it as 'a hypothesis beyond the clinical sphere' which has opened the door to many 'futile speculations'. He continues: 'In opposition to the idealist tendencies which have developed along with the new hypothesis concerning instincts, the present author has suggested that the destructive instinct may also be dependent on the libido ... ' And, having laid that awkward question to rest, he is now free to expound psychoanalysis with his own personal emphasis.

In fact, the essay is so short—a mere fifty pages or so—that there is no need to tread on thin ice; an explanation of Freud's theories of repression, the unconscious, the libido, etc., takes up most of the space. And although dialectical materialism is placed first in the title, there is little or nothing about it in the essay. Reich's chief aim seems to be to convince his Marxist colleagues that psychoanalysis, like Marxism, is a beleaguered movement, rejected by the bourgeoisie, and fighting for its life against subtle internal enemies. He attacks Jung, Adler and Rank as victims of sexual repression, whose personal hang-ups have driven them to try to de-sexualize psychoanalysis. 'Again and again sexual repression fights psychoanalysis—and wins.' And even Freud has become untrue to his original vision, with his abandonment of the libido theory. Psychoanalysis, says Reich, is now suffering 'the same fate that Marxism suffers at the hands of reformist socialists, that is to say, death by exhaustion of meaning'. And he goes on to make a statement that reveals the glaring absurdity

of his whole argument: ‘Official science will continue to have nothing to do with psychoanalysis because its class limitations prevent it from ever accepting it.’ In fact, by 1930, official science was well on its way to embracing psychoanalysis, and in America, the country where it gained its most enthusiastic following, class limitations showed no sign of preventing capitalists accepting it.

Reich’s essay would certainly have caused a further deterioration in his relations with Freud if it had been published in Vienna. In fact, it appeared in Moscow, in both German and Russian, with the title *Under the Banner of Marxism*; only an excerpt appeared in Vienna in the *Almanack of Psychoanalysis.*

In September 1929, Reich went to Moscow to lecture on the prevention of neurosis, and to study Soviet methods of child care. David Boadella states that Reich’s name became well known in Moscow after publication of his essay, and that he was invited to Russia; Ilse Reich states that Reich ‘arranged with some Russian colleagues for a lecture tour’, and this sounds the more likely version. From the beginning, Marxists showed themselves unwilling to accept Reich’s ‘materialist’ version of psychoanalysis. When Reich republished the book in 1934, after his expulsion from the Communist Party and the Psychoanalytic Association, he admitted wryly that ‘all the involved principles dissociate themselves from the interrelations presented here’. ‘I was given the same alternative in both camps—of a choice between psychoanalysis and revolutionary Marxism.’ But the Moscow trip seems to have been a success; with the publication of his essay, and his lectures at the Communist Academy and the Neuropathic Institute in Moscow, it looked as if Reich was establishing for himself a new position as the chief sexual theorist of the Communist Party.

Back in Vienna, Reich had to recognize that his involvement in revolutionary politics was making his position in the psychoanalytic movement completely untenable. Federn—who was, after all, himself a socialist—was now showing open hostility. When Reich had presented a paper at the Psychoanalytic Association in April 1928, Federn—as chairman—declared that its contents were utterly commonplace, and proposed that the paper should not be debated; Reich wrote an indignant letter to Freud. But Freud himself had little sympathy for Reich’s revolutionary views. Roazen states in *Freud and His Followers*: ‘Politically, Freud was moderate and pro-establishment, and by the 1930s he was supporting a reactionary regime in Austria.’ This is not entirely accurate. Jones says that Freud sympathized with the progressive reforms of the Vienna government, but that he never voted either for the socialists or for their opponents, the Christian Socialists. But when the small Liberal party put up a candidate in Freud’s district, Freud would vote for him. In 1919, he surprised

Jones by saying that he had been half convinced by the arguments of an ardent Communist; the Bolshevist told him that the coming revolution would result in some years of misery and chaos, then in universal peace and prosperity. Freud replied: 'I believe the first half ... '

It seems clear, then, that Freud was innately conservative with mild liberal tendencies. Reich told Eissler that 'Freud wanted nothing to do with politics.' (He added the curious remark: 'I wanted nothing of politics either. But I was trapped ... ') On 12 December 1929, their views finally came into head-on collision at a meeting of the Viennese group at Freud's home. Reich delivered a paper on the prevention of neurosis—probably the same one he had delivered in Moscow—which argued that neurosis could be prevented if the family and society could be fundamentally reorganized. In the conversations with Eissler, he summarizes his views as follows: 'If you have a stream, a natural stream, you must let it stream. If you dam it up somewhere, it goes over the banks. That's all. Now when the natural streaming of bio-energy is dammed up, it also spills over, resulting in irrationality, perversions, neuroses, and so on. What do you have to do to correct this? You must get the stream back into its normal bed and let it flow naturally again. This requires a lot of change in education, in infant upbringing, in family life.'

The lecture not only stirred Freud to passionate oppositions; it also had the interesting effect of causing him to think deeply about his own view of neurosis. For Reich was attempting to convince him that the orgasm theory *was* his own view. 'If your own theory says that the stasis, the libido stasis or energy stasis, is at the core of neurosis, of the neurotic process, and if the orgastic potency, which you don't deny (he never denied that), is a key to overcome that stasis, or at least to deal with it, then my theory of the prevention of neurosis is correct. It's your own theory. I just draw the consequences of it.'[1] That sounded thoroughly plausible; for indeed, Freud *did* regard neurosis as kind of blockage. Then why could he not agree that it could be cured by a good orgasm? Freud struggled to formulate his views that evening; he told Reich that 'Culture takes precedence'—that is, that neurosis is basically a cultural phenomenon. But how could such a view be reconciled with the sexual theory? The problem so obsessed Freud that he went on to write a book in answer to Reich—*Civilization and Its Discontents.* He must have started writing it immediately after that evening, for many sentences in it were actually spoken at the meeting.

We have already mentioned the basic thesis of *Civilization and Its Discontents*: that civilization is based on the denial of man's natural instincts. But it is the logical implications of this theory that are so startling. It is not only a rebuttal of Reich's theory of social revolution, but also a denial of Freud's own

sexual theory. This can be seen if we translate its thesis into terms of split-brain research. Animals are dominated by their instincts; they have no ‘rational self’. This means that, apart from instinct, they lack any sense of purpose or direction. To judge by its brain size, a cow could easily master the technique of opening a farm gate; but it sees no reason to do so.

Man has developed the left side of his brain, which is essentially a *brake on instinct.* It can instantly veto any impulse that emanates from the right, interrupt any instinctive process, from eating to copulation, from sleep to digestion. And neurosis is basically the result of this continual interference. With so many complicated inhibitions, the instinctive self can no longer operate normally. The ‘natural man’ is strained and filtered through a process of thought. And sometimes the brake can jam completely, locking the whole mechanism. This is Reich’s ‘stasis’.

But then—and here we come to the heart of the matter—neurosis is a fairly small price to pay for the advantages of the inhibitory mechanism. Consider the process of driving a car; it is a complex and subtle mixture of inhibition and relaxation; the right side of the brain—the habit mechanism—does most of the driving, but with continuous interference from the left, the ‘look-out’. And if driving a car is a complex cooperation of the two halves, what about writing a symphony or a poem? Mozart’s Jupiter Symphony sounds like a spontaneous, bubbling outburst from the right side of the brain; in fact, we know it was shaped at every step by the left side. Dante’s *Commedia*, Goethe’s *Faust*, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, required a subtlety of interaction a thousand times as complex as driving a car. Civilization, culture, *is* the cause of neurosis—or rather, neurosis is one of its inevitable consequences. So to imagine that neurosis can be cured merely by an orgasm is crude and shallow nonsense—a failure to erase the purpose of the inhibitory mechanisms.

In a sentence: neurosis is the outcome of the inhibitory mechanisms that man has developed to create civilization.

But Freud’s earlier sexual theory had stated: neurosis is *always* caused by sexual repressions and traumas. He had not simply contradicted himself; he had virtually consigned the sexual theory to the scrap heap.

Perhaps the most astonishing part of the story is that nobody noticed. This was because Freud pointed out that the sexual instincts—along with all the others—are repressed by civilization. It remains basically clear, nevertheless, that in answering Reich, Freud had at last recognized that neurosis is the negative part of the evolutionary process.

Oddly enough, Reich is also correct when he says that Freud really agrees with him. For Freud is not, for one moment, denying that neurosis can be cured

by sexual fulfilment, a satisfactory orgasm. He is only stating that sex is not the only source of neurosis: that there are a thousand other sources, and that they are inherent in civilization. Freud had put his finger on Reich's central weakness—a *weakness for which he, Freud, was basically responsible*: his crude and simplistic view that all neurosis is sexual in origin. And in reacting against Reich's view, Freud himself had disowned the sexual theory.

What is perfectly clear is that Freud's attempt to explain himself more clearly failed to influence Reich. The 'elephant's child' was too firmly set on his own path. He noticed that Freud had abandoned the sexual theory—he says as much in the talks with Eissler—but he assumed it was due to timidity and the influence of his disciples. That meant—as Reich correctly inferred—that he, Willy Reich, was now the sole guardian of the sexual theory in its original pristine dogmatism.

The realization does not seem to have bothered him unduly. There was no reason why it should. It now looked as if Reich was beginning to achieve a position on his own account. He was virtually the psychological spokesman of the German Communist Party. If Freud thought him a heretic, there were many younger psychoanalysts who were convinced of his correctness. In spite of the controversy that surrounded him, his private practice continued to flourish—for the simple reason that he was a fine clinical psychotherapist. And if Reich was ever disturbed by the controversy, he must have reflected that Freud's early career had been just as stormy. No, the position was, on the whole, highly satisfactory. The only minor problem was that Vienna was not really large enough to hold two men of the stature of Freud and Reich ...

It was, in fact, Reich's skill as a psychotherapist, rather than his orgasm theory, that was responsible for his steadily increasing reputation among the younger analysts. Ever since 1926, Reich had been developing a new and highly effective method of attacking neurosis. It was more positive and direct than ordinary psychoanalysis, and it had the enormous advantage of being a great deal quicker. This was the technique of 'character analysis'.

According to Reich, neurosis was due to deep-seated inhibitions, or 'resistances' (Freud called them repressions). The therapist's problem was to get at these resistances. The Freudian method was to persuade the patient to talk freely; but this was based on the assumption that he wanted to do so. Reich's clinical experience led him to feel that this was a mistake. The psychotherapist's task is, in effect, to strip the patient bare. But most people have a natural dislike of being stripped bare—especially in a cold climate. It is natural, wrote Reich in *The Function of the Orgasm*, that the patient should feel a certain defensive hostility towards the psychotherapist: 'There was not a patient to be found

without a deep mistrust of the treatment.' Therefore, said Reich, the starting point should surely be to break down this mistrust, so the patient could become truly cooperative. The patient should be encouraged to be critical towards the analyst—even to express open hostility. It was a matter, says Reich, 'of really freeing the patient's aggression and sexuality'. If the aggression could be freed first, the sexuality would follow. The analyst's job was not to establish a polite, cooperative relationship with the patient—this might conceal deep resistances—but to poke his tender spots and encourage him to express suffering and rage. 'Gradually, I began to comprehend the *latent hatred* which is never lacking in patients. If one did not let oneself be deceived by the patient giving associations without any effect [feeling] ... if, instead, one approached the patient's character defence, he would inevitably get *angry*.' The method was, in effect, to criticize the patient—or at least, to try to make him see himself in a critical light. 'If ... one showed him the ... emptiness in the manner of his communications, his coldness, his bombastic or artificial behaviour, then he would get angry.' And this was the first step in breaking down the resistance.

These resistances, Reich came to believe, are never simple or straightforward; they exist in layer upon layer, like geological strata. It was a return to Semon's idea of 'engrams' (discussed in *The Function of the Orgasm*), memory traces of unpleasant experiences, like scars. Every time we have been deeply hurt or upset, and been forced to accept the experience passively, the result is a piece of psychic scar tissue, which has less 'feeling' than the surrounding tissue. Eventually, these patches of scar tissue come to form a kind of armour. The function of this armour is to protect against further hurt. But it also has the effect of keeping out pleasure. 'I found that people reacted with intense hatred to any attempt to disturb the neurotic equilibrium which was maintained by their armour.' But if the patient was to be cured, he had to be persuaded to strip off his armour—or at least, to stop cowering inside it.

Therefore Reich developed new clinical methods, designed to pinpoint the resistances. Instead of sitting at the head of the couch, staring at the patient's feet, the analyst should sit where he could look the patient in the face. His task was then to watch like a hawk, trying to recognize resistance in its many forms—silence, anger, sarcasm, 'Freudian slips', even excessive politeness and cooperation. In *The Function of the Orgasm*, Reich mentions a typical case of such resistance: a 'passive-feminine young man with hysterical symptoms, inability to work, and ascetic impotence'. The patient was overly-polite, and readily discussed his intense attachment to his mother. Normal psychoanalysis would have proceeded immediately with an exploration of the patient's Oedipus complex; Reich, instead, kept on pointing out that his politeness was a defence

against the analyst, until the patient finally became openly offensive. Reich provoked him further—or, as he put it, 'I let the hatred come out fully by destroying every defence mechanism against it.' The hatred, in turn, released anxiety, and Reich eventually became convinced that he was dealing with a case of destructive hatred of the father, based upon a desire to castrate him, while being afraid, at the same time, of being castrated by him.

It is the final sentences of Reich's account that give rise to doubts. 'When his femininity ... was dissolved, his genital incest desire came to the fore, and with that, his full genital excitability. For the first time, he was erectively potent, though still not orgastically potent.' In short, he failed to cure the patient, although he managed to improve his condition. But if Reich's method was so superior to Freud's ('to interpret the material in the order in which it appears'), why this poor result? The answer becomes clear from the more extended version of the case offered in Reich's book *Character Analysis* (1933)—regarded by many as his most important work. Here we see that, in spite of the new 'characterological' insight, Reich's approach remained basically Freudian. At the beginning of the analysis, Reich decided that the trouble lay in an Oedipus complex, which has given the patient a definite homosexual orientation. (When asking a favour, he would stroke Reich's arm.) There is endless analysis of dreams, all interpreted sexually. For example, the patient has a dream that the apartment is surrounded by criminals; he escapes in disguise, but is stopped and searched by the gang leader. As the leader comes upon a piece of incriminating evidence, the dreamer finds a revolver in his pocket and fires it. Suddenly, he feels master of the situation. The leader of the gang changes into a woman, and the dreamer picks her up and carries her into the house.

This, says Reich mysteriously, indicates the incest motif. Moreover, the patient's disguise is an allusion to his 'masquerading in the analysis'. He pays no attention to what seems to be the major content of the dream: the dreamer's final act of courage that sets him free and gives him back his masculinity—a clear indication that the patient's unconscious mind is fighting back. In the Freudian tradition, Reich is interested only in the dream's negative content. Throughout the analysis, he continues to ignore these positive indications. The patient dreams that his brother climbs into his apartment with the intention of killing him with a sword; but the patient is too quick, and kills his brother. He dreams that a pickpocket is about to take his wallet, but he feels it happening and prevents the theft. He dreams that he is on a train that is about to crash, but he manages to jump clear. Reich continues to interpret all this in terms of incest desires and fear of castration. When the patient dreams of a girl lifting her skirt, and he turns away in embarrassment, Reich explains that he is afraid of the

female genital because it looks like an open wound, and that he must have been frightened as a child by his first sight of it. (The patient found this plausible, but could not recall any such experience.)

Understandably, then, Reich failed to cure the patient, for he remains totally convinced throughout that the trouble lies in fear of castration, and in some 'primal scene' in which he was frightened by the sight of an exposed vagina. The only evidence he offers for this 'Oedipus' interpretation is that the patient admitted rebellious feelings towards his father, who was suffering from venereal disease, and often solemnly warned his son against sex. Yet the evidence that Reich presents seems to explain the case without the need for Freudian explanations. The patient's heredity was poor; one grandfather also suffered from venereal disease, the other grandfather committed suicide. An uncle committed suicide; another was a nervous wreck; a great aunt was mentally unbalanced; his mother was neurotic and overanxious. Understandably, the patient grew up nervous and afraid of life, subject to attacks of anxiety. Before the neurosis began he brooded on the end of the world, and on the possibility that he suffered a hereditary taint of venereal disease. These fears were brought to a head by attending a hygiene exhibition—presumably with lurid photographs of venereal disease. Not long before this, he had been with a prostitute, but been impotent. All of which seems to suggest that the problem originated in his fear of venereal disease—and of insanity—brought to a head by the experience with the prostitute and the hygiene exhibition. The material about the incest desire and castration complex is totally irrelevant—and failed to play any part in the 'cure'.

How should the case have been treated? The patient's dreams suggest that a more profitable starting point may have been his own 'will to health'. This is almost certainly the line that would have been pursued by an 'existential' analyst like Maslow or Frankl. One of Maslow's own early cases may be cited as an illustration. In 1938, he treated a girl who complained of depression, sexual frigidity, insomnia, lack of appetite, sense of meaninglessness; she had even ceased to menstruate. Maslow found out that she had been a brilliant psychology student at college, but could not afford to go on to graduate studies. She had taken a well-paid job in a chewing gum factory as sub-personnel manageress, and was able to support her unemployed family, who were victims of the depression of the thirties. But after a year, she was prostrated by boredom and a sense of wasting her life; hence the symptoms. Maslow suggested that she continue her graduate studies at night school, and the symptoms quickly vanished.

If Maslow had been presented with Reich's case of the passively-feminine

patient, he may well have attempted the same approach, trying to find out whether there was any possibility of creative expression, and generally attempting to give the patient confidence to take a less passive role towards his own capacities. He would almost certainly have recognized the will-to-health manifested in the patient's dreams, and done his best to strengthen this by making the patient fully conscious of it, and generally attempting to induce a more positive and optimistic frame of mind. As far as one can tell, Reich seems to have achieved his partial cure by stimulating the patient's aggression, and thereby attacking his passivity—the root of the whole problem.

On the other hand, it is clear that, once again, Reich's instinctive insight has carried him beyond Freudian analysis. He himself recognizes this when he says that a Freudian analysis would have resulted only in an intellectual knowledge of the patient's problems, whereas the real problem is 'to alter the patient *dynamically*'. Yet the insight is only partial. Although he recognizes that the cure must be 'dynamic', his Freudian training causes him to see the problem in static terms, as if the patient is a corpse lying on a table, and the analyst's problem is to find the diseased organs. He seems unaware that one of the fundamental causes of the neurosis is the passivity, the *abnegation of will.* In existential terms, one could compare the patient to a boat that is shipping too much water because the pumps have ceased to work. The problem is not even to find out why the pumps are not working; it is to *start them up.*

Other cases described in *Character Analysis* make it clear why older analysts, like Federn, should have been so suspicious of Reich's 'characterological' approach. To read some of them in detail is to feel that Reich had turned psychoanalysis into a battle of wills—an expression of his own pugnacious character. At the same time, it is possible to see why Reich was well qualified to be a psychotherapist: he obviously becomes absorbed in this game he is playing with the patient, determined to win; so he shows endless patience. Some of the cases read as absorbingly as short stories. He describes, for example, a patient suffering from inferiority feelings, who treats the whole analysis with a kind of fatalistic boredom. His childhood had been unhappy, and he is a thoroughly inadequate personality. His attitude to the analysis is of passive resistance. Reich sensed that his attitude towards the analyst was basically hostile: a feeling that even if Reich was more dominant and potent than he was, he (the patient) nevertheless possessed higher ideals ... 'He could not tolerate the superiority of anybody and always tried to tear them down.' For Reich, the climax of the analysis was when the patient admitted that he had 'repeatedly compared his small penis with the big one of his brother and how he had envied his brother'. For the reader, the interest lies in the will-to-power battle between the analyst

and patient. ‘Now I could show him the neurotic manner in which he tried to overcome his feeling of impotence; he was trying to recover a feeling of potency in the realm of ideals ... I told him that not only did he think himself secretly better and cleverer than others; it was for this very reason that he resisted the analysis. For if it succeeded ... it would have vanquished his neurosis, the secret pleasure gain of which had just been unearthed.’ But the result is anticlimactic. Reich says merely that ‘a few months’ patient and persistent work on his ego-defence ... raised the ego to that level which was necessary for the assimilation of the repressions’—a claim whose inexact form suggests that the patient remained uncured. (When a cure is successful, Reich has no hesitation in saying so.)

In another case, the patient (again male) resists the analysis with a ‘vaguely ironical smile’ that is used to conceal his hostility. Again, the technique consisted in frontal attack—continually drawing attention to the smile. ‘The whole resistance phase lasted almost six months, characterized by derision of the analysts for days and weeks on end. Without the necessary patience ... one often would have been inclined to give up.’ Another patient is characterized by an aristocratic dignity of manner, which never changes. With typical bluntness, Reich tells him that he is play-acting an English lord, whereupon the patient admits that he is deeply ashamed of his father—a Jewish tradesman—and has always fantasized about being the son of a lord. This lordly behaviour conceals sadistic and homosexual tendencies that are at the root of his problems. By refusing to be taken in by the defence, Reich persuaded him to drop it, and to speak frankly about his problems. These cases demonstrate that Reich possessed in abundance what Freud seemed to lack: a kind of novelist’s insight into character, which enabled him to put his finger on hidden weaknesses. At the same time, there can be no doubt that this insight sprang, at least in part, from Reich’s own defensiveness and aggressiveness. In reading his own lengthy accounts of these cases, it is impossible not to observe that he derives considerable ego-satisfaction from sitting behind a desk and attacking the ego-armour of his patients. It is also clear why he was never able to complete his training analysis; he had an intense dislike of being on the receiving end.

After that frustrating meeting at Freud’s house in December 1929, Reich must have realized that he had no future as a member of the Vienna circle. For three years now, Freud had been consistently rejecting Reich and his ideas. In December 1926 he had rejected the whole idea of character analysis, as well as Reich’s observation (derived from the cases of cardiac tension) that anxiety is the result of suppressed sexual excitement. (Freud said that anxiety was derived

from deep unconscious problems, and that it *caused* sexual repression.) And in totally rejecting the orgasm theory he had, in effect, expressed his disagreement with all Reich's most basic insights. Reich's remarkable capacity for self-deception might enable him to believe that Freud was really on his side; but in practice, he could see that the Vienna circle regarded him as a thorn in the flesh. They not only felt that his ideas were mistaken; they felt that Reich himself was a thoroughly undesirable character. He was becoming increasingly well known as a Communist agitator. He was always joining in marches and demonstrations. In October 1928, he was one of the leaders of a group of two hundred and fifty Communist workers who decided to demonstrate against a mass meeting of Fascists and Social Democrats at Wiener-Neustadt; the Viennese police managed to round them all up before they reached their objective, and sent them on the next train back to Vienna. The aggressive Reich was furious at the docility of the workers in the face of police authority; he was unable to understand why they never took to the streets and smashed shop windows in the wealthy streets of Vienna. Typically, Reich failed to recognize that he belonged to a dominant minority of human beings, while most of his comrades belonged to the non-dominant majority; he was inclined to believe that sexual repression had robbed the workers of their natural aggression.

As far as Freud was concerned, Reich's political views were his own business; but this attempt to represent himself as a liaison-man between psychoanalysis and Communism was a different matter. In the eyes of the Vienna group, the Communists were revolutionary hotheads, and association with them could only discredit psychoanalysis. If Reich had stayed in Vienna, he would probably have been expelled from the Psychoanalytic Association a great deal sooner. Fortunately, he read the warning signs, and moved to Berlin in September 1930. Just before he left, Reich went to see Freud for the last time, and the hostility came out into the open. 'He was very sharp, and I was sharp too,' Reich told Eissler. Reich expressed his views about the social cause of neurosis—particularly on the family. Freud told him that his ideas had nothing to do with 'the middle road of psychoanalysis'. Reich replied that he remained convinced that the best way to prevent neurosis is to do away with social misery. Freud must have felt that he had heard all this before. He became angry, and told Reich: 'It is not our business to save the world.' Twenty years later, Reich admitted ruefully to Eissler that he now agreed with Freud. Reich left after an hour and a half. When he looked back from the street, he saw Freud striding up and down the room 'like a caged animal'. It was the last time he saw him.

Reich's ostensible reason for going to Berlin was to make the third attempt at his training analysis, this time with Sandor Rado. The analysis was still

incomplete when Rado went to America six months later; but it is doubtful whether it would have been completed even if Rado had remained in Berlin, Reich saying that Rado was ‘jealous, awfully jealous’. Annie Reich expressed the opinion that Rado’s desertion contributed to Reich’s personal deterioration; but this seems to suggest that some degree of reliance and intimacy grew up between them, and Reich’s comments on Rado contradict this notion.

The Berlin period was among the happiest of Reich’s whole life. The atmosphere there was altogether less claustrophobic than in Vienna. The psychoanalytic movement was flourishing—the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute had been founded in 1920—and so was the workers’ movement. Karl Abraham—one of the ‘old guard’—had been active in Berlin, but he had died in 1925. So most of the Berlin psychoanalysts—Rado, Franz Alexander, Hanns Sachs, Erich Fromm, Siegfried Bernfeld, Otto Fenichel, George Groddeck, Melanie Klein—knew Reich only slightly, if at all. They were prepared to accept him as a gifted psychoanalyst with interesting political views. At least three of the Berlin group—Fenichel, Bernfeld and Fromm—were Marxist in outlook. After the hostility of Vienna, Berlin must have seemed an ideal haven. Fenichel was one of the younger analysts who had responded to Reich’s work with enthusiasm; he and Reich now proceeded to gather together a group of psychoanalysts who were also Marxists. In November, Reich delivered his lecture on the prevention of neurosis to the Berlin Association of Socialist Physicians; it was a great success. A series of lectures at the Marxist Workers’ Centre aroused such enthuasism that Ilse Reich heard about them in Paris four years later.

Reich, then, seemed to have ‘arrived’. The bad old days were over. The operation of changing horses in midstream had been supremely successful; the Marxists accepted him as a psychoanalyst and the Berlin psychoanalysts accepted him as a Marxist. Freud’s approval was no longer important. By 1931, it looked as if Reich had achieved the position of security and distinction that had so far eluded him.

The basic unit of the Communist Party is the ‘cell’—left-over from the days when the Party was outlawed and members had to operate in small fighting units. In hostile countries, cells are small—three or five people. In Germany, where the Party was legal, they were larger. Reich was appointed to a cell of about twenty members in an apartment building known as the Red Block—presumably because inhabited mostly by leftists. The Red Block was in the Bonner Platz; the cell meetings seem to have taken place in the Wilmersdorferstrasse. Most of the members were artists and writers.

Arthur Koestler, who became a member of the same cell in 1932, has

described its activities in his autobiography *The Invisible Writing*, and in his contribution to a book called *The God that Failed.* The leaders of the cell were two unsuccessful writers, Alfred Kantorowicz and Max Schroeder, both easygoing, likeable men—Koestler says of Schroeder that he was a 'lovable type of Munich bohemian, who had found in his devotion to the Party a compensation for his literary, sexual, pecuniary, and other frustrations'. Cell meetings started with a political lecture from Kantorowicz, based on a briefing at the Party District HQ. 'This was followed by a discussion, but a discussion of a peculiar kind. It is a basic rule of Communist discipline that, once the Party has decided to adopt a certain line regarding a given problem, all criticism of that decision becomes deviationist sabotage. In theory, discussion is permissible before a decision has been reached; in practice, decisions are always imposed from above, without previous consultation with the rank and file ... So our discussions always showed a complete unanimity of opinion.'

Koestler gives an example of the kind of matter on which the party allowed no discussion. When he first joined the Party, Koestler wondered why, with the increasing menace of the Nazis, could the Communists not come to an understanding with the Social Democrats? Why did they persist in calling them 'Social Fascists'—'which drove them mad and made any collaboration with them impossible'. Koestler's instructor explained that the Party wanted nothing more than to establish a united proletarian front with the Social Democratic masses, but that it had to start at the bottom, not the top; the Social Democratic leaders were traitors who would betray any agreement ... After five minutes of this, Koestler felt rather foolish, and accepted the Party's anti-Socialist line with enthusiasm. But his original view proved to be right; Hitler found it easy to defeat the left because they were divided.

There is something absurd in the idea of Wilhelm Reich taking his place as a cog in this Party machine, and quietly listening to lectures on the Party line from his cell leader.

Reich was not that sort of man; if he had joined the Catholic Church he would not have been satisfied until he became Pope—or at least, a cardinal. Neither was he one to take his orders from Moscow. Reich had to be a leader or nothing. The moment he arrived in Berlin, he began working to seize the initiative. Just before leaving Vienna, he had lectured at the third congress of the World League for Sexual Reform—formed in 1928 by Dr Magnus Hirschfeld—on 'The Sexual Misery of the Workers', and had been appointed to a four-man committee to create a political platform for the League's views. Reich worked out a manifesto, which he submitted to the 'agitprop adviser' of the KPD (German Communist Party). The Party liked the manifesto, but Hirschfeld's World League thought it

too communistic and rejected it. Whereupon Reich suggested that the Communist Party should found an organization for sexual reform. The idea found immediate favour, for the Party felt that such a movement would attract new members. The Party handed over the matter of organizing the 'Sex-pol' movement to its cultural branch, led by two men named Bischoff and Schneider —whom Reich later described as 'stooges of the Moscow dictators'. Reich was appointed one of the leaders of the Sex-pol movement. He immediately produced a new manifesto, which declared that sexual repression was one of the most valuable weapons of the capitalists, and that sexual freedom would be a vital step in the overthrow of capitalism. The Church and the bourgeoisie and the government were all in this conspiracy to keep the workers cowed and guilt-ridden. 'In Soviet Russia,' said Reich, 'we can see marriage and family fading away with the change of economic life—the kind of statement he would later regret.

The German Association for Proletarian Sexual Politics held its first congress in Dusseldorf in the autumn of 1931; eight other associations for sexual freedom joined the movement, swelling its ranks by about 20,000; before the year was out, groups in other German cities had increased the number to 40,000. Since the German Communist Party (the largest in Europe) was only 124,000 strong, Reich's movement had almost doubled its membership. Understandably, he was highly regarded by the Party executive. As the movement continued to attract large numbers of young people, Reich suddenly found himself in demand on platforms all over Germany.

This success was his undoing. He was becoming a spokesman for a large part of the German Communist Party; but his views were too individualistic to represent any party. Various writers have given different reasons for his fall from favour. James Wyckoff, in *Wilhelm Reich, Life Force Explorer*, states: 'But Reich's success in recruiting people to what he called his "sex political" platform worried the Communist Party leaders, who feared that sexually happy members might not adhere to the political party line.' Ilse Reich explains that 'they feared that diverting interest to mental hygiene problems would weaken the revolutionary ardour for the party ... ' The truth is a great deal plainer. As the implications of Reich's views became clearer, the Party realized that it had no desire to be identified with a movement for sexual freedom. Reich's views on the wickedness of the bourgeoisie and the Church were all very well; but what he was saying, basically, was that there was no harm in boys and girls getting the maximum pleasure from their bodies. Interpreted more freely, this meant: Get your clothes off and make love. Or, to be more precise: Get your clothes off and fuck. This was obviously why so many young people were drawn to the Sex-pol

movement. It was not their interest in the implications of Malinowski's work among the Trobrianders, or Reich's belief that the marriage and divorce laws needed liberalizing. It was their hopeful expectation that a meeting of the Young Communist league might end with a pleasant sexual encounter with a member of the opposite sex. This was also the reason that the Communist Party began to feel misgivings.

The point is of central importance, not only to an understanding of Reich, but to that of the hostility he aroused. It is important to grasp precisely what was wrong with Reich's formulation of his ideal. As an immensely vital and highly-sexed individual, Reich felt that he deserved uninhibited sexual expression. And, like any sexually successful individual, his attitude towards sex was healthy and frank. Under different circumstances, he might have become another Casanova or Frank Harris, practising sexual freedom without necessarily preaching it. But his conversion to Freud enabled him to link his natural inclinations with his philosophical convictions. Reich was an intensely serious and idealistic individual. There is no contradiction between intellectual seriousness and sexual athleticism—the Protestant philosopher Paul Tillich was a serious theologian as well as an insatiable adulterer. Reich's mistake lay in trying to generalize his personal convictions into a social theory—a mistake that had been made a century earlier by the poet Shelley. And it was this curiously idealistic approach that led to his downfall.

What Reich failed to recognize is that our culture is not homogeneous. People are seldom aware of what their next-door neighbour is doing or thinking. We speak of the permissive society of the second half of the twentieth century without realizing that there are millions of individuals who are still living in the middle of the Victorian age. In many big cities it is possible to buy hard pornography and to see films showing sexual acts; yet an enormous percentage of adults—perhaps the majority—would be outraged if taken to see a blue movie, or offered a magazine showing men and women making love. People live in individual life-worlds like watertight compartments. A puritanical old maid may buy her daily newspaper at a bookstall that sells pornographic magazines, and not even notice them. She may sit in the hairdresser's and listen to women discussing a homosexual play that was presented on television without really taking in what they are saying. It is all unreal, part of an alien world. This is why bookshops are able to sell the works of Sade or Genet without interference. Those who want to read them do so; those who don't are hardly aware of their existence.

This is why a society may be thoroughly permissive when it comes to allowing its members to 'do their own thing', yet savagely intolerant when it

comes to generalizing these ideas. An individual may preach what he likes, provided he allows the others the choice of ignoring him. There is nothing to prevent a man from placing a soapbox on any corner and preaching cannibalism or sexual perversion, provided he makes it sound reasonable; those who don't want to listen will walk on. But if he protests that the television companies will not allow him time on the air to bring his views to the masses, the result will be universal outrage, and demands for his imprisonment. This is because he is violating a basic social taboo; he is trying to force his way into their heads; and this arouses the same kind of resistance as if he tried to force his way into their homes.

Reich's views on sexual freedom reveal another curious blind spot. For better or worse, most young and healthy males are promiscuous. Adolescent males would cheerfully have intercourse with ten different girls a day, every day of the year. They are in a more or less continuous state of sexual arousal. This means that their desires are basically unsatisfiable in *any* kind of society, since it would involve being allowed to stop girls casually in the street and ordering them to undress. Since most women are naturally less promiscuous than men—their biological urges steering them in the direction of monogamy and a family—the male is bound to experience some sense of sexual deprivation, even if he has a dozen mistresses. Reich's views on sexual freedom presuppose that male sexuality is basically 'reasonable', like that of the female. But most of us realize instinctively that this is untrue. An American judge, in sentencing a particularly brutal sex murderer, once made the interesting observation that the male sexual urge is out of all proportion to any useful purpose that it serves—a remark that is profoundly anti-Reichian in spirit. For Reich assumes that if society could outgrow 'Victorian' sexual taboos, sexual frustration would vanish, and human beings would cease to be neurotic. If the judge is right, Reich was simply underestimating the power of the sex instinct.

Whether or not Reich was correct, there can be no doubt that most human beings are instinctively on the side of the judge. They feel that human sexuality is not a subject that fits into tidy logical categories. We may agree with Reich that sexual repression is bad for us, that sexual ignorance is disastrous, that healthy human beings regard sex as a pleasure rather than a transgression. Yet somehow, it still does not seem to follow that sexual freedom will transform society. There seems to be something simplistic and over-rational about this view.

But this is clearly not why the Party comrades came to reject Reich's sexual views. Their reasons were expressed in various criticisms and arguments at the time.[2] One leading official of a youth organization commented: 'Reich wants us

to turn our Association's gymnasia into brothels. We are to turn our young people towards sexual matters instead of diverting their attention. We don't like to talk about sex too much, but otherwise we're not against it.' The accusation that Reich wanted to turn the gymnasia into brothels is unfair, but it makes his point. From the Party's point of view, Reich *did* like to talk about sex too much. The *Deutsche Volkszeitung* meant basically the same thing when it called Reich 'an unrecognized erotic hermit in the sexual wilderness'. A Communist doctor remarked: 'He concentrates on orgasm, but orgasm disturbances play only a secondary part within the proletariat.' Another one makes the point even more clearly when he says: 'In my talks, I dealt with sexual questions for ten minutes at the most, and with political questions for one and a half hours.' The basic objection becomes clear: not that Reich is wrong about sex, but that he *overemphasizes* it, until a relatively trivial matter is made to seem far greater than it should be. A Christian churchman might have raised the same objection —not on moral, but on spiritual grounds: that there are far more important things in life than sex. The Communists were making the same objection in their own terms. They saw the really serious matter as the struggle between the workers and the capitalists—a struggle that, in their eyes, was as momentous as the battle of Armageddon. Reich's belief that 'orgastic potency' had an important role to play seemed to be trivializing the issue. Reich's opponents—whether Christians, Communists, or ordinary sceptics with no axe to grind—all expressed basically the same objection: sex may be important, but it's not *that* important.

Reich, of course, was incapable of understanding such an objection. He had committed himself to Freud's theory that sex is the most important and basic impulse in the world—in fact, the *only* basic impulse. Given that dogma, all the rest followed. His opponents could only feel that he was something of a crank, a man who had fallen into the error of wildly exaggerating the importance of one single facet of human existence.

It is unnecessary, then, to look for sinister conspiracies to explain Reich's dissensions with the Communist Party, and equally unnecessary to accept Reich's explanation that 'emotional plague' was to blame. The Communists simply felt that all this talk of sex was *not* what Communism was about. Reich's earlier arguments about the misery of working-class women, the problems of abortion, the need for better marriage laws, had deceived them, and made them feel that he was basically a Communist. Now, as the Sex-pol movement expanded, and Reich talked earnestly about orgastic potency and genital personalities, they felt they were seeing him in his true colours, as someone who wanted to push civilization towards decadence. Magnus Hirschfeld's World League for Sexual Reform was concerned with removing the stigma from the

idea of sexual deviance (Hirschfeld himself was a homosexual). As far as the Communists were concerned, world revolution had nothing to do with allowing homosexuals and masochists to practise their deviations with public approval; it could only confuse the issue. And the same was true of Reich's talk about sexual freedom. It was a red herring that had been dragged into the proletarian struggle by a vociferous propagandist. A doctor remarked: 'We Communist doctors are principally to blame that [the cultural section of the KPD] came under Reich's ideological influence. We others made no effort. He, in contrast, acted very energetically.' They felt, in fact, that he was an opportunist who had tried to use the Party for his own ends. Fortunately, he had been discovered in time. Bischoff and Schneider, leaders of the cultural section (IFA) did their best to repair the damage by putting every obstacle in the way of Reich's *The Sexual Struggle of Youth.* Reich borrowed money, founded his own press, the Verlag für Sexualpolitik, and brought it out himself, together with several other pamphlets on the same subject. In doing so, he was pouring oil on the flames; Bischoff and Schneider were, technically, Reich's superiors in the Party; in going over their heads, Reich had committed a breach of Party discipline. It made no difference that he felt he was in the right, and that he said so in a letter to the Executive Committee. Reich was too politically inept to realize that he was making things worse. Party discipline was in many ways like the monastic discipline of the Middle Ages; to defy the Abbot was not only to oppose the authority of the Church, but of God. Reich had showed his cloven hoof, and revealed once more that he was simply not of the stuff of a good Party member. So although the Sex-pol organizations received his new offerings with enthusiasm, and the French Communist Party accepted *The Sexual Crisis* for publication, the Executive Committee had to face up to the recognition that their distinguished recruit was more trouble than he was worth ...

Unaware of the gathering storm, Reich continued his work for the sex hygiene clinics, wrote prolifically, read Engels and Malinowski, and studied the increasing influence of Nazism with horrified fascination. It seemed to him to provide obvious confirmation of his theories. These jack-booted young enthusiasts, marching to the Horst Wessel song, were in the grip of a vague, mystical longing for freedom and heroic adventure. This longing, said Reich, was the result of the *unnaturalness* of modern civilization. It was a craving to return to more natural means of self-expression—in particular, to genital self-expression. 'A humanity which has been forced for millennia to act contrary to its fundamental biological laws and has, therefore, acquired a second nature which is actually a *counter*-nature, must needs get into an irrational frenzy when it tries to restore the fundamental biological function *and at the same time is*

afraid of it.' Ergo, Fascism was basically a form of frustrated sexuality. It was in the interest of dictators like Mussolini and Hitler—and Reich would soon include Stalin on the list—to encourage 'the compulsory sex-morality', because frustrated young people were ideal recruits to Fascism.

The idea is deployed at length in Reich's largest and most important sex-political work, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism,* where it is expanded to some four hundred pages. It is perhaps Reich's most brilliant piece of polemical writing. Yet here again, it is difficult not to feel that he has made one of those curious errors of judgement and overshot the mark. The argument that Fascism is based on repressed sexual energy *sounds* plausible because we know that many Nazis were sadists. But when the argument is expanded to book-length, its weaknesses begin to appear. Was the ordinary young German soldier really a product of sexual repression? In order to believe this, we have to accept Reich's thesis that man has been repressed for thousands of years by civilization, until he has been twisted into a completely unnatural mould. And if we can accept this pleasantly romantic view—man the noble savage, corrupted by his own success—we then need to be convinced by the second part of Reich's argument: that the answer lies in sexual freedom. The argument is all a little too schematized and over-simplified. Who was responsible for the original repression? The Church and the aristocracy, who wanted to impose their authority. The 'genital character'—that is, the kind of human being who enjoys sex without neuroses—is naturally hostile to authority, so that it was in the interest of the Church and the capitalists to incubate neurosis by trying to give everybody a guilty conscience. The mystical and religious emotions expressed by St John of the Cross or El Greco are another form of repressed sexuality ...

The flat truth is that there is no evidence whatsoever that Fascism is based on repressed sexuality, or that Hitler and Mussolini tried to create sexual guilt. If Hitler expected the drum-majorettes in the Youth Movement to be virginal, it was not because he thought sex was wicked, but because he believed that promiscuity springs out of boredom and lack of purpose, and that Nazi ideology should remedy that undesirable situation. Hitler's few remarks on sex in his *Table Talk* suggest that he agrees with Reich. He certainly regards it as one of life's great events: 'The revelation that her encounter with her first man is for a young woman, can be compared with the revelation that a soldier knows when he faces war for the first time. In a few days, a youth becomes a man.' Neither had he any prejudices about sex for the unmarried: 'Rather than die an old maid, it's better for [a woman] to have a child without more ado! Nature doesn't care in the least bit whether, as a preliminary, the people concerned have paid a visit to the registrar.' Hitler also seemed to share Reich's suspicion of the Church:

‘The evil that is gnawing at our vitals is our priests ... ’ Hitler is not precisely Reichian in spirit, but neither is he precisely puritanical. As to Mussolini, he seems to have regarded sex as one of the supreme pleasures of life, and to have have no objection to his soldiers sharing his view.

So the overall impression of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* is of a man determined to over-simplify for his own purposes, Reich is basically an anarchist who hates all authority, and believes that sexual freedom is the answer to all mankind’s problems. Like Freud, he has no difficulty in seeing everyone he dislikes as an example of sexual repression and neurosis. But since Reich himself is authoritarian and neurotic, it is hard to take him seriously.

There can be little doubt that it was this tendency to over-simplify, to attempt to force reality into the Procrustean bed of his own ideas, that Annie Reich had in mind when she said that he showed a deterioration during these years. She was to experience it at first hand when she joined Reich in Berlin (against the advice of Sandor Rado). Reich had so convinced himself that the family unit was the source of all evil that he delivered an ultimatum: either she consent to place the children in a Marxist children’s commune, or they would have to separate. Overwhelmed by Reich’s dominant and inflexible personality, she agreed, although it went against all her natural instincts, and she later had no doubt that it had been a mistake. The children, predictably, hated it; they had a natural resistance to being indoctrinated into Communist ideology. Annie Reich recalls an incident when Reich reprimanded them for singing a German song instead of a proletarian revolutionary song. And when she writes about this period, Ilse Reich admits his ruthlessness: ‘Something was either black or white, you were for him or against him, never a shade of grey permissible. And those close to him had to follow him or get out ... It was this inflexible attitude of his ... that again and again lost him friends and co-workers.’ The ordinary reader may feel inclined to put it more simply: that, where personal relations were concerned, Reich was a bastard.

The marriage was, in fact, already drifting towards a breakdown—one crucial factor being Reich’s meeting, at the May Day parade of 1932, with a ballet dancer, Elsa Lindenberg, who became his mistress. In February 1933, Reich’s world suddenly began to collapse. The German Communist Party repudiated his views and banned his books; he was virtually ‘excommunicated’. And on 27 February, just after Reich had returned from giving a lecture in Copenhagen, a Dutch ex-Communist named van der Lubbe fired the Reichstag. Hitler had been Chancellor for less than a month; during that time, the German Communist Party had been exhorting the workers to take to the barricades: ‘Fresh bullets in your guns! Draw the pins of the hand grenades!’ ‘Our fight cannot be broken by

machine guns or pistol barrels or prison. We are the masters of tomorrow!' There had been three attempts to burn public buildings only two days before the Reichstag fire. So when Hitler was called to the blazing building around midnight on 27 February, he had no doubt that it was a Communist plot, and swore revenge. (In fact, it now seems fairly clear that van der Lubbe acted alone.) The following day, he persuaded President Hindenburg to sign a decree suspending various civil liberties; it was virtually martial law. With an ease that shocked other Communist Parties of Europe, the German Communist Party was suppressed. The trial of various Communists for the Reichstag fire proved to be a public defeat for the Nazis, largely because of Goering's incompetence as one of the prosecutors (he was Minister of the Interior). Four Communist leaders were acquitted; only van der Lubbe was sentenced and executed. But that was in September 1933; by that time, the Communist Party had ceased to exist in Germany.

Reich had returned to Berlin the day after the fire, 28 February. He was not among the 1500 intellectuals and Communist officials who were arrested, but this was mainly because he moved to a hotel under a false name. On 2 March, an article attacking his *Sexual Struggle of Youth* appeared in the Nazi press. The children were sent back to Vienna to stay with relatives; Annie Reich moved in with friends. Although the possession of revolutionary tracts was punishable by death, Reich lent his car to some young comrades to transport Communist literature. If they were caught, they were to claim that they had stolen the car; meanwhile, Reich would report it stolen to the police. After they had left, he realized that they had forgotten to agree from which street it was supposed to have been stolen. As hours went by without the return of the comrades, Reich considered the possibility of making for the frontier that night. But they eventually brought the car back—they had been delayed by a puncture. When the attack on his book appeared in the *Volkischer Beobachter*, Reich fled for the Austrian border with his wife, but changed his mind before he crossed it, and waited inside Germany for a few days—reasoning that if he left, it might be more difficult to get back in. He went back to Berlin and registered in a hotel under his own name; the Nazis were unlikely to expect him to be so open. When he learned that his home had been searched for a second time, he finally decided to make his way back to Vienna. It was necessary to leave all his possessions behind him. He left the country disguised as a tourist on his way to a skiing holiday.

By mid-March, he and Annie were back in Vienna. They were even living under the same roof but the marriage was now finished. So was the most successful and eventful epoch in Reich's career. From now on, the going would

be mostly uphill.

Chapter Six

Vienna may have been a haven from the Nazis; but for Reich it held no welcome. His former colleagues of the Psychoanalytic Society must have felt something like dismay at his reappearance; they had hoped they'd seen the last of him. And for Reich himself, this return was something of a humiliation; when he had left for Berlin he had hoped that he'd left these dreary plodders behind to their timid mediocrity. Now he was back among them, without money or possessions, and with a reputation that had grown more unsavoury in his absence. In the previous year, Freud had made an open gesture of hostility. Reich had submitted a paper on masochism to the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis.* According to Freud, this 'culminated in the nonsensical statement that ... the death-instinct is a product of the capitalist system'. Freud reacted with an irritable letter to the publisher, saying that the article could only be published if it was prefaced by a statement that Reich was a Bolshevik, and that 'Bolshevism sets similar limits to scientific research as does a church organization.' Freud went on to imply that Reich was no better than a Jesuit: ' ... the publisher would have made the same comment if he had been presented with a work by a member of the SJ [Society of Jesus].' Reich replied indignantly that the Party had never made the slightest attempt to influence his scientific freedom —which, as we have seen, was wishful thinking. Freud was finally persuaded to allow Reich's article to appeal without this introduction—some of the socialist psychoanalysts in Berlin said it would he tantamount to a declaration of war on the Soviets—but it was immediately followed by an article attacking it by Siegfried Bernfeld, implying that Reich's criticism of the death-instinct was an expression of the Party line.

On 16 March 1933, Reich received a letter from Freud—the director of the Psychoanalytic Press—telling him that they could not honour their agreement to publish *Character Analysis* 'because of current political conditions'. Reich's name had been too much compromised by his political agitations. Reich wrote a letter of strenuous protest to the publishers, in which he made things worse by asserting: ' ... no one can shake the objective truth that analytic theory is revolutionary and therefore committed to the workers' movement.' When this had no effect, Reich borrowed money and published the book himself; eventually, it was to become known as his most important contribution to psychoanalysis.

In April, Reich gave a lecture to a group of socialist students, as a result of

which he received a letter from his old enemy Federn, asking him to stop addressing left-wing groups. Instead of telling Federn to go to hell—as might have been expected—Reich answered soothingly that he intended to leave Vienna in a fortnight, and that if, during that time, he received any requests to lecture, he would consult Federn. The soft answer failed to placate the Psychoanalytic Association—of which Federn was chairman—and Federn insisted on a written guarantee that Reich would not lecture. Federn spoke to Annie Reich on the telephone—she was still living under the same roof as her husband—and suggested that Reich ought to resign from the Psychoanalytic Association. But Reich had his back to the wall and was fighting hard. He asked for a frank discussion with the board of the Association; this took place on 21 April 1933, and the board requested him to stop lecturing and to stop publishing political works. Reich again tried to compromise; he *would* stop, he said, if the Association would take a public stand about his own work. He was really asking for an open debate, which might open the way to some sort of agreement—or, at least, to an end to the conspiracy of silence about him. But the board had no wish to be drawn into scientific discussions with a man they regarded as an embarrassment; they really wanted him to shut up and go away.

Reich was perfectly willing to go away; he had enough political insight to see that Vienna would soon become a bad place for Jews; but even here, the Association put obstacles in his way. Two Danish doctors, both Marxists, expressed their interest in studying with him, and wanted him to go back to Copenhagen. Psychoanalysts to whom they mentioned this advised them against it; Reich's former Berlin colleague Eitington—now in Vienna—was particularly emphatic. The fact that Reich was also a Marxist would mean that there would be too much 'identification'. What this really meant was that Reich would be able to promulgate his own heterodox brand of psychoanalysis. Reich asked the Association's authorization to teach in Copenhagen; it was refused. The Danes were undeterred; Dr Tage Philipson invited Reich to return with him to Denmark. And so, after only six weeks in Vienna, Reich set out on his travels once more—this time without Annie. ('She was sick', he told Eissler, 'I just had to leave her'.) Elsa Lindenburg, the ballet dancer, who had remained in Berlin to oppose the Nazis, would join him later in Denmark.

Luck had now turned against Reich. Reading his letters of this period[1], it is impossible not to feel a certain sympathy. In spite of his touch of paranoia, there was something honest and naive about him. He believed that his discoveries were in the true tradition of psychoanalysis, and that in certain respects, he saw deeper than Freud. Here, as we have seen, he was undoubtedly correct. He liked to see himself as 'a working scholar', whose purely scientific work was being

obstructed for spiteful personal motives; here again, he was to some extent correct. But he was quite incapable of grasping that the real cause for the hostility went deeper than envy, or irritation at his bad manners; his opponents felt, quite simply, that he had sold out, that he was a Moscow man, a party liner, a political Jesuit, a Jew-boy on the make.

At this distance in time, we are able to see that there was a certain amount of justice on both sides, but that each was constitutionally incapable of seeing the other's point of view. When, in the previous year, Freud had spoken irritably about the Party dogmas, Reich had underlined the words and added: '[What about] Freud's dogma of the death-instinct.' What he was saying was that psychoanalysis had become just as much a dictator state as Russia, and that the pot had no right to call the kettle black. The real problem was that Reich had been a pot before he became a kettle. He had originally been a vitalist, drawn into the movement because he thought that Freud's libido was another name for the *élan vital*. He admits that Freudianism originally repelled him; he lumped it together with Krafft-Ebing, and the others who made 'sexuality seem bizarre and strange'. When a psychoanalyst came to talk to them, 'I instinctively disliked his way of dealing with sexuality.' What interested Reich, as he says, was the question: 'What is life?' But he swallowed his aversion when he decided that Freud's concept of the libido allowed him to be a psychoanalyst *and* a 'life-force explorer'. The implication can hardly be ignored: Reich began his career as a doctor with an act of compromise. It could be argued that this was not particularly reprehensible, since the motive was honourable: to combine his interest in the problem of the nature of life with his career as a doctor. But at a fairly early stage, he had to recognize that Freud was not the type of person to allow his disciples much freedom of thought; the fate of Tausk and Silberer must have made this clear. And since Reich was not a reductionist by nature, the honest solution would have been withdrawal from the psychoanalytic movement. Reich decided against this; he reasoned that, after all, he agreed completely with Freud about the importance of sex. Yet Freud's formulation of the death-instinct theory in 1920 should have warned him that the compromise was unworkable; this was, in effect, Freud's repudiation of the libido. By then, Reich was too convinced that he was on the road to success—perhaps even as Freud's successor—to heed the warning lights. He kept his eyes tightly shut, and went on working at his own version of the libido theory, meanwhile concerning himself mainly with psychoanalytic technique, by way of convincing Freud that he was sticking to the party line. By 1926, it was obvious that Freud really had abandoned the libido theory, and that Reich and he no longer had the slightest thing in common; Reich's reason for compromise had been pulled from under

his feet. And the clash of December 1926 made it clear that Reich had been mistaken in hoping that there was room for his own genital (libido) theory in the movement; like Stalin, Freud would not permit the least dissent. This was basically the cause of the 1927 crisis; Reich was forced to recognize that all his calculations had gone wrong, and that he had, in effect, wasted the past seven years. He continued to hope that some compromise might be found; but his reception by Federn and other members of the 'old guard' made it plain that *they* understood perfectly well what had happened. They were intent on forcing Reich to make an open break with the movement—like Jung and Adler. But Reich felt he had an even better solution; by flinging himself into the workers' movement, he could outflank Federn and the rest. Once again, he was faced with the necessity for a basic compromise, and with an even grosser form of reductionism. And again, Reich tried to repeat the tactics he had used eight years earlier. He made a few mental reservations about 'vulgar Marxism' under his breath—like Galileo muttering *'E pur si muove'*—and declared himself to be an advocate of sexual freedom for the workers. His reason for becoming a Communist was as flimsy as his reason for becoming a Freudian in 1919: he decided that the kind of 'open sexuality' that he wanted to see was an essential facet of true revolutionary freedom, as defined by Marx and Lenin. This turned out to be an error of truly mountainous proportions; the Party saw the ideal Communist as a 'steel-hardened cadre', not as a naked Bacchanalian. And in due course, the Party turned out to be as intractable as Freud, and told Reich he could take his sexual freedom back to his decadent bourgeois friends in Vienna.

And then came the supreme irony: the Freudian party liners, for whom he had bartered his integrity in 1920, now accused him of selling out to the Communists. Reich was perceptive enough to see the unfairness of the charge—as his remark about Freud's own dogmatism shows—but not sufficiently capable of self-appraisal to recognize that if they were being unjust, it was largely his own fault. He had tried to compromise twice, and fallen flat on his face each time. The Psychoanalytic Association had rejected him and refused to allow him to teach—although it had so far ignored his challenge to expel him. So he was at last forced to do what he should have done at least seven years earlier—set himself up as a Freudian defector, like Adler and Jung.

Although he failed to recognize it at the time, the German Communist Party had done him a favour by throwing him out. It was not really in Reich's nature to be a good Communist. His natural genius and dominance meant that he was temperamentally closer to Fascism—that is, he was an authoritarian elitist. The expulsion was a shock to his ego; but it freed him from the burden of trying to force himself into a mould for which he was completely unsuited. It is true that

for the next year or so, self-respect—the desire for consistency—led him to continue to think of himself as a left-wing rebel. But it was largely a matter of habit; every contact with the Party deepened his disillusionment. In Copenhagen, he tried to persuade the Communist organization 'Red Help' to assist Walter Kolbenhoff, a young emigrant with suicidal tendencies; but Kolbenhoff lacked papers, and the leftist bureaucrats showed themselves to be as unsympathetic as their capitalist counterparts. Ilse Reich comments that it was this incident that led to Reich's true break with the Party. But the evidence suggests that, with his usual Machiavellian caution, Reich omitted to inform his Danish comrades of his change of heart.

On 1 May 1933, the day he arrived in Copenhagen, Reich sent a letter to his ex-analyst Sandor Rado, now in New York, asking whether, if he came to America, the American Freudians would 'allow him to stay alive'. What was probably behind this was a desire to know whether Rado himself would take kindly to his arrival in America—Rado now being Freud's chief representative there. Presumably there was no reply, since Reich abandoned his plan to sail for New York. He told Eissler that Rado was hostile to him because 'Emmy, his wife, and I had very strong genital contact with each other.' He added that 'full embrace' had never occurred, but that they had danced together a good deal. Rado might therefore be excused for not wanting to see Reich in New York.

For the first few weeks, his work in Denmark went well. He was allowed a temporary permit to work, and began to enrol students the day after his arrival. His personal warmth and brilliance ensured that he was soon surrounded by admirers. Since all European Communist Parties were separate entities, it made no difference to the Danes that Reich was *persona non grata* with the German left, and the Communist magazine *Plan* accepted an article on nudism for publication. Reich also made arrangements to have *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* published in Copenhagen; it appeared in August 1933. This proved to be a major mistake. Reich's best plan would have been to keep a 'low profile' and confine himself to teaching psychoanalysis. By publishing *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* he made the authorities aware that an extreme revolutionary had arrived among them. The book also had the curious effect of alienating the Danish Communist Party which went to the length of 'expelling' Reich on 21 November 1933. (The expulsion meant little, since Reich had never been a member.) Their objection was that the book was 'counter-revolutionary', since it blamed the German workers for allowing Hitler to take over. Another reason for their irritation was that Reich's article on nudism had landed the editor of *Plan* in trouble with the authorities; it advocated that teachers and pupils, as well as parents and children, should see one another naked, and the

Danes were scandalized. (The article was eventually included in Reich's book *The Sexual Revolution.)* The editor, Edvard Heiberg, was sentenced to forty days in prison. Predictably, when the question of the renewal of Reich's residential permit came up at the end of October 1933, the Danish Minister of Justice decided that he was an undesirable alien.

Reich fought hard against the decision. Two of his closest Danish associates, Eric Carstens and Sigurd Neergard, joined him in giving a public lecture on 'The Struggle for Psychoanalysis', attended by an audience of six hundred, and a petition was sent to Zahle, the Minister of Justice. This cunning attempt to change his ground failed in its purpose; Zahle had no objection to psychoanalysis, but he objected to Reich's political views and his sexual liberalism. Besides, Reich was in trouble with the police; two rival psychiatrists had lodged a complaint about a woman 'patient' who had attempted suicide; in fact, the woman was not a patient—Reich had declined to treat her. Nevertheless, the two psychiatrists, Clemmenson and Schroeder, suggested that Reich should not be permitted to remain in Denmark, and the conservative press, delighted to attack the 'decadent' theories of Freud, launched a smear campaign against Reich. He was attacked as a 'so-called sexologist' who was 'fooling around with our young men and woman and trying to convert them to this perverse pseudo-science'.

Carstens tried to stem the tide by asking various distinguished scientists to support Reich-Einstein, Bohr, Malinowski and (predictably) Freud. He told Freud that Reich had rendered the Danish Psychoanalytic Association 'such valuable practical assistance ... that we wish to keep him at all costs'. He pointed out that the doctor who *had* been authorized by the International Association—a man named Harnik—was known to have suffered a psychotic breakdown, from which he had still not recovered, and that this was causing the Danish psychoanalysts embarrassment. Freud replied on 12 November 1933, saying that while he acknowledged Reich's stature as an analyst, he rejected his politics; therefore he was unable to help. If Carstens had known anything aboul Freud's implacable vindictiveness to 'renegades' he would not have wasted his time.

Reich now had genuine reason for his persecution mania; this *was* persecution. He was being attacked from all sides. And once again, he was homeless and at a loose end. As a temporary expedient he decided to move to Malmö, the small town facing Copenhagen across the Öresund Strait, separating Sweden and Denmark; here his students could continue to visit him. More important, so could Elsa Lindenberg, who was now working in Copenhagen as a ballet teacher and physical therapist (using Reich's techniques). Before settling in, he decided to go on a European tour, perhaps hoping to find somewhere to

settle permanently. He also had a specific reason for wanting to visit England; he wanted to consult Sir Almroth Wright, director of the Physiological Institute, about how to measure electrical charges in the skin. According to Reich, this aspect of his trip to London was a waste of time, since Wright told him it was impossible. But he also took the opportunity to call on Ernest Jones, and was received with unexpected friendliness. As President ol the International Psychoanalytic Association, Jones might have been expected to regard Reich with suspicion instead, he assured him that in spite of his disagreement with Freud about the death-instinct, there was plenty of room for him within the framework of psychoanalysis, Reich attended some meetings of a psychoanalytic group at Jones's house; they were also friendly, but gave Reich no reason to feel that he would be welcome in England as a practising psychoanalyst. His greatest pleasure on this English visit was in meeting Bronislav Malinowski, the anthropologist whose works had had such a stunning impact on him in the early Berlin days; they formed a warm friendship that was later continued in America.

Reich rejected London as a possible home—mistakenly, in the view of A. S. Neill, who believed, probably correctly, that Reich would never have been persecuted in England as he was later in America. He went on to Paris, and for a while was attracted by the ambience of a German Trotskyist group who admired his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* and would have been glad to recruit him to their number. The Trotskyists were, of course, opposed to Stalin, and to Soviet domination of the Comintern—the Third International organization of Communist Parties. Trotsky was calling for a Fourth International, free of Stalinist domination. For Reich to move among these anti-Soviet rebels was already an important step away from his former orthodox Communism. But he must have felt that they were too small and weak to be worth joining; it would have been an admission of his own fall from influence. Instead, he went on to Zurich to meet some Swiss sexologists, then rejoined his wife Annie and the children for a holiday in the Tyrol. Here he began to work on a pamphlet inspired by his discussions with the Trotskyists; it was called *What Is Class-Consciousness?* and was basically a criticism of the German Communist Party—in fact, of international Communism as he had known it. Reich pointed out that the 'masses' are *not* class-conscious; they don't, for the most part, nurse a desire to shoot the bourgeoisie and take over the means of production. He mentions a friend who picked up two young hitch-hikers; they were working class, and vaguely socialistic, but on the whole bored with politics; they were more interested in pretty girls. *This* is the reality, says Reich, and the Marxist doctrinaires, with their bureaucratic organization and endless talk about the dictatorship of the proletariat, are simply out of touch. On the other hand, his

own Sex-pol movement had drawn thousands of such young people into the Communist Party ...

Yet Reich knew that his point would be lost. *What Is Class-Consciousness?* could be regarded as his postscript to his years of Communist involvement, a kind of weary turning-away from revolutionary politics. It was also, perhaps, intended as his political justification before posterity.

Reich went on to Prague, where he renewed contact with exiled German leftists, then decided to revisit Berlin on his way back to Malmö. (He first took the precaution of ascertaining that German customs officials kept no lists of wanted persons.) The atmosphere there struck him as ominous, and when a man on the railway platform seemed to recognize him, Reich hastily turned away. In Germany, there could be no possible doubt that the revolutionary dream was over. It is true that the Reichstag Fire Trial had ended in the acquittal of the four Communists; but this was a victory for German justice rather than Communist propaganda. (In his autobiography, Arthur Koestler tells how the Communists in Paris had published a book 'exposing' the Nazis for being responsible for the Reichstag fire, then admits: 'We had, in fact, no idea of the concrete circumstances.') Communist propaganda notwithstanding, the German Communist Party had ceased to exist by 1934, and Berlin wore a military air, as if in the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm. Reich was glad to get back on to Scandinavian soil.

Malmö proved to be worse than Copenhagen. It was little more than a large village, full of malicious gossip and a lively interest in other people's affairs. Reich felt that the place embodied the futility and boredom that bred Fascism. The inhabitants were still living in the late nineteenth century—the kind of suffocating atmosphere described in the plays and novels of Strindberg. It was still dominated by puritan morals: young people walked around the streets in groups, and the boys stared at the girls without daring to speak. Reich lived in a boarding house full of snobbish bourgeoisie. Elsa came to join him at weekends; students like Tage Philipson, J. H. Leunach and Lotte Liebeck came over every other day on the steamer—a mere three miles. Leunach and Philipson were in hot water in Copenhagen for starting a birth control group, and advocating legal abortion. Finally, the Malmö police became curious about all this coming and going, especially as many of Reich's visitors were known as left-wing revolutionaries; one day in April 1934, they took a group of Reich's students to the police station for questioning, and Reich was summoned there. His best course would have been to explain politely that he was simply a doctor conducting his classes; but his ingrained dislike of bureaucracy made him irritable and rude. The police came to search his room, but when he found they

had no warrant, he ordered them to leave. They contacted the Copenhagen police, who went to search Philipson's room in his absence. The two hostile psychiatrists in Copenhagen apparently provided the Malmö police with the kind of information they wanted. Predictably, when Reich's visa came up for renewal at the end of May 1934, further permission was refused. Once again, it is difficult not to feel that Reich himself was partly to blame.

Fortunately, Reich's prospects were again looking more promising; in Copenhagen he had met a number of analysts from Norway, including Harald Schjelderup, head of the Psychological Institute at Oslo University. Schjelderup became one of Reich's students during his brief stay in Copenhagen. Nic Hoel, the wife of the Norwegian novelist and critic Sigurd Hoel, had been a student of Reich in Berlin. These and other Norwegian friends suggested that Reich might find Oslo more sympathetic than Copenhagen or Malmö. At Reich's suggestion, a psychoanalytic conference was held at Oslo in Easter 1934; there Reich met Ola Raknes, who was to become one of his closest friends as well as his most influential disciple in Scandinavia. There was no point in moving to Oslo at the beginning of the summer holidays; instead, Reich allowed Sigurd Hoel to persuade him to enter Denmark illegally; he spent the summer at a country house at Sletten, on the coast, under the assumed name of Peter Stein. Here he completed *What Is Class-Consciousness?,* and it was published in the *Journal for Political Psychology and Sex Economy* in June 1934, under yet another assumed name, Ernest Parell. Ilse Reich comments that Reich seemed to enjoy this kind of hide and seek under pseudonyms.

The children also spent the summer holiday with Reich in Denmark. The break was good for him; he was feeling refreshed when he took the children back to Switzerland in August. But even now, there were new clouds on the horizon. On 1 August, Reich had received a letter from the secretary of the German Psychoanalytic Association, explaining that they proposed to omit his name from a calendar listing the members of the German branch that would be issued to coincide with the 13th International Congress of Psychoanalysis; this was to be held at Lucerne at the end of August, and Reich naturally intended to be there. The omission, said Carl Mueller-Braunschweig, was purely a technical matter, due to the present situation in Germany, and it would quickly be put right once the Scandinavian group was recognized at the Congress. Reich dug in his heels and said he had no intention of 'resigning'; but there was little he could do. He arrived at the Congress on 25 August, and was told that he would not be allowed to read his paper; he was, for the moment, no longer a member of any psychoanalytic body. A special meeting was called to consider his case, under the chairmanship of Anna Freud; again he was asked to resign, and again

refused. An executive meeting was then held—which Reich, as a non-member, was not allowed to attend—and Federn, Eitington and Jones all had unkind things to say about him. Pressure was put on the Norwegian group not to allow Reich to become a member—it was hinted that they would not receive their recognition otherwise; to their credit, they refused. (They received their membership of the International Association in spite of this.) In effect, if not in actuality, Reich had been expelled from the International Psychoanalytic Association. (Jones later insisted that he had resigned.) His exclusion was not then after all, a purely technical matter.

On the fourth day of the Congress, Reich was allowed to deliver his paper as a guest; it was on 'Psychic Contact and Vegetative Current', and it demonstrated once again that Reich never stood still. It was in this paper that he introduced the concept of 'muscular armour'—the notion that a neurosis is often accompanied by a rigidity in the muscles; so that, for example, a person suppressing a great deal of anger might develop a rigidity of the back and shoulder muscles, and poor circulation in the hands and arms. It was a development of the recognition of his Vienna days—that neurosis often expressed itself in the form of physical effects. The paper was received by the Congress with indifference; it probably confirmed Jones in his decision not to reinstate him. Reich was definitely an outcast. Some of his former students even delivered papers that were indebted to his ideas, but conveniently omitted to mention his name. Reich left the Congress with a heavy heart.

With Elsa Lindenberg, he took a short motoring holiday through Switzerland, before returning to Copenhagen to collect his books and papers. The Swedish authorities at first declined to allow him to cross their country to Norway, but finally relented. In Oslo, in October 1934, Reich once again prepared to make a fresh start.

In his *Life and Work of Wilhelm Reich*, the Belgian critic Michael Cattier ends a chapter on the Swedish period with the words: 'He spent five years in Oslo sinking into madness.' It is Cattier's contention that all Reich's work after the 'psychoanalytic period' is worthless: that he made crude biological experiments that led him to totally false conclusions, and that the 'discovery of the orgone' was an elaborate piece of self-delusion. 'As the scientists ignored him,' says Cattier, 'he began to abuse them and suspect them of having hatched a plot to suppress his discoveries.' The result, he thinks, was full-blown paranoia.

There can be no doubt that Reich *did* become paranoid towards the end of his Norwegian period, when articles deriding his work appeared in the press almost daily. But the most impressive thing about his work during the period is the logic

of its development. At no stage was there any sudden leap into unproven theory or imaginative speculation. Unlike his political ideas, his scientific work shows a commendable pragmatism and caution.

When Reich arrived in Oslo, his aim was simple: to discover whether ‘sexual electricity’ really existed. In 1926, he had reviewed a book by the Berlin physiologist Friedrich Kraus, dealing with the electric currents of the body. Kraus went so far as to say that all life processes can be explained in terms of these currents, and that all illness can be explained in terms of their malfunctions. Absorbed in creating his orgasm theory, Reich had paid little attention at the time; now it struck him that Kraus could have been talking about the ‘libido’.

The idea was logical. If, as Reich believed, the loins flood with a kind of vital electricity at the moment of orgasm, it ought to be possible to measure it with a voltmeter. This was the idea he had put to Sir Almroth Wright in London in the previous year. It was altogether too startling a conception for Wright, whose revolutionary days were far behind him. (In 1906, Wright had served as a model for the hero of Shaw’s *Doctor’s Dilemma.)* But it struck Reich as logical, and he proposed to test it. All that was required, he reasoned, was some device that would amplify the natural currents of the skin. Accordingly, he used the proceeds of a series of lectures that Schielderup had organized at the University of Oslo to pay for an apparatus that would register the electric charge of the skin on an oscillograph. The experiments, which occupied the next two years, fully justified Reich’s assumptions. He discovered that the skin has an electrical charge of a few thousandths of a volt—usually between ten and forty—while the erogenous zones (genitals, nipples, ear lobes, lips and so on) have a far more irregular electrical potential that could soar as high as two hundred millivolts. Pleasure increases this charge; pain decreases it. Anxiety and fright also decrease it. He also made the interesting discovery that to breathe in deeply decreases the electrical tension of the abdomen, while breathing out increases it. This confirms an observation that anyone can make at any time: that taking a deep breath produces tension, while breathing out—sighing with relief—decreases it. And the pleasure of the release produces electric current.

Cattier is unfair when he suggests that Reich thought he had discovered the libido with his electrical machines; Reich was not naive enough to imagine that the force of life could be measured in millivolts. He is closer to the point when he says that Reich’s attempts to measure the libido are ‘exactly as if someone wanted to *bottle* thirst or hunger’. This *is* the disturbing element about Reich’s later philosophy. He often seems so obsessed with the physiological side of health and sickness that he forgets that psychology is about the *mind.* Mental

health is basically a sense of *inner breathing space,* a kind of freedom; neurosis is a kind of mental claustrophobia, a lack of inner freedom, a sense of being *tied down.* And what one is tied down to is *the body.* We feel ourselves stranded, trapped in a world of matter, of mere physical reality. On the other hand, health is a feeling of freedom from the limitations of the body, of the physical world. The mind feels powerful and detached; it can do handstands and turn double-somersaults. It is true that mental health is accompanied by a feeling of vital energy. But this energy is basically a function of the will. Whenever human beings have something to *look forward to,* they experience a kind of lifting of the heart, which is followed by a surge of energy. The same energy is summoned by a sense of purpose. It is dependent upon our *attitude* towards the future—as Frankl realized in Dachau. We might borrow a term from brain physiology and describe this vital energy as 'readiness potential'. Readiness potential is the energy that surges into the muscles before some voluntary act; it would be compared to the compression of a spring. And our minds also have their store of readiness potential. Lazy, dull people keep a low stock; determined and purposive individuals keep a large reserve store. The basic aim of psychiatry is to persuade people whose readiness potential has been depleted by 'discouragement' to increase their store.

What Reich was measuring in the skin was basically 'readiness potential'. To do him justice, he never—as Cattier asserts—equated this skin-reaction with the libido. But he was, undoubtedly, inclined to look upon this mysterious energy as the *source* of mental and physical health, as if it were a kind of vitamin. His Freudian training led him to look for mechanical models of sickness, and in his later work these tended to be transformed into equally mechanical models of health.

This curious tendency to ignore the purely psychological component can be seen in the section of *The Function of the Orgasm* in which he explains his 'break-through into the biological realm'. He begins by explaining the new 'social' theory of neurosis that he has developed as a result of the years in Berlin. As a social animal, man's chief cravings are 'position, fame and authority'. These fill him with drives and ambitions that run counter to his biological needs—particularly the need for sex. This simplistic theory enabled Reich to throw the full emphasis on man's need to satisfy his natural demands.

The real nature of the problem, says Reich, began to appear when he turned to the question of masochism. 'In 1928, I treated a man who suffered from masochistic perversion. His lamentations and his demands to be beaten blocked any progress. After some months of conventional psychoanalytic work my patience wore thin. One day, when he asked me again to beat him, I asked him

what he would say if I actually did. He beamed with happy anticipation. I took a ruler and gave him two hard slaps on the buttocks. He yelled aloud; there was no sign of pleasure whatsoever, and from that time on such demands were never repeated.' This, says Reich, convinced him that it is untrue that masochists derive pleasure from being beaten. And then came a 'truly fantastic idea': that 'the masochist wishes to burst and imagines that torture will bring this about'. That is to say, the masochist is full of desires that he dare not express, and they have the effect of making him—figuratively speaking—blow up like a balloon. But in the case of human beings, the balloon cannot burst, because the person has developed a kind of 'armour' to hold it in, like a child struggling to hold back his tears. So an intolerable tension is created, an inner pressure that cannot find release. Being beaten, says Reich, is an attempt to find such release, a desire to be struck until the balloon bursts. The alternative would be to find—with the help of Reichian therapy—an 'orgastic discharge'. But what *is* it that is discharged in such a moment? Not just semen, for an orgasm without pleasure does not reduce tension. It must be some form of *biological* energy—the energy Reich was seeking to measure with his electrical machines.

This reasoning sounds convincing until it is examined more closely. To begin with, can we really accept that neurosis is due to the clash between biological and social demands (fame, ambition, etc.)? It is easy to see that many young men would enjoy making love to every pretty girl they meet, and that social taboos make this impossible. But is it really society that is to blame? Surely, the girls themselves would have some objection? And their objection is just as 'biological' as the young men's desires. Neurosis *can* be caused by the conflict between social and sexual desires; but it is not *always* so. A few years later, Abraham Maslow produced a more balanced theory in the concept of the 'hierarchy of needs'—that the most basic need of all living creatures is for food and security; after that, sex (and love); after that, success and fame (self-esteem). A man could be satisfied on the sexual level, and still become neurotic out of unfulfilled self-esteem.

Reich's theory of masochism is open to a more basic criticism. He seems to prefer to ignore the sexual component. Magnus Hirschfeld has a chapter on masochism that makes it clear that in the majority of cases, masochism is sexual in nature. A schoolboy enjoys being beaten because the mistress—an attractive young woman—removes his trousers before bending him over her knee; she often allows her other hand to stray to his genitals as she spanks him. A young man enjoys lying on the floor, while his pretty cousin stands on him in high-heeled shoes, allowing him to look up her dress to her underwear; as a climax of the 'game', she presses her foot on his penis, and he has an orgasm. A girl has a

fantasy in which she is bound and naked on a butcher's slab; the butcher prods her all over, as if trying to decide on the best cuts, then inserts a finger in her vagina—which causes an orgasm.[2] In none of these cases can we see any evidence of Reich's 'desire to burst'. There is simply an *association* of pain with sexual pleasure, so that pain ends by evoking sexual pleasure, as the ringing of a bell caused Pavlov's dogs to salivate when it became associated with food. And because Reich wilfully ignores this psychological component, he fails to see why his patient did not enjoy being struck with a ruler. For the masochist, the person who is beating him is an object of sexual desire, the real cause of the excitement. A grim-faced psychiatrist wielding a ruler bursts the soap-bubble of illusion. The actress Florence Farr used to practise the same technique on love-sick swains; she would lean forward, grab them by the head and make them kiss her and then say: 'Now let's have a reasonable conversation.' The treatment was intended to extinguish romantic desire, and seems to have succeeded.

So although Michael Cattier is undoubtedly wrong when he claims that Reich became insane during the Oslo period, the suggestion is not entirely without foundation. Reich did become increasingly paranoid in Norway, and—what is more important from our point of view—increasingly simplistic. The paradox is that his simplistic approach enabled him to make some important discoveries.

From the point of view of his psychoanalytic colleagues in Oslo, Reich's work had never been so exciting. This was not on account of the researches into 'bio-electricity'—which many of them felt to be a waste of time—but because of the new analytical techniques he was now developing in the field of character analysis. In Copenhagen, Reich had treated a case of a man whose neck muscles were rigid and tense. 'After an energetic attack upon his resistance,' the man's resistance suddenly broke; the 'stiff neck' vanished, but he began to exhibit all kinds of psychosomatic symptoms: mottled skin, head and neck pains, diarrhoea and accelerated heartbeat. The problem, apparently, was that the man was basically a passive homosexual, and that he resisted this recognition with an attitude of tense masculinity, which expressed itself in his neck muscles.

If release of psychological tensions could cause relaxation of the muscular armour, then surely the reverse would also be true? If the muscular armour can somehow be destroyed, would the tensions also vanish? In effect, Reich wanted to prick the balloon.

The method he developed can best be illustrated by quoting a passage from Orson Bean's book *Me and the Orgone.* Bean is an American actor who, many years later, went along to Reich's follower Elsworth Baker for treatment.

> The doctor was feeling the muscles around my jaw and neck. He found a tight cord in my neck, pressed it hard, and kept on pressing it. It hurt like hell but Little Lord Jesus

my neck, pressed it hard, and kept on pressing it. It hurt like hell but Little Lord Jesus no crying he makes. 'Did that hurt?' asked Dr Baker.
'Well, a little,' I said, not wanting to be any trouble. 'Only a little?' he said.
'Well, it hurt a lot,' I said. 'It hurt like hell.'
'Why didn't you cry?'
'I'm a grown-up.'
He began pinching the muscles in the soft part of my shoulders. I wanted to smash him in his sadistic face, put on my clothes and get the hell out of there. Instead I said 'Ow.' Then I said 'That hurts.'
'It doesn't sound as if it hurts,' he said.
'Well, it does,' I said, and managed an 'Ooo, ooo.' ...
I thought of Franchot Tone in the torture scene from *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. I managed to let out a few pitiful cries which I hoped would break Baker's heart. He began to jab at my stomach, prodding here and there to find a tight little knotted muscle ...
'Turn over,' said Baker. I did, and he started at my neck and worked downward with an unerring instinct for every tight, sore muscle. He pressed and kneaded and jabbed and if I were Franchot Tone I would have sold out the entire Thirty-first Lancers. 'Turn back over again,' said Dr Baker ... 'I want you to breathe in and out as deeply as you can and at the same time roll your eyes around without moving your head. Try to look at all four walls, one at a time, and move your eyeballs as far from side to side as possible.' I began to roll my eyes, feeling rather foolish but grateful that he was no longer tormenting my body. On and on my eyes rolled. 'Keep breathing,' said Baker. I began to feel a strange pleasurable feeling in m eyes like the sweet fuzziness that happens when you smoke a good stick of pot. The fuzziness began to spread through my face and head and then down into my body.
'All right,' said Baker. 'Now I want you to continue breathing and do a bicycle kick on the bed with your legs.' I began to raise my legs and bring them down rhythmically, striking the bed with my calves. My thighs began to ache and I wondered when he would say that I had done it long enough, but he didn't. On and on I went, until my legs were ready to drop off. Then gradually it didn't hurt anymore, and that same sweet fuzzy sensation of pleasure began to spread through my whole body, only much stronger. I now felt as if a rhythm had taken over my kicking which had nothing to do with any effort on my part. I felt transported and in the grip of something larger than me. I was breathing more deeply than I ever had before, and I felt the sensation of each breath all the way down past my lungs and into my pelvis. Gradually, I felt myself lifted right out of Baker's milk chocolate room and into the spheres. I was beating to an astral rhythm ...

On the way home, Bean describes how 'the sky over the East River ... was a deeper blue than any I had seen in my life, and there seemed to be little flickering pinpoints of light in it. I looked at the trees. They were a richer green than I had ever seen. It seemed as though all my senses were heightened. I was perceiving everything with greater clarity. I walked home feeling exhilarated and bursting with energy.'

Clearly, a half-hour of Reich's muscular therapy had produced a more dramatic effect than six months of normal psychoanalysis.

The basic principle of Reich's 'muscular therapy' is that the body has a series

of seven muscular rings or segments: ocular, oral, cervical, thoracic, diaphragmatic, abdominal and pelvic. Any or all of these rings can become ‘armoured’ by negative emotions—fear, rage, spite, inhibition. The ocular segment, which includes the top of the head, is most frequently ‘armoured’ by anxiety, the oral segment by self-pity and the desire to cry, the cervical segment (neck and back) by rage and hysteria, and so on.

Asthma—due to chest armouring—can be caused by repressed anxiety *and* rage. (Reich believed that all asthmatics have a hidden fantasy of a penis in the throat.) In the case of Orson Bean, Baker worked his way steadily down through the segments—for example, making him jam his finger down his throat and ‘gag’, without ceasing to breathe; this had the effect of causing Bean to sob violently for five minutes, suddenly recalling his mother.

Baker explains the basic principle of armouring in his book *Man in the Trap.* An amoeba, Baker says, pulsates with life and energy, reaching out pseudopodia for food. If a pin is stuck in it, it contracts, and takes a few moments before expanding again. After several attacks it becomes cautious and takes a long time to reach out. And if it is jabbed often enough, it remains contracted. It is now ‘armoured’. In human beings, a sudden violent shock can cause the ‘armouring’ first time. Baker describes the case of a woman patient with fantasies of being strangled, during which she would choke. After therapy, she began to have dim memories of a man and a woman, and of her hatred for the woman. One day when she came to see Baker she was close to death, and her breathing almost ceased. She seemed to revert to childhood and was unable to speak. Baker managed to restore her breathing by massage, and the crisis passed. Eventually, she seemed to recall a man bending over her cot and choking her, and her mother hitting her with a frying pan. She asked her mother, who admitted that she was illegitimate, and that after her birth, her mother had asked her lover to choke her —he had left her for dead. The episode of the frying pan also turned out to be an accurate memory. Baker’s muscular therapy had released these early memories —memories that had become bound up with her musculature in the form of permanent inhibitions.

What Reich had discovered was what has since become known as ‘abreaction therapy’. It is based on the fact that when we are severelv shocked, or placed under emotional strain, we often react by trying to ‘ignore’ the pain, pretending it is not there. A child sometimes reacts in the same way when he cuts or crushes a finger—afraid to look at it, *in case it is far worse than he thinks.* But then, human beings have extremely powerful and efficient mechanisms for digesting and assimilating experience; this is why we can eventually adjust to almost any shock. When an experience is ‘ignored’ or repressed, it remains undigested, and

so retains its power to cause misery and neurosis. The therapist's problem is to persuade the patient to face up to the experience, and if possible, to actually *re-live* it. There are many ways of bringing this about—for example, the English psychiatrist William Sargant prefers to use drugs. In his book *The Mind Possessed*, he describes his treatment of a shell-shocked soldier who had become partly paralysed; Sargant placed the soldier in a semi-trance with ether, then induced him to re-live the whole experience of the bombardment; the man went into a kind of emotional orgasm of terror, collapsed—and woke up feeling fine. It is clear that Baker was using a basically similar technique with the woman patient. The problem is to allow the patient's system to 'face up' to the undigested chunk of experience. The system will do the rest.

Reich's new technique was revolutionary, as well as highly controversial. In psychoanalysis, it was regarded as strictly forbidden to touch the patient; now Reich was going to the opposite extreme. But it worked spectacularly. Understandably, his Oslo students—Nic (Hoel) Waal, Ola Raknes, Tage Philipson, Harald Schjelderup—were full of enthusiasm, and were inclined to regard Reich with an emotion akin to idolatry. He occupied in Oslo the same kind of position that Freud occupied in Vienna. For the first time in years, Reich had no need to be defensive. He relaxed and expanded in this glow of admiration. Raknes, who met Reich in 1934, emphasizes his natural warmth. 'Although at that time I often felt awkward and embarrassed in the presence of remarkable persons, there was something warm and friendly about Reich that made it easy to speak to him.' His students and colleagues knew him as 'Willy'. Raknes also emphasizes Reich's brilliance as a therapist. ' ... he was naturally and absolutely concentrated on the patient. His acuity to detect the slightest movement, the lightest inflection of the voice, a passing shadow of a change in the expression, was without parallel ... And with that came a high degree of patience, or should I call it tenacity, in bringing home to the patient what he had discovered, and to make the patient experience and express what had not been discovered. Day after day, week after week, he would call the patient's attention to an attitude, a tension, or a facial expression until the patient could sense it and feel what it implies.' That is to say that, like Gurdjieff, Reich was training his patients in *self-observation*; and this undoubtedly played as important a part in the cure as the uncovering of sexual repressions.

And now, it seemed, Reich was finally in the position he had always wanted; he had become the Freud of Oslo, surrounded by admiring co-workers. The Norwegian government apparently had no objection to his political views; and in any case, Reich had now abandoned active politics. He had a laboratory at his disposal, and his admirers provided the funds for expensive apparatus. In spite of

the clashes with the Psychoanalytic Association, his reputation was expanding steadily. The days of conflict and frustration seemed to be behind him. But there remained one major obstacle to his peace of mind—his own dominant and aggressive temperament. Reich was impatient, and capable of uncontrollable bursts of temper. These alienated colleagues who might otherwise have remained devoted admirers. Otto Fenichel was a case in point. He demonstrated his loyalty and friendship for Reich by moving to Oslo with him. Fenichel was a gentle, intellectual man, of great personal charm; Nic Waal says 'he represented Austrian softness and humour in a peaceful way'. But then, he and Reich had always been colleagues and equals; now Reich's explosions, and air of confident superiority, began to get on Fenichel's nerves. It was true that Reich was now the central figure in the Norwegian psychoanalytic movement; but was it so necessary to *show* his awareness of it? Within a few months of moving to Oslo, Fenichel had been thoroughly alienated; he moved to Prague in 1935, then went to America. Ilse Reich is convinced that he was the chief source of the rumours —in America—that Reich had gone insane.

There was another reason for the increasing strain between Reich and some of his Norwegian colleagues. Many of them regarded his electrical experiments and his new bio-dynamic theories as a waste of time. A. S. Neill—who met Reich in 1937 in Oslo—was one of these, although he expressed his feelings more politely, merely claiming that he was 'unable to understand' the orgone theory. Reich was apparently able to accept Neill's scepticism—perhaps because Neill was a distinguished man in his own field of education—but he was unable to show the same patience and constraint towards less gifted colleagues. So within the first months of his sojourn in Oslo, Reich had already begun to undermine his own position by alienating some of his warmest admirers.

In Reich's defence, it should be added that he was not a man to nurse grudges. Nic Waal says: 'Although Reich sometimes exploded and was very aggressive, at times terrifying in temperament, he forgot about it quickly. His mind and creative searching did not give him time to rest upon old matters.' And during his first years in Oslo, Reich had enough new ideas and 'creative searching' to keep him permanently occupied. In February 1936, he formed the Institute for Sex-economic Life-Investigation, and the name meant precisely what it said. That is to say, Reich wanted to investigate why and how the life-force, the libido, creates living organisms. And within a few months he had made—or believed he had made—a discovery so staggering that it eclipsed everything he had done so far. In a word, Reich believed that he had solved the age-old problem about the origin of life.

Now it should be explained that there are basically two theories about the

origin of life on earth. The first is that it came from outer space in the form of drifting spores. The second is that the action of sunlight on various inorganic chemicals suspended in water caused them to build up into more complex molecules, until finally the amino-acids, the basic building blocks of life, were formed. In the nineteenth century, there was a third view, known as ‘spontaneous generation’. This stated that when certain substances decay, they spontaneously create new life forms: decaying cheese creates maggots; decaying apples create grubs. It was even believed that tadpoles and newts are created by decaying vegetable matter in ponds, and blow-flies by putrid meat. Pasteur disproved this by showing that if sterilized yeast solution is placed in a sealed and sterilized flask, no living organisms develop. The fermentation of yeast—and alcohol—is caused by tiny living animals that fall in from the air. Pasteur also placed sterilized hay and other refuse in sealed vessels, and showed that they would remain sterile—free of life—for many years; in fact, indefinitely.

Now Reich repeated this experiment. He placed dry sterile hay in sterilized water, and allowed it to soak for a day or two. When he looked at it through his microscope, he saw that it was swarming with living organisms—some of them were even visible to the eye.

Further experiments showed him that when the hay had been in the water for a short time, the cells at the edge disintegrated into tiny bladders, or vesicles, which began to float in the water. These bladders, said Reich, behaved very like living organisms; they joined together into larger groups, and sometimes split into smaller groups, which in turn would attract more vesicles around them; it looked very much like the process of birth. He became convinced that these tiny balloons *were* a kind of living organism, the basic energy-units of life. He decided to call them ‘bions’.

And bions, he said, formed not only from organic substances like grass and egg-white, but from inorganic substances like earth and coke.

What he was asserting, basically, is that life pervades the air we breathe and the space that surrounds our Earth, and that it can ‘take over’ these simple cells, turning them into living matter. He was reasserting the truth of the spontaneous generation theory.

Michael Cattier takes a derisive view of Reich’s experiments. ‘(Reich) bought meat, vegetables, eggs and milk, put them all in a saucepan, and boiled up the mixture for half an hour. Then he took a drop of this soup and placed it under a microscope. What he saw on the slide took his breath away—a myriad of globules moving in every direction. He immediately came to the conclusion that these globules were full of biological energy and that he had found what he was looking for. In fact he had simply observed an emulsion, and the vesicles were

fat particles in suspension; their agitation was due to Brownian movement [the motion of small particles of matter suspended in liquid, due to the impact of molecules].'

Even a completely uncommitted reader cannot help feeling that this sounds unlikely. Reich may have been an inexpert biologist, but he was not so stupid as to be unable to tell the difference between globules of fat and living organisms, or between the jerky billiard-ball motions of Brownian movement and the swimming of living organisms.

The natural response of most scientists was that Reich had failed to keep his 'soup' sterile, and had allowed germs to get in from the air. Reich answered this by setting up another experiment in which he deliberately contaminated his cultures with dirt taken from a vacuum cleaner. He insisted that the results bore no resemblance to the living cells in his 'bion solutions'. He convinced himself still further with another experiment; he heated coke until it was red hot, then immersed it in sterile water (or potassium chloride solution, which seemed to produce even better results). The bions formed almost immediately—there was no time for germs to get in from the air, a process that took days.

Reich discovered that the vesicles had an electrical charge, and would move either to the anode or cathode of his electrical apparatus. He further demonstrated that the 'bions' could be cultured like other minute living organisms; after heating them to 160 degrees centigrade, to 'sterilize' them, he transferred a drop of the solution into a test tube containing bouillon which had been sterilized. Within twenty-four hours, the vesicles were swimming busily in the meat-solution.

Dr Louis Lapique, of the Physiological Laboratory at the Sorbonne, examined Reich's bion solutions, and admitted that the bions seemed to be alive; moreover, they were still 'alive' a year later. But he was strongly inclined to believe that he was witnessing Brownian movement. Another researcher, Professor Roger du Teil, also studied Reich's bion solutions, and had no doubt that they contained organisms that behaved as if they were alive. Reich himself came to adopt a view that was not entirely at variance with Lapique's chemical theory. Bions, he decided, were a transitional form between living and non-living matter. They are the elemental units into which all living matter disintegrates if it is made to swell (by being immersed in liquid). The bion is basically a simple energy unit, containing a 'quantum' of 'bio-electricity'.

Early in 1937, Reich's experiments took another interesting step forward. In his coke bion cultures, he observed tiny black organisms, smaller than ordinary bions, with a rod-like shape. (Under greater magnification they were seen to be oval.) Unlike the bions, they could not be dyed with Gram's stain—a

characteristic they shared with typhoid germs. The bions in these cultures also seemed to have changed their nature, looking more like amoeba. And there was a definite antagonism between these amoeboid bions and the black rods—they could kill or immobilize them. What had happened, Reich concluded, was that the original simple bions had broken down into these two new forms. He called the amoeboid bions 'PA bions', and the black rods 'T-bacilli'. The T stood for *tod*—death, for Reich soon discovered that the T-bacilli had the property of killing mice. Moreover, a large proportion of mice injected with T-bacilli developed cancer. But when mice were first injected with the PA bions, they built up a resistance to the T-bacilli, and usually recovered. Reich became convinced that T-bacilli are always associated with cancer—probably its cause. They could also be cultured from the blood of cancer patients—an observation that Reich was later to develop into a method of testing for cancer.

The two years—1936 and 1937—during which Reich worked on his bion research were probably the happiest of his adult life. He felt that he was making discoveries that would revolutionize science; and, moreover, that he had finally laid a true and secure foundation for psychology. Kammerer was dead—driven to suicide by his scientific opponents—but Reich had vindicated Kammerer's belief in a 'specific life energy', a creative energy that plays its part in the formation of crystals as well as living organisms. This bio-electricity is the energy that fuels our emotions, said Reich, and is therefore the key to psychology as well as biology.

At this period, Reich had another reason for finding life pleasant. In 1936, Elsa Lindenberg had been invited to Dartington Hall, the experimental school in Devon, to teach ballet at the summer school; Reich, always interested in educational experiments, went with her. The school had been founded in 1925, by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst, as an 'experiment in rural industry'; by 1936 it was one of the liveliest cultural centres in Europe, full of poets, musicians, dancers, and every type of craftsman. The latter included an attractive young Norwegian textile designer named Gerd Bergersen, who was in charge of the Dartington textile mill.

Gerd Bergersen had—understandably—never heard of Reich. But she was told that the newcomers lived in Oslo and spoke some Norwegian; so one lunchtime in the canteen, she went and spoke to Reich in Norwegian. The smallish, grey-haired man looked friendly and harmless. But his instant reaction startled her. Staring directly at her, he said: 'You interest me. I want to know you.' Her own reaction was less enthusiastic. 'He puzzled me, and somehow I sensed danger.'[3]

At twenty-five, Gerd Bergersen was a young woman of independent ideas. Her upbringing had been in the usual tradition of Norwegian middle-class respectability. But an engagement to a fellow student had ended in disillusion and some bitterness. The resultant emotional problems were severe. She revolted instinctively against her fiance's attempt to treat her as a chattel, an obedient and self-effacing little *hausfrau.* By the time she found herself at Dartington, she had come to recognize that the answer lay in her own individuality and creativity. Her experience of the opposite sex had made her cautious—at Dartington she did her best to steer clear of males, and concentrate on her work. She was not wholly successful. One married man—with whom she worked—tried hard to persuade her to have an affair. Another colleague, a homosexual, was in love with the married man. She found it all emotionally exhausting, and looked forward to returning to Norway, where she had secured a job in a textile mill.

So Reich's obvious interest in her was unwelcome. She had no intention of being seduced—especially by a man who already had a mistress. But lack of encouragement made no difference to Reich. 'He took it upon himself to find out more about me, visited me at the studio workshop, and told me: "I've plenty of time. You're soon leaving Dartington Hall and returning to Norway."' She pointed out that she would be taking up an important job, and would be busy. 'You interest me greatly and I am sure I will manage to find you—I will promise you that.'

Back in Norway, difficulties arose; work in a large textile mill outside Oslo was strenuous and demanding. She was soon at cross purposes with the director, who did his best to force her to leave by being unpleasant. She began to develop ulcers, but her native stubbornness made her fight on. She decided that a change of scene might be beneficial—she had been living next to the mill—and took a flat in Oslo. Soon after she moved in there was a knock on her door; Wilhelm Reich stood there. 'I told you I'd find you. I would like to find out more about you.'

It soon became clear that Reich's motive in seeking her out was not—primarily at least—sexual. He was genuinely attracted by her independent spirit and her obvious need for creative self-expression. This attractive blonde was a latter-day Norah Helmer, determined to stay out of the doll's house and achieve some kind of individual self-fulfilment; and there was too much of the teacher in Reich to be able to resist the opportunity for guidance. But Reich himself also needed someone like Gerd Bergersen—someone completely unconnected with his laboratory work or his left-wing activities, to whom he could talk frankly about his hopes and fears. With her he could be completely natural.

For Gerd, the relationship was perhaps the most fruitful of her life. Here was

an intelligent and famous man, a doctor, who enjoyed spending hours talking to her, opening her mind to new ideas. He introduced her to left-wing intellectuals, and she took part in discussions and debates, where her sturdy common sense made a considerable impression. He made her aware of larger issues. He took her to see a performance of a play about the Reichstag Fire Trial, where right-wingers booed and threw tomatoes at the actors (she saw her own young cousin among them). They discussed Marx and Freud. And Reich was unoffended when she told him that she rejected Freud's view that sex was the most basic of all human drives; he enjoyed encouraging her to think for herself.[4] 'He accepted me as a rational human being.' Sometimes their disagreements became warm; Reich frequently told her 'You are a very good quarreller.'

Understandably, Elsa Lindenberg became alarmed at this renewed intimacy between Reich and the girl from Dartington. One day, she called on Gerd and begged her to give Reich up. She said that she—Elsa—needed Reich more than Gerd did, because she was now alone and in exile; Gerd, she said, was a stronger person than she was, and could stand on her own two feet. (This was true enough; she was now making a success of her job as a textile designer and seemed completely independent.) The Norwegian girl found this unreasonable; the sexual element in her relationship with Reich was far less important than the intellectual companionship, and the new world of ideas she was discovering through him. She told Elsa firmly that it was not for her to renounce Reich; it was for Elsa to hold his interest and respect. (In Gerd Bergersen's view, Elsa was not a sufficiently strong personality to hold Reich's interest.) In fact, Gerd had no intention of 'taking' Reich. She regarded herself as his 'safety valve', as someone he could relax with after a hard day's work. And Reich, whose dominant temper was bringing him into conflict with his co-workers, obviously found it a relief to spend his evenings in the flat of a woman who had no part in his political or scientific activities.

Reich's temper outbursts during this period were basically those of an energetic man who objects to being crossed. In an amusing passage, Ilse Reich explains that 'some of the Germans, especially those who worked in the publishing house, ran into some difficulties with Reich. Since it was *his* effort and *his* organization on which things ran, he had to have the prerogative to make final decisions. But some of these young socialists insisted on a political way of running the publishing house with equal rights for everyone. When Reich, in his rather forceful way, insisted on his rights, he was called a dictator ... ' For all his socialist views, Reich felt that a man who knows his own mind has a right to give the orders.

But all Reich's Norwegian acquaintances seem to agree that he was unusually

relaxed, good-humoured and friendly—a mood for which Gerd Bergersen was largely responsible. He enjoyed Norwegian café life, and was often to be found in the Theatre Café, opposite the National Theatre, with friends like Sigurd Hoel, Amulf Oeverland (Norway's poet laureate) and the painter Edvard Munch. He was as busy as ever, giving lectures to students, talks to workers' groups, even writing verses for the 'Red Revue', for which Elsa was doing the choreography. (Ilse Reich comments that his verses were as banal as his music.) There were also social gatherings at various homes, and camping and skiing trips in the mountains. Reich was fond of Ravel's *Bolero*, and one morning told his friends August and Lizzi Lange about a dream in which he had been riding into Berlin on a white horse, while the band played the *Bolero.* Clearly, he was feeling basically optimistic. In March 1937, his fortieth birthday was celebrated with an enormous party that went on for more than twenty-four hours.

And then, once again, Reich made the same mistake he had already made in Copenhagen: publishing his revolutionary sexual ideas for public consumption. In 1937, he expanded an article called 'The Orgasm Reflex' into a book called *Orgasm Reflex, Muscular Posture and Bodily Expression.* But Norway was still basically as puritanical as Sweden; it had not changed greatly since the days portrayed in Ibsen's plays, and to publish a book with 'orgasm' in its title was a public offence. The Norwegian press, which had so far paid little attention to the Viennese exile, became aware of his presence after a public discussion of Reich's sex economy theories at the Psychiatric Institute, when a Professor Ragnar Vogt accused Reich of distorting Malinowski's views for his own purposes. (Malinowski himself came to Reich's defence in March of the following year.) Other academics joined in the attack, this time on Reich's biological experiments; three professors from Oslo University announced to the press that Reich's claims about bions were preposterous. A Professor Thjotta of the Oslo Bacteriological Institute examined some of Reich's bion preparations and took the opportunity to announce to the press that he had found only two well-known microbes. These attacks were enough to make the Norwegian press scent a victim, a balloon that deserved puncturing. Non-Reichian psychoanalysts joined in the attack, and one of them brought out an article called 'Psychoanalytic Quackery' in January 1938. One article by a hostile psychiatrist made the extraordinary statement that one of Reich's bion experiments involved sexual intercourse between two psychopaths.

The Norwegian public, starved of scandal, was thrilled and horrified to read these insinuations. As far as they could make out, Reich's therapeutic methods were an excuse for a non-stop sexual orgy, while his new technique of 'vegetotherapy' (a name Reich had invented for his physiological-psychology)

was based on masturbation. The publication in 1938 of Reich's book *The Bion* was the signal for a campaign of derision and calumny. One attack was headed: 'God Reich Creates Life'. Articles of this kind were appearing daily by the middle of 1938; altogether, more than a hundred attacks on Reich appeared in the Norwegian press.

From the point of view of Reich's co-workers, it was the worst thing that could have happened. Reich made no reply to the attacks—except on two occasions to appeal for fairness—but he brooded grimly.

Gerd Bergersen now became aware of a new side of Reich. The attacks on him shocked and puzzled her; she knew he was not the monster—or madman—the papers made out. Again, Reich used her as a safety valve. He would ring her up when some particularly bitter attack had appeared, and go around to her flat with the newspaper under his arm, to talk until the early hours of the morning. She became aware of him purely as a human being, hunted and tormented. Reich puzzled and worried her by talking—sometimes for hours together—about the coming Nazi holocaust. (No one in Norway believed for a moment that the Nazis would attempt to conquer Europe; everyone was too convinced that war was out of the question for civilized people ...) Oddly enough, she was unaware that he was Jewish, and so failed to grasp the reason for his alarm. It was during this period that Reich began proposing to her. He said that they would find a remote cabin in the mountains, and hide there to escape the holocaust. But although she was deeply committed to Reich—even in love with him—she was unable to take the idea of marriage seriously. It was not simply that she knew he was already married (Reich made no secret about his first wife, and his love for his children). It was that she felt an instinctive desire for a husband who would be the father of her children. And 'if I married Wilhelm Reich, there would be no question of children. He would need all the concentration on himself.' As Reich's 'safety valve', she was the person he could turn to when he felt miserable and persecuted. And that, she felt—perhaps wrongly (in view of his later marriage to Ilse Ollendorff)—ruled out the possibility of children. Besides, unlike Elsa Lindenberg, she was independent. She was achieving success—and creative satisfaction—in her profession as a designer. Marrying Reich would have meant subjugating her career to his.[5]

She is frank enough to mention another reason. Her first love affair had left her with a distrust of men and of natural sexuality. She often expressed strong disagreement when Reich talked to her about Freud, and about his own belief in the fundamental importance of the force of sexuality. Yet in spite of her disagreement, she was startled by the awakening of her own physical responses. 'The passion of the body was taking charge, and there was something

frightening about this. It was destructive.' To someone of her natural independence, it must have seemed a kind of bewitchment.

So she refused, and her rejection must have struck Reich as another betrayal. His 'safety valve' had failed him, and he had his back to the wall, surrounded by enemies. All the old paranoia came flooding back. And in this case, his bitterness is understandable. He was convinced that he had made some of the most important discoveries in the history of science, and unqualified fools were screaming their contempt. In Vienna and Berlin and Copenhagen, Reich's troubles had been partly his own fault; but in Norway he had minded his own business and stuck to his work. He had not even taken part in any political activities, except for the occasional lecture. And now, suddenly, the whole country was shouting abuse. Reich was not objective enough to see that small countries like Norway develop a positive craving for scandal; it is doubtful if he had ever read Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*. He took it all personally. It was during this period that he overheard someone at a party describe Krishnamurti as Christ-like, and asked: 'If he's Christ-like, why hasn't he been murdered?' The old persecution complex was taking a new form. Now it was not merely *he* who was being vilified and slandered; it was *all* men of genius and good-will. Such a negative state of mind is hardly conducive to mental health.

Once again, it was clear that it was time to move on. And once again, one of his supporters was able to suggest a refuge. Dr Theodore P. Wolfe, of Columbia University came to Oslo to study with Reich in the midst of the newspaper scandal. Wolfe ran into difficulties with the Norwegian authorities when it was known that he was there to study with Reich. Now he procured Reich a position as Associate Professor of Medical Psychology at the New School for Social Research in New York, so that Reich was able to obtain an entry visa. When the rumour of his emigration reached the newspapers the campaign against him died down. But the damage had been done. Reich had turned against many old friends and supporters—including Elsa Lindenberg. She had become independent of Reich, working again as a ballet teacher, and Reich turned his bitterness against her. His outbreaks of temper cowed some colleagues and enraged others, including Nic Waal. He became sullen and suspicious, believing that his colleagues were all waiting to steal his ideas. Philipson, who had been responsible for bringing Reich to Norway, now accused him of being a dictator who could not bear to allow others to go their own way. (Philipson was one of those who regarded Reich's bion research as irrelevant.) Others—like Sigurd Hoel—felt that he was running away and abandoning them as soon as things became difficult. When Reich finally sailed for America in August 1939, he left little but bitterness and resentment behind him.

Yet although he was full of frustration and anger, it would be a mistake to assume, as Cattier does, that he was insane, or even hovering close to it. He was full of rancour towards his opponents, yet still capable of self-control. Before leaving Oslo, he wrote a long and sarcastic letter to his chief enemy, Johann Scharfenberg—the doctor who had accused him of experimenting on sexual psychopaths in which he thanked Scharfenberg for advancing his work by giving it so much publicity. 'A British scholar recently remarked that "the whole scientific world was now talking about bions",' he tells Scharfenberg, then goes on to denounce him as a Fascist. Yet after giving full reign to his bitterness and desire to hit back, Reich decided not to send the letter after all. 'Leave the idiot be', he scrawled on it, adding: 'But the idiots govern the world.'

Reich had an invisible ally against despair: his certainty that he had made a great scientific discovery. In this field, at least, he felt his luck was enviable ... Even in the final days before he sailed for New York, the discoveries continued. In January 1939, one of his assistants was showing a visitor the bion experiment. Instead of heating earth in a bunsen flame, she took the wrong container and used sea-sand. Left to 'disintegrate' in a solution of potassium chloride and bouillon, this soon produced a bion culture of unusual purity, groups of bions glowing an intense blue colour. It proved to be deadly to cancer cells, causing them to spin around as if shot before dying. Reich called them SAPA (sand packet) bions. And after examining them for long periods through a microscope, the eye began to swell. It seemed that the SAPA bions were giving off some powerful radiation. Placed on the skin, the culture would produce an anaemic spot. The effect was more powerful on healthy people than on those of low vitality. In a dark room, the sand glowed with blue light. It affected photographic plates and magnetized metal objects. Placed near a wart on Reich's cheek, it caused it to vanish. A pair of rubber gloves became highly charged and caused a strong deflection in an electroscope. 'There was no doubt,' says Reich, 'of the existence of an energy possessing extraordinarily high biological activity.'

When Reich sailed for America, he was convinced that his twenty-year quest was at an end. He had finally succeeded in isolating the libido—the fundamental energy of life—in the laboratory. Because it was identical with the energy of the sexual orgasm, he decided to call it 'orgone energy.'

Chapter Seven

Reich's first year in America was crowded, eventful and as usual when he found himself in a new environment triumphantly successful. Those who are interested in astrology will note that Reich was an Aries, a sign associated with the pioneer and explorer. He had the ability to make himself at home, to draw people around him, and to make his environment seethe with activity. Within days of arriving, he had begun to teach at the New School for Social Research, where his course on biological aspects of character formation was so successful that a group of his students—mostly professional people—began to meet at his home for regular seminars. The house was in Forest Hills, Long Island, and as soon as the equipment arrived from Oslo, Reich turned it into a laboratory and clinic. All he needed now was a female companion. His first wife Annie, divorced in 1933, was in New York, but Reich was never one to retrace his steps. He met Ilse Ollendorff—through his assistant Gertrude Gaasland—at the beginning of October, noted that she was bored in her office job, and married her on Christmas Day, 1939. Within a week she was working as his laboratory assistant, and taking a course in laboratory techniques at the same time.

Reich continued to see Annie, and he and Ilse took the children for Sunday drives and to local beaches. But relations with his first wife had soured; two years later, he would be convinced that it was she who caused him so much trouble with the immigration authorities. With the exception of Malinowski—who was also at the New School—he avoided colleagues from Europe; he even refused to go to chamber music concerts in case he bumped into acquaintances like Rado. He seems to have been determined to make a completely new start.

Reich had reason for optimism about the future; he was convinced that his orgone radiation was a cure for cancer—in which case, it should only be a matter of time before he achieved the kind of world recognition that he felt was his due. He had held a tube containing sea-sand bions against a wart on his cheek; the wart had disappeared. A growth on the left side of his tongue contained T-bacilli; the bions killed the bacilli and made the growth vanish. A woman suffering from pus discharges from the vagina was cured by the insertion of a test tube with SAPA bions. Orgone energy seemed to be as efficient as radium in destroying cancer, and a great deal safer, since it apparently had no destructive effects on other tissues.

A basic problem remained: how to get the radiation to the site of an internal cancer? In New York that autumn, Reich tried injecting cancerous mice with his sea-sand culture. The tumour softened and grew smaller; then grew again. More

sea-sand culture. The tumour softened and grew smaller, then grew again. More puzzling still, healthy mice also developed cancers when injected periodically with bions. The explanation was probably that healthy PA bions could break down into T-bacilli. In which case, injection was no answer.

In January 1940, Reich stumbled upon the solution; and failed to recognize it. He had constructed a kind of isolation chamber for his sea-sand culture, to try to stop its energy from dissipating. It was a box with a layer of metal enclosed in a layer of wood; there was a lens in the door for observing the bion culture inside. One day when the box was empty, and the room was in darkness, Reich observed a dim luminescence through the glass. Assuming that his chamber had been absorbing radiation from the sea-sand, Reich took it to pieces and cleaned it thoroughly. Still the dim glow was visible. He had another box made: still the radiation seemed to be present. In *The Cancer Biopathy*, Reich admits that it was unintelligent of him not to realize what was happening; he explains that the Norwegian smear campaign had eroded his self-confidence.

In July 1940, Reich and Ilse went on a camping trip through New England, using the camping equipment he had brought from Europe. A spell of wet weather led them to rent a bare log cabin by the side of Mooselookmeguntic Lake in Maine. It was here that Reich made what he later considered the greatest discovery of his life.

One clear, warm night, he was looking at the stars above the lake when he noticed that the stars directly overhead seemed to twinkle less than those on the eastern horizon, near the rising moon. The phenomenon intrigued him. The twinkling of the stars is supposed to be due to the Earth's atmosphere (in the same way, you would expect objects to twinkle—or shimmer—if seen through clear water). But surely, Reich reflected, the twinkling should be the same all over? He directed a wooden tube at the sky, and realized that it was not only the stars that were shimmering; the blue sky in between seemed to be alive. It also seemed to be crossed with threads and points of light. He inserted a magnifying glass in the tube, and it became clearer still. The explanation dawned on him. He wrote in *The Cancer Biopathy* 'It was the same fine flickering and flashing, with dots and streaks of light, that I had observed so often in my box.' He was looking at orgone energy—free orgone energy in the atmosphere. And this, he felt, explained why the stars on the horizon twinkled more than those overhead; they had more atmosphere—and therefore more orgone energy—to pierce, so to speak. It is true that the same explanation would apply if the twinkling was due to the atmosphere—especially after a hot day; but this would still not explain the flashes of light. No, the answer had to be orgone energy—a free-streaming energy that penetrates all space. This would also explain the meaning of the

luminescence in the wood and metal box; it was somehow acting as a greenhouse to capture this atmospheric orgone energy.

But if one layer of wood and metal could trap the energy, would not several layers work even better, just as a greenhouse made of several layers of glass would be hotter than an ordinary greenhouse? And so the orgone accumulator was born—the device that would eventually cost Reich his freedom.

Those who—like Martin Gardner—are inclined to dismiss Reich's discovery as self-delusion should at least do him the justice to read the relevant sections in *The Cancer Biopathy*. For this makes it clear that, delusion or not, Reich approached the problem with the objectivity of a true scientist. The first question he asked was whether the flickering was inside his own eye rather than in the atmosphere. When he put the magnifying eyepiece into his tube, it made the phenomenon more distinct; he could make out individual dots and flashes. This suggested that what he was observing was outside his own eye, since the eyepiece would hardly magnify a subjective impression. But how did he know that he was observing biological energy? Could it not be some ordinary electrical phenomenon—since we know that the air is full of static electricity? But if the phenomenon *was* biological, then it should be intensified in the area of living things. And this was just was he observed; there was a greater concentration of the energy around trees and bushes than in the 'empty' air. It was stronger over earth than over asphalt. In another attempt to determine whether the energy could be electrical, he built an 'accumulator' around a Faraday Cage—a cage of copper mesh that cannot be penetrated by any form of electrical radiation. After sitting for half an hour inside this cage, Reich's eyes adjusted so that he was able to see the blue orgone radiation. It seemed that the cage provided no obstacle to orgone energy.

But was the orgone accumulator the answer to the problem of how to administer the energy to his patients? Reich tried the experiment of placing the cancerous mice inside a small accumulator. The results were spectacular. ' ... their fur became smooth and shiny, their eyes bright, the organism as a whole, strong; the bent, contracted posture, typical of cancer mice, became straighter, and the tumours either ceased to grow or receded.' But they failed to disappear entirely. The mice's life span was increased, but they still died. Nevertheless, in December 1940, Reich built his first full-size accumulator for human beings. And he quickly observed a result that proved conclusively that *something* was happening. Within a few minutes of being in an accumulator, the temperature of a human being would rise by as much as a whole degree centigrade (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit). This could only mean that something proceeded to happen in the body of the patient—some chemical reaction, so to speak. Reich concluded that

the orgone energy was exciting the body's cells, and causing an increase in its rate of metabolism. This in itself was exciting and promising. For an increase in metabolism is the opposite of 'energy stasis'. So the orgone energy was apparently 'unfreezing' the body's vital energies. Which suggested that it might be a cure for psychological as well as physcial illness ...

In fact, experiments with cancer patients over the next few months showed remarkable results. Reich treated fifteen cases, all in advanced stages of cancer. Every one showed immediate improvement: pains decreased, general health improved. One patient developed cancer in both legs (and had already had a cancerous breast removed); within two months, these cancers had vanished, and the patient was still alive and well two years later. A patient suffering from an inoperable cancer of the oesophagus, who was unable to swallow, was soon able to eat soft food, and lived for another two years. None of the patients was permanently and totally cured; but all showed undoubted improvement; Reich was convinced that his orgone box would be capable of curing cancer if the disease could be caught at a sufficiently early stage.

Many of the cases confirmed Reich's belief that the basic problems are usually sexual. One female patient began to experience a certain genital excitement in the orgone box, and this was followed by sexual stasis (i.e. loss of feeling in the genitals). Reich concluded that the vital energies were flooding through her system, arousing sexual excitement, and that her natural response was one of fear and repression.

In fact, the greatest problem with the orgone treatment could be compared to what happens when ice melts in spring. The 'thaw' could overwhelm the patient. On the physical level, the waste matter from the dissolving cancer could overwhelm the body's waste-disposal system. The psychological problems could be almost as bad. A male patient developed pains in the pelvis that were different from the earlier pains (due to a bladder tumour). For the previous fifteen years the patient had had no sexual outlet—an abstention which Reich was convinced had caused the cancer. Now the orgone energy was dissolving the cancer, and the sexual needs reappeared as pain. Reich advised the patient to masturbate; when he did this, the pain vanished. (Reich found it incomprehensible when a medical journal, commenting on the case, took him to task for encouraging masturbation.) The woman who had developed sexual stasis died before Reich could recommend the masturbation treatment; Reich wrote: 'It seemed quite clear that the patient died because her "instinct for life" had never functioned correctly, and her vital system gave up for want of joy in life.'

Reich's account of these months of experiment and discovery hint at some of

the immense excitement felt by everyone in the laboratory. After all, if he was correct—and he had no reason to doubt it—then he had made the greatest medical discovery of modern times, a feat of scientific detection that should place him on a level with Einstein. Yet ironically, the professional people who surrounded him were incapable of grasping its significance; they were interested in psychotherapy, and Reich had gone off at a tangent into the realms of biology and physics. Ilse writes: 'I think that he felt desperately alone ... He needed to talk and I was there to listen, but I did not understand the implications of what he talked about, and neither did anyone else around him.'

This last sentence may cause some puzzlement. What was so incomprehensible about Reich's discovery of a cancer cure? Why should intelligent psychologists fail to see its significance, even if they were more interested in psychotherapy? But the point, of course, is that Reich did not consider his discovery in isolation. As far as he was concerned, it was simply a logical extension of his work with Freud. Libido-blockage caused neurosis, and he had shown that it was a specific sexual energy that was blocked. Now he was convinced that he had isolated this energy in the laboratory, and that its blockage was responsible for cancer as well as neurosis. Freud had already recognized that neurosis can cause many physical illnesses; now Reich was moving towards a new, holistic conception of medicine in which there was no clear dividing line between mental and physical illness. *This* is obviously what his colleagues found hard to take.

It also helps to explain what seems otherwise incomprehensible: why the medical world remained determinedly deaf to Reich's discoveries. It was because Reich wanted to sell his cancer cure as part of a package—a package that involved the whole 'genital theory'. This almost certainly explains the curious 'Einstein episode' that took place at this period. In December 1940, at the time he was constructing his first full-size accumulator, Reich wrote to Einstein to ask for a meeting to explain his new findings. Ronald Clark's biography of Einstein contains a brief and uncharitable account of what happened. 'This eccentric, distraught figure [Reich] seems already to have slipped down the slope towards charlatanry or madness by the time he asked Einstein to investigate his discovery of a specific biologically effective energy which behaves in many respects differently to all that is known about electromagnetic theory.' Reich first wrote to Einstein on 30 December 1940, informing him that he had been Freud's assistant at the Polyclinic in Vienna from 1922 until 1930, and was now teaching 'experimental and clinical biopsychology' in New York. Anyone other than Einstein would have been warned by the letter, which continued with the admission that he had not

reported his discovery to the Academy of Physics because of 'extremely bad experience'. But Reich added that it might possibly be used in 'the fight against the Fascist pestilence'. 'Einstein ... was the last man to resist such a bait ... '

Reich called on Einstein at his home in Mercer Street, Princeton, on 13 January 1941, and launched into a five-hour explanation of his ideas. The meeting was cordial. Einstein sat in the dark for twenty minutes, and agreed that he could then see the flickering of orgone energy in the atmosphere through the magnifying tube. When Reich told Einstein about the temperature difference caused by an accumulator within ten minutes or so, Einstein was interested, and replied that if this could be confirmed, it would certainly be a bombshell for physics. Reich finally left, promising to send Einstein an accumulator. He did this soon after, and Einstein confirmed that a thermometer inside the box registered 4 degrees centigrade when a thermometer suspended in the room outside only registered 3 degrees. But then, the air above the table top (on which the accumulator was standing) proved to be warmer than that below it, because cool air from the floor cooled the air below the table, while warm air from the ceiling warmed the air above it. Reich replied with a long letter, pointing out that he had obtained the same temperature differences in the open air, so Einstein's explanation could not be the correct one. To this Einstein failed to reply—as he failed to reply to subsequent letters. Three years later, Einstein *did* finally excuse himself, explaining that he had been too busy to give Reich's twenty-five-page letter the attention it required. Reich subsequently wrote a short book about it called *The Einstein Affair*, published by Reich's own press in 1953. By that time, Reich had reached the conclusion that Einstein's change of heart had been due to a Communist conspiracy against him—a notion that Ilse Reich admits to be almost pure imagination.

The truth is that the Einstein episode encapsulates the problems that were to dog Reich for the rest of his life—and which we have already glanced at in the Introduction. It is worth trying to pinpoint their precise nature. According to Reich's version, it is a case of one great scientist failing to acknowledge another—first of all out of laziness and indifference, then as a result of a sinister plot. This is the view accepted, for example, by David Boadella in his important study of Reich. There is a certain amount to be said for it since, as we have seen, Reich was not a crank or a madman; he had good reason for believing that his orgone energy really existed. Clark's statement that Reich had already 'slipped down the slope towards charlatanry or madness' is palpably unfair.

But if we look at the matter from Einstein's point of view, it takes on a different aspect. Einstein was a world-famous scientist—*the* most famous in the world—and as an exile from Nazism, he was the target of daily requests of all

kinds from other exiles. Clark writes: ‘During these wartime years, Einstein was to many scientists the ultimate court of appeal, and this fact drew him, the most amiable of men, into some cantankerous disputes.’ He goes on to describe one with Felix Ehrenhaft, an old acquaintance who had been forced to leave behind in Vienna a great electromagnet to which he had devoted years of his life. Ehrenhaft became increasingly irritable and assertive, ‘a capable experimenter who had gradually developed into a kind of swindler’, according to Einstein, and ‘a strongly paranoiac creature’. When Einstein disputed some of Ehrenhaft’s claims about magnetism, it brought a request to ‘repair the great injustice done to Felix Ehrenhaft by your attitude towards him and through the unfounded and defamatory reports about his discoveries which you spread ... ’ *etc.* Einstein was forced to ignore him.

When Einstein received Reich’s letter—talking about ‘bad experiences’—he must have groaned, ‘Here comes another.’ But, being a polite and helpful person, he agreed to see Reich. Ilse Reich describes how Reich came home towards midnight, bubbling with excitement. He said that the five-hour conversation with Einstein had been friendly and cordial, and that Einstein had agreed that if Reich was correct about the temperature difference, it would be a ‘bomb’. Reich was already daydreaming of working with Einstein at Princeton; as far as he could see, the battle was almost won.

We know nothing of Einstein’s inner reactions, but they are not difficult to infer. He was an overworked man who really cared for nothing but science; he wanted to be left alone to think out his ideas. His own experience with relativity had proved to him that a man with valid ideas will usually be recognized by fellow scientists—even if he has no academic qualifications—provided he goes about it in the right way. Scientists who became paranoid about opposition, and went around demanding apologies and reparation, were probably bad scientists anyway. Emotional self-discipline should be an essential part of the scientist’s equipment.

For all his genius, Reich was not a man who possessed much self-discipline or self-criticism. He was, quite simply, a man who liked his own way, and who created havoc when he didn’t get it. Ilse tells how, at about this time, Reich and his long-time assistant Gertrude Gaasland began to argue about ‘work democracy’ as they were driving back from the New School. The dispute was prolonged and became acrimonious; Gertrude Gaasland left the next day and went back to Norway. Ilse adds that because of Reich’s unforgiving attitude, she was not allowed to keep in touch with her. Reich could behave with the vindictiveness of a thoroughly spoilt child. Einstein could have accepted that assistants are allowed to have their own point of view; but for Reich, to

contradict him was a sign of a kind of criminal wrongheadedness. Again, Ilse tells how she accompanied the children—and Eva's husband—on a climb up a mountain; they came back later than expected, and Reich's fury completely spoiled what had been a delightful day. When Reich experienced an emotion, he had no interest in what other people might be feeling; they had to share his point of view.

When a man feels and behaves like this habitually, it begins to show in his face and general demeanour; no amount of charm and enthusiasm can wholly conceal it. It can be seen very plainly in most of the later photographs of Reich; and in some of the early ones too: the look of a man too involved in his own subjectivity, in his self-esteem and his need to have his own way. If this was not plain to Einstein within the first half-hour of their conversation, it must have become apparent over the remainder of the afternoon. If Reich had been sensible he would have explained his ideas in half an hour, left a small orgone box for Einstein to try out, and gone away; instead, he talked for five hours. (From what we know of Reich, it is doubtful whether Einstein said much.) The eagerness with which Einstein plunged on the temperature difference phenomenon suggests the relief of a man who is at last able to perceive something he can grasp in a sea of bewildering generalities. Being asked to sit in the dark and peer through a tube at some 'flickering' in the air must also have struck him as an unnecessary trial of his patience. At one point, he seems to have shown a flicker of humour when Reich told him that he was a psychologist as well as a physicist, and Einstein asked, 'What else do you do?' His emotion when Reich finally took his leave must have been one of immense relief. And Reich, who had never been given to paying attention to other people's feelings—in spite of his training in 'character analysis'—left in a state of effervescent optimism, which was basically as exaggerated and unreal as his more normal state of irritable suspicion.

So, in fact, Clark has a grain of truth when he talks about Reich's slide into charlatanry and madness; at least, this is undoubtedly the way it struck Einstein. We are able to take a more balanced view because we can see that Reich's orgone experiments were not the delusions of a madman; even if we are sceptical about orgone energy, we can at least agree that it deserved thorough investigation. Yet there is no point in allowing this recognition to push us too far in the other direction. Reich was a misunderstood genius, but he was not a persecuted genius. If he was persecuted at all, it was not because of his genius, but because of a determined refusal to acquire any kind of self-discipline or self-knowledge.

But what of the *objective* content of his ideas? Should this not have entitled

him to recognition—or at least, to an unprejudiced examination of his claims? Even here, the answer cannot be an unqualified affirmative; and the reason takes us to the very heart of the 'Reich problem'. In his scientific work, Reich revealed the same peculiar blind spots as in his personal life. That is to say, when he became convinced by an idea, it became a matter of personal loyalty—or prejudice; his emotional commitment to it made him incapable of looking at it objectively and, if necessary, modifying it. In a letter to Hitschmann in 1942, Reich talks about his loyalty to 'Freud's good old doctrines', as if he and Hitschmann were members of a students' guild—or political party—toasting one another in steins of beer.

We have already seen how Freud himself virtually came to abandon the sexual theory—in its most dogmatic form—in *Civilization and Its Discontents;* he did this because Reich's theory that all neurosis is genital in origin made him aware of its absurdity. Now, as his orgone research brought new insights, Reich himself was coming close to the point where he must have recognized that 'Freud's good old doctrines' were an intellectual straitjacket. Yet he was incapable of the admission that perhaps his 'genital theory' was perhaps a little *too* rigid, a little too wholesale.

The problem becomes clear if we look at Reich's development since the Freudian days. He began by believing that the 'libido', the life force, would one day be as well understood as electricity. This already smacks of reductionism—like the belief of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein that he could animate his monster with some electrical machine. Reich was inclined to treat consciousness—and its corollary, free will—as a by-product of this energy.

His first step towards pinning down the life energy involved a machine to measure skin resistance; when he discovered 'bions' in 1936, he was convinced that these were the basic units of this 'bio-electricity'. In due course, he went on to develop the orgone accumulator, which enabled him to capture this energy in its free form.

But he was still convinced that neurosis was caused by a blockage of orgasm-energy, and that a person without such a blockage is, *ipso facto*, psychologically healthy. Now he had his energy on tap, so to speak, what could he *do* with it? Open a vein and pour it in through a funnel? Develop an orgone cream that could be rubbed on the genitals? Obviously not. Reich's answer sounds anticlimactic: people can sit in the accumulator to improve their general health.

Now, at last, he is face to face with something he had avoided all his life: the recognition that psychological illness is basically psychic in nature, that its root lies in the mind, not in blocked sexual energies (which, by definition, belong to the region of the genitals). He noted, for example, that patients with low vitality

took longer to respond to the orgone energy, as if they needed to be ‘charged up’ before they were capable of response. That, of course, could be interpreted mechanistically. But then, the more ‘vital’ patients were also able to cope better with the ‘thaw’ effect produced by the orgone accumulator. If orgone energy *was* vital energy, there should be no such distinction; an increase in orgone energy should mean an increase in vitality. The same point emerges from Reich’s comment on the patient who died after experiencing sexual stasis—that her instinct for life had never functioned correctly, and that her vital system ‘gave up for want of joy in life’. Reich has recognized that there *is* another factor here: what he calls ‘joy in life’. This joy, it seems, is quite independent of the orgone energy absorbed from the accumulator; it resides in the patient’s *attitude to life.* And ‘attitude’ must be defined entirely in mental terms; it is what Husserl called an ‘intention’.

What has happened is that Reich has come very close to Frankl’s recognition that the vital factor in psychological health is *purpose.* It would be easy to write: ‘the patient died because her “instinct for life” had never functioned correctly, and her vital system gave up for want of purpose in life’. But Reich’s hand would have declined to write the word. ‘Joy in life’ can be used as a loose synonym for sexual release, ‘genital potency’; but the word ‘purpose’ remains stubbornly unreducible. To recognize the element of purpose would have been an admission that sexual blockage *is an effect, not a cause.* And for Reich, sex had to be the cause, the prime mover. Therefore he found another explanation for the anomaly; some patients, he explains, arrive with a pronounced *libido deficiency*—a convenient synonym for ‘joy in life’. This explains the difference between vital and non-vital patients. He fails to see that his explanation is circular. The libido *is* orgone energy, and this is precisely what the accumulator provides. So it should make no difference whether the patient suffers from ‘pronounced libido deficiency’.

A Reichian might object that, even if this were so, it would make no difference to the importance of Reich’s discovery of orgone energy. But this is not true. Reich’s attitude effectively blocked any further development, and left him trapped in this peculiarly illogical vicious circle.

Neurosis is due to blocked orgone energy. But can the accumulator cure neurosis? No, because it also exists on a characterological level, in the form of repressions. And the nature of these repressions? Sexual, always and invariably ... So the ‘Good old Freudian doctrine’ remained to serve as a straitjacket for the new discoveries about orgone energy. In the *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone Research*, published in the forties, the body of Reichian philosophy remains as rigid and doctrinaire as ever; there is an implication that if

you accept one part, you must accept the lot. Reich's ideas form a single corpus, like those of Karl Marx. Anyone who might feel inclined to accept the idea of muscular therapy—which worked so spectacularly for Orson Bean—is rebuked for 'wrong attitudes'. ' ... the vegetative energies are released from their anchoring in the musculature not by work on the muscular tensions, in any mechanical way, but by the systematic analysis of the character attitudes which express themselves in—or rather, are identical with—muscular attitudes which, in their totality, form the muscular armour.'[1] But in the case of Orson Bean, we have seen that 'vegetotherapy' *did* amount to 'work' on the muscles, not to character analysis. For Reich, it had become an article of dogma that psychological problems always express themselves in muscular armour, just as it was essential to Freud to believe that neurosis is always due to childhood sexual traumas. In the same way, it was essential to believe that mental health was closely connected with the sexual orgasm. When an unmarried nursery school teacher explains that she has never masturbated, although she regards herself as a happy and normal person, the standard Reichian answer came back like a packet of cigarettes from a slot machine: she must be frigid, due to repressed memories of infantile masturbation; any normal individual has the desire to masturbate if normal sexual expression is denied. If she regards herself as happy, she must he mistaken ... Reich found it impossible to accept that the sense of purpose could express itself on any level but the sexual one.

All this makes it clear why Reich continued to encounter so many difficulties in getting his discoveries taken seriously. Many psychiatrists might have found his muscular therapy useful. Many cancer specialists might have been interested to look into the orgone accumulator. Many biologist might have been intrigued by his 'bions'. But anyone who wanted to learn more about these subjects and opened a copy of the *Orgone Journal* would find them inextricably bound up with Reich's belief in the genital theory, muscular armour, emotional plague and Communist conspiracies. Reich was like some religious prophet who insists that every one of his 'revelations' is of equal value. Again and again, he challenges scientists to examine his findings without prejudice; but the whole tone of the *International Journal of Sex-Economy* seems calculated to arouse prejudice; at times it sounds like the magazine of an odd religious organization, directed specifically at the faithful. It was not necessary to be suffering from emotional plague to find the whole thing rather distasteful.

Reich repeated the mistake by setting up his own Orgone Institute Press, instead of trying to persuade some respectable New York publisher to bring out *The Function of the Orgasm* or *Character Analysis.* After his death in 1939, Freud had almost been canonized in America; as a Freud disciple, Reich would

have had no difficulty in publishing his more ‘orthodox’ works through the usual channels. Instead, his own press brought out *The Function of the Orgasm* under the title *The Discovery of the Orgone, Volume One*—the kind of miscalculation that becomes so frequent in his later life that it begins to look like a disguised suicidal urge.

Reich’s obsessive character made him increasingly difficult to deal with—the desertion of Gertrude Gaasland was only one symptom of the problem. Ilse writes: ‘Reich was a hard taskmaster ... At times I had the feeling that our whole life was ruled by the stop watch.’ The neighbours objected to the rats in Reich’s basement, so they were forced to change houses. When war broke out, in December 1941, Reich was arrested as an enemy alien and taken to Ellis Island; the reason was almost certainly his Communist past. He was released just over three weeks later, after threatening a hunger strike. In a letter to Malinowski—who had by now moved to Yale—he accuses his first wife of being behind the arrest, forgetting that his own political past was a sufficient explanation. It was shortly after this—in the spring of 1941—that Reich declined the advice of his old Vienna colleague, Dr Walter Briehl, to take the New York State medical licensing examination, which would have enabled him to practise medicine; it might have saved Reich a great deal of trouble later. Ilse Reich records that Briehl broke with Reich because of his ‘disappointment in not finding in Reich the same person he had known in Vienna’. This seems to be an admission of the deterioration which she denies elsewhere in the biography. She admits that Reich had become much more formal than in his Scandinavian days. Female assistants were always addressed as ‘Miss So and so’, by their maiden names, and the males were called by their surnames. It was Reich’s own way of armouring himself against a world that he felt increasingly hostile.

Yet in many ways, life was easier than it had ever been before. Reich might be ignored by the medical establishment, but he had plenty of pupils eager to learn about vegetotherapy, and even about the use of orgone accumulators. He was well paid, and the money was used to purchase a cabin on Mooselookmeguntic Lake, in the summer of 1941, and then, in the following year, an abandoned farm on Dodge Pond—in the same area near Rangely, Maine—which was to become his new laboratory; he called it Orgonon. Prices were reasonable; Ilse Reich mentions that they bought 280 acres of land for about $2000. In spite of his conviction that the world sets out to destroy its great men, Reich was becoming prosperous and successful.

Advances in his orgone research were slow but encouraging. In December 1943, an experiment with a photographic plate convinced Reich that orgone energy can be ‘photographed’. The plate was kept close to a bion sample for

several days, then briefly exposed to light before being developed; a black patch was visible in its centre. It seemed that orgone energy repelled light. Reich tried taking an X-ray photograph of his two hands, held a few inches apart, and it showed a foggy patch between the two palms. Reich was convinced that he could actually feel the orgone energy flowing between the hands when they were moved gently towards one another. In effect, he was rediscovering the odic force of von Reichenbach and Kilner's 'human aura'. But the thought would certainly not have given him any pleasure—he would probably have associated both of them with 'occultism'.

Yet his own conclusions were taking him steadily further away from orthodox science. The most startling of these was the result of an accidental discovery in December 1944. An earth-water solution (made by boiling earth, then filtering off the water) was left outside for three weeks in freezing weather. When it thawed, Reich noticed that it contained a number of brown flakes. He was about to throw the sample away—assuming it had been contaminated—when he decided it might be worthwhile to examine it under a microscope. What he saw excited him. The flakes were undoubtedly some form of matter, which contained clusters of bions. Reich came to the breathtaking conclusion that the bions in the earth-water had been made to 'cluster' by freezing, and in so doing had created solid matter. In short, bions had been created in the earth-water solution through the interreaction of its molecules with orgone energy, and then these bions had coagulated under the freezing process to form solid matter. He states his conclusion in a book called *Ether, God and Devil*, that 'primary matter originated in the cosmos, and the process of matter formation apparently continues uninterruptedly'. Understandably, he regarded this experiment—which he called Experiment XX—as the most crucial he ever performed. In his book on Reich, David Boadella describes how he and A. McDonald repeated the whole experiment, freezing sterile earth-water in tubes, then allowing them to thaw slowly; they also observed the 'smooth, plasmatic and well defined forms', and the clusters of bions with a blue glimmer. Boadella also mentions that the experiment was repeated by the well-known biologist Bernard Grad, who not only observed the flakes, but photographed them. If there is some fundamental error, either in Reich's postulates or in his experimental method, it is difficult to see what it is.

Ilse Reich's account of life at Orgonon makes it sound idyllic. In April 1944, their son Peter was born; Reich suddenly became fascinated by the problems of child upbringing. In the month after Peter's birth he wrote to Neill: 'I assure you that after twenty-five years of intensive and extensive psychiatric work, I am

discovering for the first time ... the real nature of the newborn baby ... I would never have guessed how little we know about newborn babies ... ' Reich believed that a child should be brought up with the maximum of love, freedom and self-determination. His ideas have since become so much a part of our culture—through the writings of child psychologists and the authors of popular books on child care—that few people are aware that Reich deserves the credit. This was an area where the influence of Freud's ideas was wholly beneficial. If neuroses can be traced back to childhood traumas, then the best way to prevent neuroses is to prevent the traumas. And since there is a flow of orgone energy between mother and child, then body contact is of prime importance in the 'prophylaxis' of traumas. The idea now sounds so obvious that it is hardly worth stating; most mothers feel instinctively that there is a flow of energy between themselves and the baby. But even as recently as 1944, Victorian ideas of child rearing were still prevalent: that babies should be allowed to cry if there is nothing obviously wrong with them, that they should be replaced in the cot or pram as soon as feeding is over, that they should receive toilet training and other forms of discipline from the earliest possible age ... Reich's ideas, developed by his students and co-workers—like Lucy Bellamy Dennison—created a quiet revolution in the field of baby care and upbringing. His work in this field may one day be regarded as his most solid and undeniable achievement.

With the end of the war in 1945, there were again contacts with the international community—particularly with old friends from Scandinavia. Reich was now forty-eight years old, and his reputation was spreading slowly but steadily. It was necessary to build a new laboratory at Orgonon to house the increasing body of students. A group had been formed in England to study Reich's work with orgone energy, and in the summer of 1946 they sent a student to work with Reich. A seminar on newborn children in the autumn of 1945 was attended by educators, social workers and paediatricians. Reich had every reason to feel pleased with the course of his life and the progress of his ideas. Yet it was in 1946 that he wrote the bad-tempered and (at times) querulous book called *Listen, Little Man!,* a tirade against the 'small men' of the world, with the clear implication that Reich was one of the great. 'After thus having driven the great man into loneliness, you forgot what you did to him. All you did was to utter other nonsense, to commit another little meanness, to administer another deep hurt. You forget. But it is of the nature of the great men not to forget, but also not to take revenge, but instead to try to understand why you act so shabbily ... ' And so on, for over a hundred pages. It is true that when Reich wrote the book, he had no thought of publication; but this is hardly relevant.[2] What is so surprising is that a man who had apparently achieved so much success and

security in his newly adopted country should feel the need to pour out so much bile. What is even more disturbing is that the book is so fundamentally aimless. Swift and Voltaire felt the same contempt for human stupidity and cruelty; but their books were deliberately *aimed*, like arrows, at their target. Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels* as a story because he wanted to lure his readers into accepting it as a harmless fable; the same is true of Voltaire's short novels like *Zadig* and *Candide.* But Reich could hardly hope for readers who would acknowledge that they were 'little men' and buy the book to see what he said about them. There are moments when Reich becomes conscious of this appalling negativity, and attempts to disguise it. 'Stop a minute, Little Man. I do not want to belittle you, I only want to show you why ... you have not been able to get freedom or hold it.' But the tone soon switches back to choleric denunciation: 'But you are a little, cowardly thief. You are clever but, being psychically constipated, you are unable to create ... '

In Reich's favour, it should be acknowledged that there is a great deal of sense in the book. 'Your Napoleon, this little man with the gold braid ... is displayed in your bookshops in large golden letters, but my Kepler, who foresaw your cosmic origin, cannot be found in any bookstore. That's why you don't get out of the morass, Little Man.' But such comments only emphasize the overall tone of negativeness. When Reich tells the Little Man passionately that 'only you yourself can be your liberator', it is suddenly very clear that he, Reich, is quite incapable of being *his* own liberator. This is not a free man. It is a man who has become the victim of all that is worst about himself: bile, envy, hatred, self-righteousness, self-pity, self-aggrandizement—all adding up to self-destructiveness.

To read *Listen, Little Man!* after the earlier books is to realize that it was a turning point in Reich's life. As long ago as 1941, he had invented the term 'emotional plague' to describe the negative, aggressive side of human nature that tries to conceal itself under various respectable disguises. At that stage, it was basically a synonym for mass hysteria, and he insisted that it had no more 'defamatory connotation' than any other form of mental illness. As time went by, it became increasingly a term of abuse, a blanket explanation of any opposition his work aroused. And although the term does not appear in *Listen, Little Man!,* it is clear that the change from the descriptive to the pejorative has taken place in Reich's mind, and that the book is really a denunciation of emotional plague. It is as if, where his mental balance was concerned, Reich had passed a point of no return. The 'yang' side of the equation—the purely personal—had finally overbalanced the 'yin', the element that Keats called negative capability. When he tells the Little Man: 'Your life will be good and secure ...

when the mood of Beethoven or Bach will be the mood of your existence', he makes us aware that *this* is what has gone wrong with his own existence: it will never again be dominated by the mood of Beethoven or Bach, only by a rankling sense of injustice and persecution. Reich himself has fallen victim to the emotional plague.

In the autumn of 1946, Ola Raknes visited Reich, and spent the month of September working at Orgonon; then he took a house close to Reich's Forest Hills laboratory on Long Island, where he lived for another three months. Apart from Neill (who was to visit Reich in the following year), Raknes was one of the few men Reich trusted and accepted without reservation. If Raknes found Reich changed since the Oslo days, he is too loyal to say so in the chapter on 'Reich as I knew him' in his book *Wilhelm Reich and Orgonomy*. What he *does* say is that Reich 'liked to trust the people he liked and, on the other [hand], was too prone to distrust them as soon as they disappointed him in any way. That is certainly one reason why so many of his pupils and even friends came to desert him ...'

It was undoubtedly Reich's increasing tendency to react with distrust and suspicion that triggered the 'persecution' that was finally to bring about his downfall.

What happened was that, sometime in the autumn of 1946, a woman telephoned Reich at his Long Island house, and told him that she was bringing him greetings from a West Coast friend. Reich invited her out to Long Island. She was a forty-year-old writer and journalist named Mildred Edie Brady, the wife of a professor of Economics at the University of California. It was while working as an industrial analyst, studying the beer industry, that Mrs Brady became interested in the subject of alcoholism, and read various books on psychoanalysis, including some of Reich's. A colleague who was suffering from terminal cancer renewed her interest in Reich's cancer therapy (which she regarded as 'crack-pot nonsense'), and this explains why she decided to get an interview with Reich.

Once in his office, she mentioned that she was a writer who was interested in his ideas, and said that she would like to write an article about him. Reich's reaction to this expression of sympathetic interest was to tell her that he made a practice of refusing interviews to writers, and that he would prefer it if she wrote nothing. Mrs Brady was understandably irritated by this high-handed attitude; she went ahead and wrote two articles anyway. Their tone was thoroughly hostile.

Reich was later to take the view that it was his own courtesy and restraint that were to blame for the attacks; he should have thrown her out the moment she

admitted to being a writer. This view has been echoed by dedicated Reichians like Jerome Greenfield (in his book *Wilhelm Reich versus the USA).* Yet it is plainly nonsensical. The two articles were not based on the 'interview' (which Reich refused to give) but on Reich's published work, available in abundance from the Orgone Institute Press. There is no reason to disbelieve Mildred Brady's assurance to Reich that she felt his work to be significant, and that this was why she wanted to write about him. It is true that she had described his cancer therapy as 'crack-pot', but she was probably ready to be enlightened and convinced. Lady journalists are usually susceptible to charm and enthusiasm. Whether Mildred Brady would have become a convinced Reichian is open to question, but at worst her criticism might have been tempered with some friendly regard, and the admission that Reich was a sincere and dedicated scientist. As it was, Reich's snub turned her into a 'woman scorned' and determined to get her own back. The article that appeared in the April 1947 issue of *Harper's* was entitled 'The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy', and it was followed up by an equally astringent piece in *The New Republic* called 'The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich'. Reich's typical—and indignant—reaction was that 'she turned her normal, natural desire into mud, which she then throws into my decent face'. He preferred to believe that it was her genital frustration, rather than his own rudeness, that provoked the hostility.

Having decided that Reich was a man who deserved taking down a peg or two, it was not difficult for Mrs Brady to work up an effective case against him. To a woman of her background and training, the whole notion of sexual freedom and orgastic potency would arouse a certain innate resistance. Even if, like many Americans, she regarded Freud as a great medical innovator, she might still feel that Reich was carrying his theories to absurd extremes—as Freud himself felt. Consequently, Reich was a sitting target for an attack that linked his theories of sexual freedom with the new post-war bohemianism of the San Francisco Bay area—the first stirring of the Beat Generation. Jerome Greenfield admits that this article is in many ways perceptive.

It was the second article that did the damage. This was a basically accurate account of Reich's career and his theory of character armour. But it contained the statement that Reich believed that his accumulator could produce orgastic potency in people who used it. In retrospect, this distortion also sounds trivial enough. Reich *did* believe that the accumulator could charge up the blood with vital energy; so it probably *would* increase most people's orgastic potency, assuming that there were no deep-seated inhibitions and repressions. But the distinction is important. Reich was not trying to hawk his orgone accumulators as a cure-all for cancer and impotence. At most, he was claiming a tonic effect.

The avalanche that followed these first two well-aimed boulders was, admittedly, a tragedy for Reich and his ideas. But it can hardly be represented as an expression of 'emotional plague'. The Norwegian debacle will bear this explanation because Oslo was basically an overgrown provincial town, whose ideas had hardly changed since the nineteenth century. But the America of 1947 could hardly be accused of nineteenth-century puritanism. The problem here was that Reich looked a little too much like that well-known American phenomenon, the Fake Messiah or Prophet—Aimee Semple Macpherson, Father Divine, Elijah Muhammed. His sexual ideas bore a remarkable resemblance to those of John Humphrey Noyes, founder of the Oneida Community. Reich had set himself up on his own estate in Maine—Mildred Brady stated he had named a town Orgonow—and published his books and the Orgone Journal on his own private press. He was surrounded by disciples who believed that his ideas would be the salvation of modern civilization. He had announced his discovery of an unknown cosmic energy, which could be captured in boxes. His sexual ideas sounded as if they were an excuse for orgies. He was an authoritarian who was intensely—neurotically—touchy about criticism. He lacked medical qualifications to practise in America, yet he was firmly convinced that his own heterodox ideas were right, and that the rest of the medical profession was hopelessly misguided. He *sounded* like a crank and a fake messiah, and it was partly his own fault for setting up an organization that looked like a crank religious movement. In short, it is unnecessary to call upon the concept of emotional plague to explain why Reich now found himself the object of widespread ridicule and hostility.

On 27 August 1947, the Food and Drug Administration sent an investigator called Charles Wood to interview Reich at Orgonon. This time, Reich was cooperative and fairly cordial; he did his best to explain his concept of orgone energy, and how the accumulator worked. Wood seemed friendly and open-minded. He went on to the nearby workshop at Oquossoc, where the accumulators were built by a girl named Clista Templeton. Reich had treated her father—a woodsman and carpenter—for cancer of the prostate in 1941, and had prolonged his life for more than two years beyond the medical prognosis. He had encouraged Templeton to build himself an accumulator which he used in his own home; the results were so satisfactory that Reich decided that this home use of accumulators should be extended. By August 1947, there were about 170 large accumulators in existence, and Reich was renting them for ten dollars a month—bringing in something in excess of $20,000 a year. The accumulators were sold for $225, a reasonable sum considering the cost of manufacture. $20,000 a year could not be regarded as an excessive profit, in view of the running costs of the two laboratories at Forest Hills and Orgonon.

For various reasons, Clista Templeton herself had ceased to be happy with the Reich organization—probably, like so many co-workers, she found Reich's despotic temper a strain. She and the FDA agent fell in love, and married three months later. The result was that the FDA gained access to a great deal of information about Orgonon and the accumulators. But none of this in any way compromised Reich, since none of his activities could be considered fraudulent or criminal.

In fact, Reich had very little to worry about. There was no way in which the FDA could stop his work with accumulators. They could not even prevent him from renting them or selling them provided he made no false claims about them. All they *could* do, if the accumulators were judged to be worthless, was to prevent him from shipping them across state lines. But again, there was nothing to prevent Reich from having them built in individual states and sold. What *could* be said, even at this early stage, was that unless Reich could succeed in proving the existence of orgone energy—or the efficacy of the accumulators—he would probably have to stop sending them across state lines. But since most of the users were in one state—New York—this should not raise any insoluble problems.

Mildred Brady's first article had aroused the suspicion that Reich was operating some kind of a sexual racket—perhaps even a vice ring. But the FDA's attempts to follow up this lead soon came to nothing. A female patient who was supposed to have been masturbated at Orgonon told the investigators that she had never been there, and the medical practitioner who had reported the story had to admit that it was only hearsay. There were plenty of psychiatrists who were willing to state their opinion that Reich's latest ideas were worthless, and that Reich himself was psychotic; but their testimony could not influence the practical course of the investigation. Nevertheless, the side effects were unpleasant. Two doctors who practised Reichian techniques were dismissed without reason from the New Jersey State Hospital, and the townspeople of Rangely became distinctly hostile to Reich and Orgonon. All this was reprehensible, but understandable. Reich claimed to be a scientist who had made an epoch-making discovery. Then why had he not done what scientists have always done: publish it to the world, and allow other scientists a chance to judge it, instead of setting up a private institute to exploit it? Reich addresses himself to this question towards the end of *The Cancer Biopathy*—written at the time the investigation was beginning—and gives an illogical and unconvincing answer: that no 'social institution' had offered to finance orgone research, while in Scandinavia he had had to cope with the irrationality of petty officials. But then, Reich could hardly be expected to give the true reason: that he was suspicious to

the point of paranoia, and unable to trust anyone.

In spite of the cloud hanging over Orgonon, its activities continued normally. The number of students continued to increase. The foundations of an observatory were laid—Reich's interest in cosmology was increasing. He purchased a Geiger counter and discovered that it was sensitive to orgone energy, although it had to be 'saturated' for some months before it would work. In the summer of 1948, an 'orgonomic convention' was held at Orgonon, attended by thirty-five doctors and educators, including Neill and Raknes. When Dr Hoppe of Israel was detained by the Immigration Service for five days, Reich reacted with fury, sending cables protesting about 'persecution' to various authorities. To a young assistant he kept repeating: 'This is research. He cures their cancers and they throw him in jail.' And, predictably, Reich addressed the conference on the subject of emotional plague. He also decided to publish *Listen, Little Man!* Significantly, he was encouraged by various followers to whom he showed it. No one seems to have had the honesty—or the sense—to advise him to put it on the fire. In due course, it was quoted—with telling effect—in Martin Gardner's attack on Reich in *Fads and Fallacies.*

Ilse Reich mentions that, in spite of the crowds at Orgonon that summer, Reich was withdrawn, taking part in few social activities. He also forbade her to go with the others to the weekly square dances in the village, claiming that too much familiarity with trainees would lead to contempt. The true reason was probably his violent and irrational jealousy—she mentions that when she came back from a trip to Europe in the previous year, Reich had subjected her to a third degree to make sure she had remained faithful, although he had had an affair in her absence.

To counter the increasing attacks from the American Psychiatric Association, a group of twenty-three Reichian doctors formed the American Association for Medical Orgonomy. In a letter to Neill, Ilse reported that Reich's books continued to sell well, and that an increasing number of young psychiatrists were attending his lectures. The attacks were depressing, yet it seemed cleaer that the enemy was failing to destroy Reich's influence and reputation. In fact, the attacks were having the opposite effect, and arousing the interest of people in search of new ideas.

With a little common sense and patience, Reich could have been certain of ultimate victory. Unfortunately, these were qualities that he had long ceased to possess.

Chapter Eight

It says a great deal for Reich's incredible capacity to spawn ideas that the last phase of his life is as fascinating and controversial as anything that had gone before.

Where Reich was concerned, the most interesting event of 1947 was not the beginning of the campaign against his work, but the discovery that a Geiger counter—a machine for detecting radiation or cosmic rays—would respond to orgone energy. This suggested that orgone energy could exert *force*, like atomic energy. But, unlike atomic energy, this was a living force—the force that is responsible for the locomotion of living organisms.

In 1947, the whole civilized world was much preoccupied with the problem of atomic energy. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had made its murderous qualities apparent. But could it also be used in the service of civilization? In 1946, the Americans proposed the creation of an international authority for the development of atomic energy, but flatly declined to destroy their own nuclear stockpile. In fact, America started an extensive testing programme of atomic weapons at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific. The Cold War began in earnest; in 1948, the Russians blockaded West Berlin; in 1949, they announce their own first successful test of an atom bomb. A few months later, in January 1950, Klaus Fuchs revealed that he had been betraying American atomic secrets to the Russians since 1945.

Most intellectuals were pessimistic about the future atomic of energy; Reich's theory of emotional plague made him more so than most. Inevitably, he found himself wondering whether, in the event of a nuclear war, orgone energy could be used to counteract radiation sickness. This is why, in mid-December 1950, he applied to the Atomic Energy Commission at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, for a small quantity of the radioactive Phosphorus-32. When this failed to arrive, he ordered two milligrammes of radium from a private laboratory; this arrived on 5 January 1951, in two small lead containers. One of these was placed in a garage on the other side of the hill, to act as a check; the other was placed in an orgone accumulator in a room that was itself an accumulator.

What Reich was hoping was that the orgone energy would neutralize the atomic radiation. The reverse happened. The Geiger counter began to register such high levels that the mechanism jammed. Yet the radium itself was not giving off more energy, for when it was tested outside its count became normal.

The laboratory workers, including Elsworth Baker, and Ilse and Eva Reich, quickly began to feel the unpleasant effects. There was a salty feeling on the

quickly began to feel the unpleasant effects. There was a salty feeling on the tongue, nausea and dizziness; some experienced hot and cold shivers, When the radium was taken outside the room, the room itself continued to register high levels of radiation.

Nevertheless, the experiment continued. Reich wanted to expose mice to the radiation, then see if they could be cured by orgone energy. The radium was placed in the orgone room for an hour every day—although no longer in its accumulator—and the mice were exposed to it. On 11 January, Ilse Reich found that most of the mice were dead. Dissection revealed that they were suffering from radiation sickness. Reich should have been warned; but he wanted to continue the tests. The following day, the radium was once again placed in the room, this time inside the accumulator. The effect was immediate. Through the windows of the room, bluish clouds could be seen; while the people outside experienced the dizziness and nausea even at a distance of ninety yards. After only half an hour, the radium was removed: but the damage had been done.

Everyone was ill. Peter Reich had to be sent away. Some female assistants felt too ill and depressed to remain at Orgonon. Eva Reich made the mistake of placing her head inside an accumulator which had been in the orgone room, and went into a semi-comatose state in which her breathing became laboured and her pulse became faint. For two hours it looked as if she might die; then she began to recover. She also had to leave.

The Oranur (Orgone anti-nuclear) experiment also produced long-term emotional depression. Since the FDA was at this time intensifying its pressure on Reich, the atmosphere at Orgonon became unbearable. Ilse became so ill at the end of March that she collapsed and had to have an operation. She blames the Oranur experiment—and its effect on Reich's moods—for her final break with Reich, which was to occur in 1954. Reich himself, who had been suffering from hypertension for the past few years, had a heart attack the following October, and was in bed for six weeks.

What, then, had happened? It seemed clear that the orgone accumulator had not increased the atomic radiation—a scientific impossibility, since radium decays at a fixed rate. Then how could Eva Reich have contracted severe radiation sickness? The logical inference was that the atomic radiation had somehow caused the orgone energy to change its nature, and become negative and dangerous—as healthy bions can deteriorate into T-bacilli. Reich labelled this negative energy DOR—'deadly orgone radiation'. It was to lead him increasingly to take the view that there is a negative principle in the universe—the equivalent of the Devil in the Christian religion. This has provided sceptics with some effective ammunition, since it seems to show that Reich was all along

a crypto-religious crank. Yet, on the basis of the Oranur experiment, it is difficult to see how Reich could have reached any other conclusion. Neither is it possible to agree with Martin Gardner that the Oranur experiment was a ‘comic opera’—with the implication that all that went wrong was due to incompetence in handling radioactive material. A half-milligramme of radium (i.e. a two-thousandth part of a gramme) cannot, under normal circumstances, cause radiation sickness at a distance of ninety yards. Even allowing that Reich and his assistants may have been as incompetent as Gilbert and Sullivan’s Sorcerer, there can still be no possible explanation of what happened in the Oranur experiment unless we accept Reich’s premise that the normal effect was somehow *amplified* beyond normal possibility.

Reich’s assumption that he had caused some kind of chain reaction seems to be supported by an item in the *New York Times* for 3 February 1951—three weeks after the experiment; it reported that there was an unusually high level of radiation in an area with a 300—to 600-mile radius, *with its centre in Rangeley.* The explanation offered is that atomic tests had taken place in Nevada in the previous week. But since these took place more than two thousand miles away from Rangeley, this seems unlikely.

Reich also observed, in the months following the experiment, that the atmosphere in the area became dull and heavy. There were immobile black clouds in the sky; the vegetation became limp; human beings and animals lost their vitality and felt tired and depressed. What had happened, Reich decided, was that the ‘deadly orgone radiation’ had affected the normal atmospheric orgone, producing a kind of spreading rot, like bacteria. The implications were alarming, suggesting that nuclear radiation may be far more dangerous than is generally realized—the danger lying not so much in the radiation itself as or the effect it produces on orgone energy. In effect—according to Reich—the interaction produces a kind of poisonous gas. This is as true of ‘the peaceful use of atomic energy’ as of atom bomb tests. It can also be produced by television sets, fluorescent lights, and ever luminous watches ...

As usual. Reich succeeded in using these negative results as the basis for further discovery. The problem was to deactivate the polluted atmosphere. His solution was the ‘cloudbuster’—his most controversial and bizarre invention.

In 1942, Reich had observed that when hollow metal tubes—presumably those used to manufacture ‘orgono-scopes’—were pointed at the surface of Mooselookmeguntic Lake, they seemed to influence the motion of the waves. He stored the observation for future reference. After the Oranur experiment, he returned to the problem. And although, as far as I know, there is no record of his reasoning, it seems to have gone something like this. What could have caused

the water to ripple when he pointed a hollow metal tube at it? Probably orgone energy. Why? Because, presumably, the metal absorbed energy from the atmosphere—the greenhouse effect—building up a kind of 'orgone pressure' in the tube. And since the tube was open at the end, the energy could stream out again. The fact that it caused ripples on water suggests that water attracted it (a notion that seems to be confirmed by an observation made by another Reichian, T. R. Constable—that when an orgone accumulator is suspended over running water, its underside develops warmth).

Reich applied these principles in constructing the 'cloudbuster'. It consisted of a whole bank of metal tubes, with one end 'earthed' to water by a steel cable. (A well at Orgonon was used for this purpose.) The tubes were mounted on a swivel and a turntable, so they could be pointed in any direction. Reich tried pointing this device at a low black cloud; within minutes it had dispersed. The inference seemed to be that the tubes set up a kind of convection current of orgone energy, flowing from the atmosphere into the water. And since, according to Reich, 'DOR' consists of stagnant energy, the orgone current acts like a breeze and disperses it. The principle, he explains, is similar to that of a lightning conductor, except that the energy is drawn piecemeal, in small amounts.

Conversely, Reich discovered, a cloud—any cloud—could be increased by pointing the cloudbuster into the clear sky somewhere near it. In this case, the orgone 'breeze' causes the cloud to attract more energy, and therefore more water vapour.

In 1953, Reich had an opportunity to prove the practical value of his invention. By early July, New England was parched after seven weeks without rain. Reich's son-in-law, Bill Moise, told a worried farmer that he knew a scientist who might be able to help. Reich was hired to produce rain on a basis of 'payment by result'. The story, as told by a reporter of the *Bangor Daily News* for 24 July 1953, is that Reich and his assistants set up the cloudbuster near the Bangor hydro-electric dam at 10.30 a.m. on 6 July—this, presumably, was so that the lake could be used as the 'earth'. By Monday evening it was drizzling, and by midnight this had turned into steady rain, which continued through the next morning. By the time the report appeared in the newspaper, Reich had already turned his attention to ending the drought over New York State. This took longer, but after four attempts, the drought ended with a freak rainstorm.

One witness of the Bangor experiment reported that the cloudbuster was able to change the wind direction. In the following year, Reich conducted his most spectacular experiment in weather control when he made an attempt to divert hurricane 'Edna', which was expected to pass over the centre of New York, then over Boston. On the evening of 9 September 1954, the radio reported that 'only a

miracle could prevent the hurricane from hitting New York'. The next day, 'New York got its miracle', and the hurricane passed fifty miles to the east.

Again, it is impossible not to feel regret that Reich's attitude to the scientific establishment prevented him from making any attempt to publicize his invention, or to have it subjected to independent testing. There are numerous accounts by Reich and his co-workers of 'weather control' by means of the 'cloudbuster', and of the dispersal of 'DOR' clouds. They sound so circumstantial that the hypothesis of self-deception becomes untenable. Moreover, David Boadella has described two sets of experiments conducted by scientists—Dr Charles Kelley and Dr Richard Blasband; both reported unequivocal success. (Kelley, who was a weather researcher for the US Air Force, was so impressed that he wrote a book entitled *A New Method of Weather Control.)* But these took place after Reich's death. If the cloudbuster was as obviously effective as Reich claims, it should have been possible to gather together a few sceptical—or even hostile—scientists to witness a demonstration. But Reich had turned his back on the 'establishment', and continued to work alone—with the predictable result that any scientists who came to hear about his results dismissed them as the delusions of a crank.

From the point of view of the biographer, the element of tragic paradox becomes steadily more pronounced in Reich's later years. It is impossible to blame the scientists for regarding him as a madman; that is clearly Reich's own fault. Yet at no point is it possible to feel that Reich simply abandoned scientific logic and allowed himself to be controlled by imagination—or wishful thinking. A book like *Ether, God and Devil* (1951) looks, at first, like a total break with his earlier psychological pragmatism. 'What now do we mean when we say "devil" as opposed to "God"? When I say "devil" I mean exactly the same thing the Christian or mystic speaks of when he describes "evil".' But in the next sentence he goes on: 'The core of the matter is the deep anxiety in the organism ... ', and it is obvious that he is still a long way from being a religious convert. In fact, *Ether, God and Devil* is basically Reich's first open repudiation of Freud. Freud had dismissed the 'oceanic feeling' of poets and mystics as some kind of 'sublimation' of the sexual instincts; Reich argues that the 'oceanic feeling' is the mystic's intuition of the great ocean of orgone energy streaming through the universe.

Reich's concept of God was basically a sense of mysterious underlying laws governing orgone energy. Christ had become Reich's favourite symbol of a completely 'unblocked' human being, the ideal non-neurotic who responds directly to the life impulses. Evil, at this stage, is not an independent force, but

merely man's capacity to repress his own vital 'streamings', and to try to impose his neuroses and repressions on other people—particularly children. *Cosmic Superimposition* (1951), written at the same time, is Reich's first—and only—attempt at a scientific cosmology based on his orgone research; its most controversial assertion is that matter can be created 'out of nothing'—or rather, out of orgone energy: again, a conclusion that Reich felt to be amply justified by 'Experiment XX'. To anyone who has followed Reich as far as *The Cancer Biopathy* of three years earlier, these books seem eminently logical and reasonable.

The Murder of Christ (1953), subtitled 'Volume One of The Emotional Plague of Mankind', is a rather more special case. This is the volume that Neill described as the most important book he had ever read; Reichians are inclined to regard it as Reich's 'Great Testament'. Non-Reichians, like myself, will see it simply as an extension of Reich's paranoia. Reich identifies himself with Christ and preaches a sermon on the various stratagems of the forces of emotional plague, with chapters on Judas Iscariot, St Paul (the man who turned Christianity into a life-hating morality) and Mocigeno, the man who betrayed Giordano Bruno to the Inquisition. This chapter—on 'The Murder of Christ in Giordano Bruno'—is a typical example of Reich's tendency to see everything in his own crudely oversimplified terms. The historical truth is that Bruno was another 'Right Man', a bitter, violent, egoist—the *Encyclopedia Britannica* speaks of his 'disdainful, boasting nature'—who taught a sinister, anti-Christian form of magic.[1] The death sentence was, even so, not inevitable; Bruno only had to recant—like Galileo—and he would have received a prison sentence; he refused to recant, and had to receive the mandatory death sentence for unrepentant heretics. Reich's picture of Bruno as a life-force mystic who was destroyed by the emotional plague has no relation to historical fact.

As to Mocigeno, there is little to be said in his favour; but he was certainly not the kind of person Reich represents, the 'nonentity' who goes around 'habitually breeding evil'. 'The pestilent killer ... murders his victim simply because he cannot stand the existence of such souls as Bruno's or Christ's ... ' Mocigeno had two reasons for handing Bruno over to the Inquisition; he was a conservative who disliked Bruno's liberalism, and he had come to hate Bruno's bullying temper. Bruno's biographer Frances Yates says that he was 'subject to pathological accesses of rage in which he said terrible things which frightened people' (i.e. made them fear his magical powers—he was at this stage practising black magic), and adds that Bruno 'seems to have given way to some of his more alarming outbursts while in Mocigeno's house'. This seems to suggest that Mocigeno's reason for betraying Bruno was not entirely a wicked man's hatred

for a saint.

But Reich was not concerned with historical accuracy. Mocigeno was a convenient symbol for emotional plague; and in due course, his name was combined with Stalin's (Djugashvili) to represent the essence of petty-minded malice—Modju.

Still, allowing for the fact that Reich identified himself with Christ, and his enemies with Modju, *The Murder of Christ* is not the product of a mind that has lost its sense of reality. What Reich is saying is what he has been repeating since *The Function of the Orgasm:* that most human evil is the result of repression. It may be an oversimplification, but it contains a nugget of truth. Reich may have more than a touch of paranoia, but he is a long way from being insane.

And this is the irony—and the tragedy—of the post-war years: that while, from his own point of view, Reich's development seemed totally rational and logical, the detached—and necessarily superficial—observer could only see increasing evidence of extravagance and disintegration. Close and faithful supporters—like Ilse Reich and Myron Sharaf—left him because they found his demands too great. The books seemed to reflect increasing delusions of grandeur. His 'scientific' discoveries became ever more preposterous—the orgone accumulator, the cloudbuster, even a motor that was supposed to work off orgone energy. (Many Reichians claim to have seen the motor operating; the driving force was an orgone accumulator, excited by a half-volt battery; it drove a 25-volt motor.) And then, in what seemed like an irrevocable step into sheer nuttiness, Reich suddenly decided that the human race—and himself in particular—was being observed by beings from outer space in flying saucers.

Reich's UFO phase began in November 1953, where someone sent him two books on Unidentified Flying Objects. Flying saucers had been in the news since 24 June 1947, when a businessman named Kenneth Arnold, flying his private aeroplane near Mount Rainier in Washington State, reported seeing nine shining discs travelling against the background of the mountain. Reports after this became so frequent that in September of that year, the American Air Force inaugurated an official project for the study of Unidentified Flying Objects—Project Blue Book under the direction of Edward J. Ruppelt. Ruppelt's team dismissed almost 75 per cent of the sightings as hoaxes exaggerations or mistakes; that still left more than 25 percent of sightings that were too well-authenticated to be dismissed or explained away. On 4 July 1947, the crew of an airliner watched nine 'flying saucers' for several minutes; in Portland, Oregon, on the same day, hundreds of people watched a dozen flying discs move across the sky; on 7 January 1948, three F.51 pursuit planes from the US Air Force base at Fort Knox chased a vast UFO that had flown above the town. As Captain

Thomas F. Mantel reported over the radio that he was going to try to get closer to the object—which he described as ‘metallic and of tremendous size’—his plane disintegrated. In spite of which, a Commission of Enquiry concluded, in December 1949, that UFOs could be dismissed as hallucinations or misinterpretations of natural phenomena. Another Commission reported—somewhat more ambiguously—in 1953 that the phenomena were not a threat to national security, but that the continual reporting of UFOs ‘does ... result in a threat to the orderly functioning of the channels of the body politic’—a suggestion that the situation needed to be ‘cooled’.

Reich had paid no attention to all the publicity about flying saucers—even when, in 1952, some visitors to Orgonon reported seeing shining objects in the sky. In the spring of 1952, he observed a black substance forming on rocks around Orgonon; it caused headaches and nausea, and when scraped off the rocks produced an unpleasant burning sensation and high blood pressure; Reich assumed it to be some kind of after-effect of the Oranur experiment. But after reading Major Donald Keyhoe’s *Flying Saucers Are Real*, Reich remembered the visitors who had reported shining objects in the previous year. He himself had heard something flash past at a great speed as he sat on the steps outside the house one night. What intrigued him was that Keyhoe said that UFOs were often surrounded by a bluish light, and moved noiselessly. To Reich, this immediately suggested orgone energy. He began examining the stars, wondering how it would be possible to tell if some of them were actually UFOs. The answer was obviously time-lapse photography. Reich tried it, and was excited when he discovered that some of the stars did *not* produce the white lines due to the earth’s motion; they simply vanished. He needed no more persuading that Orgonon was under observation from UFOs, and that they were responsible for the ‘melanor’ that was giving everybody headaches.

No doubt this conclusion was due in part to Reich’s paranoia. But it is also necessary to admit that, even if he had been completely balanced and unsuspicious, he might still have arrived at the same conclusion. For Reich’s basic philosophy—his belief that the whole universe is permeated with life energy—implied that there must be other inhabited worlds in space. Reich would have had every reason for accepting the existence of UFOs even without the very considerable body of evidence that existed in 1953. There is still a widely held theory, among ‘ufologists’, that it was the atomic explosions of the mid-forties that drew the attention of the UFOs to earth. There was therefore nothing illogical in Reich’s belief that the Oranur experiment—with its massive pollution of the Maine area—had drawn the attention of the UFOs to his own activities. When Reich’s own observation—which all his co-workers agreed to be

exceptionally keen—confirmed that there was evidence of UFO activity above Orgonon, it was natural that he should assume that he was the subject of their special attention. On 12 May 1954. Reich tried pointing the cloudbuster at a hovering point of blue light in the sky above Orgonon. It faded out, then gradually reappeared. Reich pointed it at another point of blue light hovering nearby; it also faded, then reappeared. Reich was startled and shocked. This was the first genuine evidence for the existence of UFOs. His next feeling was of alarm. What he had done was the equivalent of poking a tiger with a stick. Reich decided that, for the time being, at any rate, he would make no further move against the UFOs.

He had, in any case, plenty of other problems to occupy his mind. On 10 February 1954, after seven years of investigation, the Food and Drug Administration finally served Reich with a twenty-seven-page complaint, containing a proposed injunction against the interstate shipment of accumulators. The essence of the Complaint was that the orgone accumulator did not work —*could* not work, since orgone energy did not exist. It cited various publications by Reich to show that he believed the accumulator could cure cancer, but made no mention of the various qualifying clauses Reich himself had added in *The Cancer Biopathy*.

Dr Charles Kelley, in an article on 'The Life and Death of Wilhelm Reich', has described the Complaint as 'so vicious, so false, so twisted and sick, that it was difficult to believe it could ever be taken seriously in court'. But a study of the actual Complaint (reprinted in full in Jerome Greenfield's *Wilhelm Reich versus the USA*) hardly justifies that description. Taking into account the basic attitude of the FDA—that Reich was a crank—it is, on the whole, a fair and balanced document. Moreover, if the FDA believed that there was no such thing as orgone energy—and that therefore the accumulators were worthless—then they had no alternative than to try to prevent their use; for patients who relied on them rather than on proper medical attention were placing their lives at risk.

Reich should have been rational enough to see this, and to concede that in future the accumulators would not be shipped across state lines. Instead, he made his most appalling mistake so far—possibly the greatest single mistake of his life. Instead of appearing in court to try to try to explain his position, he wrote the court a rambling, four-page 'Response', quibbling about whether the FDA was the 'US Government', quoting Abraham Lincoln on freedom, and talking about 'conspirators whose aim is to destroy human happiness and self government'. Reich's main argument was that the court was trying to interfere with the course of scientific investigation; therefore, he said, he did not intend to appear.

Reich was missing the point. The FDA was not trying to interfere with his research; only with the sale of what they considered to be a quack remedy *across state lines* to finance that research. But the whole tone of the Response was bound to irritate even the most open-minded judge. Its last sentence: ‘ ... I submit that the case against orgonomy be taken out of court completely’, sounded like a challenge. The judge took the view that the Response was a ‘crank letter’, and the FDA seized the opportunity that Reich had offered on a plate by demanding a default injunction against him, which Judge Clifford promptly granted.

In retrospect, it is almost impossible to understand what made Reich play into the hands of his opponents. For this was not simply a question of being forbidden to ship accumulators across state lines. The sting of the Complaint was contained in its penultimate paragraph: a plea that Reich be forbidden to do ‘any act whether oral, written or otherwise’ to promote the sale of the accumulators. But the Complaint lists a dozen or so of Reich’s publications which could be regarded as ‘promotion material’. It included *The Function of the Orgasm*, *The Cancer Biopathy* and most of the later books, including *The Murder of Christ.* In effect, the FDA was asking that all these works should not be sold outside the state of Maine. And here Reich was on very firm ground indeed. The most incompetent lawyer in America would have pointed out that this was a violation of the right of freedom of speech, and that the suppression of books—except on grounds of obscenity—ran counter to the whole spirit of the American Constitution. No court would have granted such an injunction under normal circumstances, and the FDA probably took it for granted that the judge would refuse to ban Reich’s books. By writing the court a defiant ‘crank letter’, Reich took the only possible step that could have led to the suppression of some of his most important works.

The question of Reich’s motives will probably never be clear. The most obvious explanation is that his persecution mania had reached a point where he believed that the banning of his books was as likely as the banning of the accumulator. But surely any lawyer—or for that matter, any intelligent American citizen—could have told him he had a powerful case? Here the answer could be that Reich’s followers were deserting him in droves—and that those who were left accepted whatever Reich said or did without question.

There remains one other hypothesis that seems to me plausible. As long ago as 1920, Reich had identified himself with Peer Gynt: ‘It is the story of an individual who ... gets out of step with the marching column of the human herd. He is not understood. They laugh at him when he is weak; they try to destroy him when he is strong.’ Reich had written his own scenario, and the thread of ‘outsiderism’ runs throughout his life. He almost gives the impression of being

determined to be misunderstood and rejected; to be understood and accepted would embarrass him. And the later identification with Christ suggests that, unconsciously at least, he *wants* to be crucified. The root of the urge could lie in his sense of guilt about being responsible for his mother's suicide; but this 'Freudian' explanation could be too glib. It seems just as simple to say that his belief in his own genius was linked with a romantic conviction—based on self-pity—that greatness invites martyrdom. For what would Reich have done with success and world acclaim? It is impossible to imagine that haunted, suspicious face relaxing into a smile of reconciliation. If Reich had been given the Nobel Prize. his acceptance speech would have been a torrent of reproach and scorn. His unconscious mind was geared to the idea of persecution and martyrdom.

This view is supported by Reich's line of argument in the Response, his insistence that what is at issue is his right to conduct scientific research. He gives the impression of someone who is determined to stoke up a sense of injury and injustice. The underlying message seems to be 'Very well, ban my books. Make me into a martyr. You are only proving what I've said all along ... '

When Judge Clifford granted the default injunction on 19 March 1953, he was unaware that Reich had cast him in the role of Pontius Pilate.

Reich heard about the injunction three days later when his caretaker told him about local gossip; later that day, a US marshal came to Orgonon to deliver a copy of the injunction. Reich's instant reaction was rage, and the formation of a plan called OROP-EP—Orgone Operation Emotional Plague. (Reich's tendency to make use of these grotesque abbreviations is one of his most tiresome and irritating characteristics.) OROP-EP was basically a plan to prove the existence of orgone energy—and confound his enemies—by using the cloudbuster to flood the eastern states. Later that afternoon, Reich despatched a telegram to this effect to the US Weather Bureau in Washington. 'We are drawing east to west from Hancock, Maine and Rangeley, Maine, to cause storm to prove that Orgone energy does exist. Consequences of this action are all your responsibility and that of Federal Judge Clifford ... ' It included the sentence: 'We are flooding the east as you are drying out the south-west.' This expressed Reich's conviction that it was the nuclear tests in the Nevada desert that were creating DOR, which was in turn creating more desert; but it is not clear why he thought the US Weather Bureau was responsible. Jerome Greenfield remarks that in these accusations 'there is a hint of the merging of two issues that until then had been separate: [the FDA case, and] Reich's fight against the "planetary DOR emergency". This merging will become more marked in *Contact with Space* where descriptions of scientific work are often interspersed with comments on trouble with the FDA, as if there were some actual inner connection between the

two.' That is to say, Reich's persecution mania was finally beginning to reflect an element of certifiable delusion. David Boadella is inclined to agree. 'Now it is one thing to indulge far-reaching hypotheses about certain relationships, as Reich had done in *Cosmic Superimposition*, it is quite another to state as a matter of irrefutable fact that one's speculations have been proved correct ... This kind of breakdown in reasoning indicates that something in Reich's mind had "tumbled beyond retrieve ... "' He is speaking of Reich's conviction that the black substance on rocks—melanor—'stems from the Core men and their space ships'.

Yet Reich's conviction that he could control the weather seems to have been no delusion. He began pointing the cloudbuster at the sky immediately after sending the telegram to the weather bureau. A few hours later the weather bureau forecast fair to good weather for the following day. But at seven the next morning, there was an acknowledgement: 'Yesterday's forecast an error', and a prediction of light snow. Fair, sunny weather with higher temperatures was predicted for the morrow but by four that afternoon, snow was falling in Rangeley. Reich sent off a triumphant telegram: 'Snowstorm in Rangeley region as predicted' to the weather bureau, with copies to President Eisenhower and J. Edgar Hoover, as well as various newspapers. Three days later, the *Bangor Daily News* was commenting gloomily: 'US Weather Bureau forecasts fair and warmer for today, but you couldn't tell it from the snow that was pelting Bangor streets last night.' But Reich's 'demonstration' must be regarded as a failure. He had hoped to 'flood the East' but a few local snowstorms in March convinced nobody.

Reich's failure to answer the Complaint had more serious consequences than anyone had expected. The injunction not only forebade 'interstate commerce' involving orgone accumulators and 'promotion material', but also ordered the return of all accumulators 'shipped in interstate commerce', and their destruction under the supervision of the FDA. Yet even this was not necessarily as disastrous as it sounded. The wording of the injunction meant that accumulators in Maine should have been exempted. Moreover, if the accumulators 'shipped in interstate commerce' were destroyed, then the various books and other material would automatically cease to be promotion material or 'labelling'. It is hardly possible to advertise something that does not exist, since advertising is an attempt to influence prospective purchasers.

Even at this stage, then, there was room for manoeuvre. The most sensible course would have been to recall the 'interstate' accumulators, and to destroy these under the supervision of the FDA; then to point out that the books and magazines could no longer be considered as 'labelling'. Reich would then have

been free to manufacture accumulators in New York. It seems clear that the court had no real intention of trying to prevent Reich from selling his books; in October 1954, his son-in-law Bill Moise wrote a letter to the court stating that Reich had every intention of continuing to sell his books, and asking them to state if they had any objection; no reply was received.

But Reich seemed to be in the grip of some fatal laziness or indifference. When he had received the original Complaint, he had refused to allow a panel of Reichian doctors—led by Elsworth Baker—to 'intervene' in the case. ('Intervention' means that other people concerned may, in effect, insist on standing beside the defendant.) If Baker and the others had intervened and appeared at the original hearing, they might well have prevented the injunction. Instead, they attempted to intervene after the injunction, which was too late; the judge denied their right. (Jerome Greenfield states: 'the timeliness of the application is a factor'.) And even after the injunction, Reich made no attempt to carry out its instructions. A letter was prepared to advise renters that they would have to return the accumulators, but these were never sent out. All Reich did was to stop further rental of accumulators. He seems to have had no suspicion that he was placing his head on the chopping block.

It is true that Reich felt he had more important matters in hand. His experience with the cloudbuster in May 1953, when he 'extinguished' two UFOs, convinced him that the human race has another enemy beside the emotional plague. He was also convinced, by this time, that the government of the United States was taking an active—and benevolent—interest in his researches. He had written to the government to describe the Oranur experiment and its aftermath; when aeroplanes flew low over Orgonon, Reich took this to indicate that the President was aware of the importance of his work, but was not at liberty to offer open support. The persecution of the FDA was therefore of less importance than the continuation of his research into the activities of the spacemen—particularly their use of Deadly Orgone Radiation to create deserts. On Reich's instructions, Bill Moise wrote to the Air Technical Intelligence Centre at Dayton, Ohio—the site of Project Blue Book—to inform the Air Force about the 'space gun' and its effectiveness against UFOs. Moise later saw a Colonel Wertenbaker at the base, and was convinced that he had made a powerful impression. But Wertenbaker's report refers to Moise as 'this person', and says that the Air Force 'will do well to avoid any entanglements ... ' He clearly felt that Moise was just another UFO nut.

On 18 October 1954, Reich set out to drive from Maine to Arizona to undertake his most ambitious weather project so far: to prove that his cloudbuster could cause rain in a desert area. The project was called OROP

Desert, another of Reich's cryptic abbreviations, meaning Orgone Energy Operation in the Desert. Peter Reich drove ahead with Bill Moise; Reich came behind in a second car with his daughter Eva. Reich's assistant Bob McCullough also moved to Arizona with his family and the cloudbuster equipment. Ilse stayed behind; by this time she had finally separated from Reich. (She explains that this was basically due to his 'irrational accusations about my supposed infidelities', leading to an increasingly bitter relationship.)

The three-thousand-mile trip convinced Reich that America was suffering widespread attacks from DOR; everywhere he seemed to see blackened rocks, decaying vegetation, withered trees. He arrived at Tucson on 29 October 1954; Bob McCullough was already there. They quickly located a fifty-acre property, eight miles north of Tucson, which Reich christened 'Little Orgonon'. They were surrounded by desert—it had not rained in Tucson for five years. On the night they moved in—31 October—Reich observed several flying saucers, which he called Ea (for Energy alpha), hovering in the sky. The cloudbuster was put to work immediately. It proved—predictably—far more difficult to obtain results here than in New England. To begin with, the cloudbuster worked by focusing somewhere near a cloud, which would then become larger as streams of free orgone energy were drawn to it. Here, the nearest large sheet of water was the Pacific Ocean over the mountains. Nevertheless, Reich persevered; in his book, *Contact with Space* (published posthumously), he notes that by 7 November, the moisture in the atmosphere had increased five-fold, and the clouds had begun to form thickly over Little Orgonon. Then, suddenly, the clouds all vanished. What had undone their work? That night, Reich found the answer. A large luminous ball rose slowly and hovered over Mount Catalina for most of the night. It looked as if the flying saucers were actively opposing his attempts at rain making. 'There was no escape from the fact that we were at war with a power unknown to man on Earth.' He felt there could now be no doubt that the UFOs had caused all the deserts on Earth—a notion that seems to ignore such factors as natural weather conditions. At the same time, he reached a conclusion that seems altogether more interesting and relevant: that the action of the spacemen was aided by the 'emotional desert' created by man. And the emphasis Reich laid on this concept in his last year suggests that what he had in mind was not simply the emotional plague, or man's fear of his own vital forces There is an implication that the *mind* of man has some how influenced his physical environment—not simply through pollution or destruction of natural resources, but *directly*.

Throughout November and December, Reich's battles with the UFOs continued; he could feel the presence of UFOs when they 'drew' upon him—

presumably using their own equivalent of space guns to suck Reich's energy. But President Eisenhower's speech about 'atoms for peace' of 22 November convinced Reich that Eisenhower was still behind him; Reich himself had used the same phrase in his writing, and believed that Eisenhower had borrowed it from him. When an American Air Force plane circled Mount Catalina after Reich had seen a UFO there, Reich took this to be another attempt to assure him that the government knew all about DOR and Eas, and was behind him. But before dismissing Reich's talk of UFOs as a kind of Don Quixote fantasy, we should bear in mind that everyone else at Orgonon and Little Orgonon witnessed the phenomenon of the 'lights' blinking out when Reich pointed the cloudbuster at them—Peter Reich, for example, describes witnessing it in his *Book of Dreams.* Reich may have been suffering from paranoid delusions by this time—even the most staunch Reichians admit as much—but his impressions were not entirely subjective.

Early in December, Bob McCullough had an unpleasant experience of the power of DOR. As he was using a cloudbuster (there were now two) on a DOR cloud, he experienced a crippling sensation in his right leg, followed by paralysis in his right side. When he staggered away from the cloudbuster, his condition improved. But the next day, the 7th, as he was again using the cloudbuster, the paralysis came again, this time so powerfully that he had to drag himself back to his quarters. It took him two months to recover, and even then his right foot was permanently affected.

Reich decided that this 'attack' justified a further reinforcement, and asked his assistant, Dr Michael Silvert, to bring the two 'needles' of radium from Orgonon in Maine (he used them in a technique to hasten rain-making). They arrived on the morning of the 14th, towed behind an aeroplane. Later that day, according to Reich, there was another attack from the East. An immense black and purple cloud rose over Tucson, and the atmosphere became so charged with DOR that they all felt sick. 'The situation appeared threatening, bizarre and frightening,' says Reich. Several Air Force planes flew overhead, but their vapour trails dispersed quickly, a sure sign of DOR in the atmosphere. Reich ordered one space gun to sweep the sky overhead, and the other to point at the cloud of Tucson. This cloud gradually grew smaller and vanished. Finally, about an hour after the attack began, four Air Force bombers flew low over Little Orgonon, as if to congratulate him.

The whole story, recounted in *Contact with Space,* sounds like paranoid fantasy; again, it is necessary to remind ourselves that it was witnessed by everyone at Little Orgonon, and that the dispersal of the black cloud really happened. (Since Tucson was still suffering from a drought, it could not have

been a rain cloud.)

Back in Maine, the FDA were still trying to find out if Reich had complied with the court order, but experienced some difficulty, since Orgonon seemed almost deserted On 30 December 1954, Reich made another of those fateful miscalculations that would ensure his downfall when an FDA agent named Holliday called at Little Orgonon with a marshal, Reich declined to see him. He had decided that the FDA was part of a plot against him and that the injunction had been engineered by Communists. Holliday only wanted to find out whether Reich was building accumulators in Texas, and it would have been to Reich's advantage to reassure him on this point. Refusing to see him could only make the FDA more determined to 'get him'.

In January 1955, Silvert—now back in Maine—decided to send a truckload of accumulators and books by Reich to his own address in New York. This was, of course, a direct violation of the injunction, and was probably the crucial factor in sending Reich to prison.

Unaware of these ominous developments, Reich continued his cloudbusting experiments with increasing enthusiasm convinced that success was now in sight. He proved to be correct. on 13 January 1955, there was heavy rainfall in Arizona—so heavy in the Tucson area that the airport was temporarily closed. This could conceivably have been coincidence; yet it is more difficult to explain why the humidity over the desert had increased steeply since the beginning of Reich's operations—to such an extent that there was now a covering of grass in places where many people could remember nothing but desert. When, in March, Reich drove west, he found grass extending for fifty miles before the desert became bare again.

On 7 March 1955, Reich resumed his rain-making operations at Jacumba, California. Again, the results were spectacular; by 9 March, heavy rain was falling; by the 12th, bare mountain slopes were turning green. Reich was convinced that he had broken the 'DOR barrier' caused by atomic explosions and Eas, and that the life-giving cycle had again been restored to the area. Satisfied with his six months' work, he returned to Orgonon in April.

Here another type of cloud was gathering. The FDA had finally become convinced that Reich had done nothing to carry out the court order; they now applied for the initiation of proceedings for contempt of court. On 30 March, the Attorney General gave instructions for the legal documents to be prepared. But Reich continued to stonewall attempts to inspect the premises at Orgonon, and Silvert blocked the FDA's attempts to inspect his premises in New York—where the books and accumulators had been delivered. It looked, quite simply, as if Reich was defying the injunction and continuing his activities as before. On 16

June, the FDA again complained to the Attorney General about the refusal of Reich and Silvert to permit inspection or to furnish information.

Finally, officialdom lost its temper. On the same day, Judge Clifford issued an order for Reich and Silvert to appear in court to explain why legal proceedings should not be instituted against them. Reich's son-in-law Bill Moise telegraphed the judge to ask if he could see him privately; at the meeting, he asked if Reich could be excused from appearing in court on the grounds that 'he always told the truth', and that he might say something that would be 'disastrous nationally'. The judge refused. Reich and Silvert were ordered to appear in court on 26 July.

Reich became increasingly paranoid; he was convinced that the FDA were trying to find out his 'secrets'; heavy chains were put up across the entrances, and his followers were armed with rifles. Several people who strayed innocently on to Reich's land were indignant when they were shown off at gunpoint.

At the hearing on 26 July, Reich's lawyers argued that the court had no jurisdiction to order the recall and destruction of accumulators. After this, Reich spoke for half an hour about UFOs, and about the conspiracy against him. He made a thoroughly bad impression, insisting that he was a humble man, then adding that he was one of the greatest scientists alive. When he became too excited and began to shout, his own lawyers had to caution him. Altogether, it was a disastrous day. The judge ordered the defence lawyers to present their case in writing by 9 September.

At this later hearing, the FDA argued that whether or not Reich thought it was unjust, the injunction should have been obeyed anyway. They were undoubtedly right. Three days after this hearing, Reich's lawyer withdrew from the case after Reich insisted that he wanted to cross-examine witnesses personally. Not long after that, the other lawyer withdrew.

The hearings continued to drag on—10 October, 18 October, 4 November—and Reich defended himself; he signed his motions as a 'representative of the EPPO'—the Emotional Plague Prevention Office. He continued to talk about conspiracy and about the misrepresentation of his ideas. With considerable patience, the judge kept explaining that the present case had nothing to do with either of these matters: it was simply a question of whether Reich had actively disobeyed the injunction. He also pointed out that if Reich had wanted to present these arguments, he should have appeared in court to answer the original Complaint. It was the nearest he came to telling Reich that he had mishandled the whole affair from the beginning.

In late December, Reich decided to move to Washington. In the previous August, at a conference on OROP Desert, Reich had met Aurora Karrer, a biologist who lived in Washington; they formed a relationship that was to last

until Reich's death. He rented a suite in the Alban Towers Hotel, and took the pseudonym Walter Roner. Peter Reich, who was now living with his mother, spent the holidays with him there, and an increasing closeness developed between them.

The trial was postponed several times—from December to March, then to April. Reich continued to be difficult, and the trial was delayed because he insisted that the attorney had failed to sign the notice of the trial. Ilse Reich—who was also named in the indictment—checked with a lawyer, and discovered that it was customary for the US Attorney's signature to be typed, so she appeared in court, as ordered, on 30 April. Reich was not there. He had also told the judge that he would not appear for trial unless the order had the judge's personal signature. On 30 April, Reich was arrested, placed in handcuffs, and taken to Portland, Maine, where he was charged with contempt of court. Silvert and Thomas Mangravite—an associate who built accumulators in New York—were already there in handcuffs. They spent the night in jail, and were later all fined for contempt.

The trial finally began on 3 May 1956, and lasted for three days. It may have been Reich's misfortune that there was a new judge, George C. Sweeney—Judge Clifford, who had shown increasing signs of sympathy towards Reich in the previous hearings, now pleaded overwork.

Judge Sweeney was less pliable; but his impatience was directly impartially at Reich, for presenting irrelevant issues, and at the prosecution attorney, Joseph Maguire, for being long-winded. Reich continued to act as his own attorney, and showed a failure to grasp what was at issue—or a determination to introduce testimony he knew to be irrelevant. When a witness testified that he had continued to rent an orgone accumulator after the injunction, Reich asked him whether the accumulator had done him an good. The judge promptly stopped him.

In fact, the prosecution had a watertight case, and a Reich's attempts to throw a spanner in the works could have made no difference. The government could prove that Silvert had shipped accumulators across a state line and that these accumulators had subsequently been rented out in New York—and, of course, that Reich had accepted the money. Reich had no possible case. His only hope might have been to dissociate himself from Silvert's action the moment he found out about it—on his return from Arizona. The fact that he had not done so meant that he had condoned the action, even though he was unaware of it at the time.

The offence could have been mitigated if Reich had attempted to show that he started to obey the injunction—by drafting the circular letter to accumulator renters, for example—but had been prevented from going further by the non-cooperation of the FDA, who were supposed to supervise the destruction. Reich

cooperation of the FDA, who were supposed to supervise the destruction. Reich made no such attempt instead, he kept arguing that there were weighty reasons for disobeying the injunction. This was, of course, totally irrelevant. The only question at issue was whether he had obeyed—or tried to obey—the injunction. The judge made this clear in his summing up to the jury. And, inevitably the jury came back with a verdict of guilty. Reich looked stunned; he seems to have expected an acquittal.

Judgement was postponed until 25 May; then the Wilhelm Reich Foundation was ordered to pay a $10,000 fine, and Reich himself was sentenced to two years in prison. Silvert was sentenced to prison for a year and a day.

Reich decided to appeal. But meanwhile the orders of the injunction had to be carried out; in June, the FDA supervised the destruction of accumulators and copies of journals and pamphlets at Orgonon; in New York, a truck was loaded with the books and journals from the orgone Institute stockroom, and transported to the Lower Manhattan incinerator. The books included volumes that contained no reference to orgone energy, like *Character Analysis* and *The Sexual Revolution.* On 11 March 1957, Reich's appeal was denied. The appeals argued that the the original injunction contained false claims; the law ruled that even if this was so, it either had to be contested or obeyed. Reich had done neither.

The following day, Reich and Silvert entered the Danbury Federal Corrective Institution in Connecticut. The prison psychiatrist quickly diagnosed him as paranoid, and he was transferred to the Lewisburg Penitentiary, Pennsylvania, which had psychiatric facilities. The psychiatrists there decided against treatment; Reich firmly resisted the idea, and their only alternative would have been to declare him insane. They were unwilling to inflict this humiliation on a man of Reich's standing. Reich was permitted to write—he began a book called *Creation*, a kind of sequel to *Cosmic Superimposition*—and to work in the prison library.

Reich became friendly with the prison doctor, who supplied him with an oil preparation—he was suffering from a skin complaint—and who told Ilse that everyone in his office had been impressed by Reich's knowledge and unquestionable genius. 'But they all felt strange when he would look up any time a plane flew overhead and say: "There they are, watching over me, encouraging me ... "' Reich was still convinced that Eisenhower knew all about his problems, and would soon intervene; he applied for a presidential pardon, but this was turned down. Meanwhile, however, he was making a surprisingly good adjustment to being in prison. Lewisburg was noted for its relative comfort—Greenfield says it had the reputation of being a country club. The imprisonment may actually have benefited Reich's health—Ilse Reich comments that he had

begun to drink very heavily during the last years. He also seems to have derived much comfort from the thought that he was sharing the fate of Socrates, Christ, Bruno, Galileo, Savonarola, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche ...

He also seems to have undergone a kind of religious experience, writing—after he had attended some church services: 'I was deeply moved; I felt a new *universal* faith in *Life and Love ... '* (quoted from Ilse Reich's biography of Reich).

Reich was allowed three visitors; he chose his daughter Eva, his son Peter, and Aurora Karrer, whom he regarded as his fourth wife. On 1 November 1957, Aurora Karrer spent three hours with Reich; he looked ill, and told her he was experiencing the same symptoms as in October 1951—when he had had a heart attack. He had been unwilling to mention this to the prison authorities in case it delayed the parole hearing due on 5 November. Always optimistic, Reich was already making plans for spending Christmas outside prison. But on the following night—2 November—he died quietly in his sleep. The cause was heart failure—a disease Reich believed was caused by heartbreak.

Silvert was released from prison in the following December, having served nine months of his sentence. He committed suicide shortly afterwards.

Reich was buried at Orgonon, overlooking the lake. The controversies continued, but now mainly in the Reichian camp. 'There was already, before the funeral, a take over by a number of "pure Reichians" who wanted to exclude others from the funeral because Reich had not approved or completely trusted them,' records Ilse Reich, although she does not mention whether she was among those who were mistrusted.

The FDA supervised another session of book burning as late as 1960, when Mary Boyd Higgins, trustee of the Reich estate, wanted to dispose of 'banned' material that was occupying storage space and could not be sold under the terms of the injunction. But in 1961, the tide began to turn at last when Farrar, Straus & Giroux—a respectable New York publisher—reissued *The Function of the Orgasm* and *Character Analysis* in the 'banned' edition. (This could now be done legally since those named in the injunction had ceased to exist.) By the mid-sixties there were distinct signs of a Reich revival, both in Britain and America. Reich had the treble benefit of being a sexual revolutionary at a time when everyone was discussing the 'permissive society', a leftist when the younger generation was chafing against the 'establishment' and the war in Vietnam, and a believer in UFOs when the market was being flooded with books on 'the occult'.

By 1970, Reich had joined J.R.R. Tolkien, Hermann Hesse and Che Guevara

as one of the heroes and symbolic mentors of the younger generation. Not least among his qualifications for this position was the fact that he had died in a federal penitentiary, hounded by the establishment. The FDA had helped to place Reich among the ranks of revolutionary martyrs.

It would have given him grim satisfaction to know that he had had the last word.

Postscript

It was the ‘pure Reichians’ who became custodians of the official legend: Reich the visionary and prophet, who was destroyed by pigmies in the grip of the emotional plague. There was no question of insanity, or even of it being, to some extent, Reich’s own fault. But in a new edition of *Fads and Fallacies*, issued in the year of Reich’s death, Martin Gardner continued impenitently to assert the view that, with the possible exception of the early Freudian period, Reich’s work was unalloyed nonsense. The same view was supported by Reich’s biographer Michael Cattier.

Temperamentally, my sympathies are with Gardner and Cattier. Reich seems to me a thoroughly unlikeable human being. Moreover, I agree with the critics that it was not Reich’s ideas, but his paranoiac behaviour, that landed him in jail. And colleagues in the Vienna group had already noted his paranoid tendencies when he was in his twenties. It was Reich’s combination of aggression, ambition and craving for success that led to most of the rebuffs he received. It seems to me that it was this eagerness for recognition that thwarted the natural expression of his genius. By the mid-1930s, the sense of rejection had turned him into a man with an outsize chip on his shoulder; and it was this, rather than his revolutionary ideas, that caused his endless personal problems.

I must also admit to a thoroughgoing dislike of the Communist aspect of Reich’s personality. I am not now speaking of his ‘Communist phase’, which he later repudiated so violently, but of that tendency in him that made him seem, for a time, such an admirable recruit to Communism: a kind of intellectual thuggery, an ability to treat complex issues with a crude and unrepentant reductionism. It seems to me to compound the offence that he did it in the name of an idealism, a sympathy for human suffering, that was foreign to his basically self-centred personality.

Then why write a book about someone I find it so hard to like? First, because there is a kind of horrifying fascination in watching a man of Reich’s immense vitality making a series of wrong choices that bring him to disaster. But second, and more important, because I find it impossible to agree with critics who feel that he went off the rails after the discovery of the orgone. Anyone who takes the trouble to follow Reich’s development in detail quickly realizes that these critics were not in full possession of the facts. There was no sudden insane conversion to the idea of orgone energy. Reich made the discovery slowly and logically, step by step, in the most approved scientific manner. He began, as we have seen, with electrical experiments to try to determine whether the orgasm produced any

with electrical experiments to try to determine whether the orgasm produced any change in skin resistance. (Sir Almwroth Wright told him it could not be done, but here Reich's intuition proved correct.) These immensely painstaking experiments continued for two years. They led him to study protozoa, to find out whether his tension-discharge formula could be observed in simple organisms. The standard procedure for obtaining protozoa is to soak dry hay in water; it is generally accepted that the tiny organisms are formed by the interaction of the hay and free spores from the air. It was when studying this procedure that Reich first observed 'bions'. When he boiled the water—which should have destroyed all atmospheric spores—the bion activity increased. This led Reich to conclude that bions were not spores, but some semi-living organism that was formed 'spontaneously' in the hay solution. But how? His answer was logical: that the life energy must exist in a free state, but that it could somehow 'take over' and animate 'dead' cells. Hundreds of experiments were then performed to make sure that Reich was not making some absurd mistake, and allowing his samples to become contaminated from the air. Reich could have been mistaken about the bions; but it is impossible to maintain that he arrived at his conclusions through some dubious, non-scientific methods.

It was Reich's misfortune that his aggressive and paranoid personality seemed to type-cast him as a crank. It must be admitted that he fits perfectly into Martin Gardner's gallery of religious messiahs and flat-Earthers. But Reich was undoubtedly justified in feeling indignation when colleagues dismissed him as a crank, for he was a scientist by temperament and training. As it was, the genuine injustice increased the paranoia, and the paranoia had the effect of provoking further injustice. The result is that writers like Martin Gardner and Christopher Evans have no difficulty in 'proving' Reich a crank by describing his personality and quoting some of his typical utterances.

In retrospect, Reich's greatest mistake was probably to cut himself off from the scientific community. During the Norwegian period, he at least persuaded other scientists—like Roger du Teil and Louis Lapique—to check his results. But in America, where this was more essential than ever—if only because the public there is more easily impressed by scientists—he practically withdrew into solitude, working with a few chosen disciples. By behaving like the founder of some offbeat religion, he invited the kind of attacks that destroyed him.

This was Reich's tragedy; for within two decades of his death, the scientific attitude towards such matters had changed beyond recognition. In 1973, eminent scientists from twenty countries gathered in Prague for a conference on 'psychotronics'—the possibility of direct interaction between mind and inert matter—and one of those present wrote: 'Can it be that all forms of energy (from

that which moves a muscle to that which propels a rocket) ... derive from one basic energy, an energy about which we still know almost nothing?'[1] In the same paragraph, Reich is mentioned as a forerunner of the idea. There is still today probably just as little acceptance of orgone energy among the scientific community as in 1957; but the atmosphere has become altogether more open-minded and receptive. It now seems perfectly conceivable that, by the end of the century, Reich will be regarded as the paranoid genius who stumbled on an important discovery, and was ridiculed for his pains. While his own claim to belong among the prophets and visionaries will probably make no headway, it may well be conceded that he belongs in the same company as Semmelweis, Boltzmann, Mendel, and others whose discoveries failed to achieve recognition while they were alive.

The question of Reich and the Eas (or flying saucers) is a slightly different matter. Here again, we have a curious and complex phenomenon, which the sceptics prefer to dismiss by pretending that it does not exist. In the long run, their attitude may prove to be justified. But meanwhile, there is a great deal that needs to be explained. The phenomenon has been witnessed by too many people to be written off as mistaken identification, and by too many sensible and reliable people to be dismissed as hysterical hallucination. It seems clear that *something* is going on.

Neither is it true that UFO reports began to pour in only after Kenneth Arnold's original 1947 sighting; there are many others dating from earlier periods. To cite only one: Nicholas Roerich, a Russian painter and archaeologist (who collaborated with Stravinsky on *The Rite of Spring),* was on an expedition across the Himalayas in 1927; on 5 August he describes looking into the sky at an eagle, then seeing something else above it: 'We all saw, in a direction from north to south, something big and shiny reflecting the sun, like a huge oval moving at great speed ... We even had time to take our field glasses and saw quite distinctly an oval form with a shiny surface ... ' The book in which this report appears—*Altai-Himalaya*—appeared in 1930.

In spite of these circumstantial reports, Jung has suggested that UFOs may be some kind of 'psychological projection'[2]—that is, that in some way, the unconscious mind may not only be capable of creating hallucinations of UFOs, but of somehow projecting them against the sky, where they can be seen by other people; he suggests that they have some religious significance. This intriguing theory has the disadvantage of being no more nor less likely than the notion that UFOs are visitors from outer space.

Yet this notion that there may be a *mental* element involved in such phenomena is worth further study. We have already noted how Freud was alienated by Jung's belief in 'exteriorization phenomena' and, more particularly, by the explosions in a bookcase, apparently produced by Jung's unconscious mind. Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, psychical researchers have been aware that 'poltergeist' phenomena seem to be produced by the unconscious minds of human beings—usually disturbed adolescents; yet although this is now widely accepted even among the most sceptical researchers, no one has yet even suggested a plausible theory of how the mind can move physical objects. Split-brain research naturally suggests the possibility that the right rather than the left hemisphere is the source of the mystery, but this takes us no further. It seems that at the present time we lack some essential concept that would provide the key to the whole problem—as scientists before Volta and Faraday lacked the key to understand lightning.

Jung discussed another aspect of the unconscious that looks like a type of 'exteriorization phenomenon'—coincidence or 'synchronicity'. In fact, this had first been systematically described by Paul Kammerer—the biologist whose anti-Darwinian views influenced Reich—who called it 'the law of seriality'. Kammerer noted the paradox that absurd sequences of coincidence—far outside the laws of probability—nevertheless seem to be everyday occurrences. We hear an unusual name for the first time, then, over the next few hours, come across it repeatedly in completely unrelated contexts.

Peter Fairley, science editor and TV science correspondent, described in a broadcast on the BBC how he became involved in such a series of 'coincidences'. In 1965, a virus made him blind in both eyes; one day, in a state of fury and frustration, he threw down the drying-up cloth and said: 'I *must* make contact with some blind people ... ' As he said this, the telephone rang, and a total stranger asked if he would be willing to go and talk to an audience of the blind. After his sight had returned, the coincidences continued—many of them, as he emphasizes, completely meaningless and pointless. One day, driving to London, he heard a record request on the car radio by a Mrs Blakeney. He had just driven through a village called Blakeney. A few minutes later, there was a mention of another Blakeney in a totally different context. At the office, he heard the name again—this time, that of a horse running in the Derby. Although he was not a racing man, he decided that this was too good to miss; he backed the horse and it won. From then on, he says, he was able to pick winners merely by looking down a list of horses; 'Somehow the thing would be there, leaping out of the page: *that* horse is going to win ... But as soon as people started to ask me to do it for deliberate reasons, it just went. I realized that it wasn't going to

work to order, that it had to be almost subconscious or unconscious ... ' In the following year, it came back again, and he backed six winners in a row; again he was unnerved, and it went again. All this suggests that the 'foresight' was a right-brain activity, promptly suppressed by any 'left' interference.

It is not difficult to accept—at least for the sake of argument—that his right brain might have become somehow 'attuned' to the future, possibly by the powerful emotion that started the chain of coincidence. But how could it 'cause' the coincidence involving Blakeneys? What is the relation between such 'synchronicities' and 'paranormal' perception? The sensible response is to say 'None'. The fact remains that we all know certain people who seem to attract some particular kind of disaster, over and over again, almost as if the unconscious had steered straight towards it. And people who suddenly become deeply interested in a subject discover references to it all over the place, and meet total strangers in a subway who are equally interested. These kinds of 'synchronicity' we take for granted, without even attempting to explain them.

Where Reich is concerned, these speculations provide an interesting alternative to the two theories that have so far held the field: *i.e.* that he was a sublime genius, and that he was a demented crackpot. For Reich was undoubtedly the type of personality that produces 'exteriorization phenomena' and odd synchronicities. He was the kind of man who was always seething with anger resentment, jealousy; some of the photographs even have that defensive look of a tormented adolescent. Exteriorization phenomena often seem to be related to rage (for example, Jung mentions that when the explosions occurred in the bookcase, he was feeling enraged with Freud; he says the explosions were preceded by a 'glowing feeling in the diaphragm, as if it were becoming red hot) All of which suggests that the kind of extraordinary events that Reich records in *Contact with Space* may not be paranoid delusions—an interpretation rendered unlikely by the other witnesses—but some kind of 'exteriorization phenomenon' triggered by Reich's abnormally active unconscious.

The same explanation could apply to some of the experiments with orgone energy and weather control Reich's co-workers have insisted repeatedly that there was no element of self-delusion in these experiments; they all observed the phenomena. The sceptics reply that in that case, they must all have been infected by Reich's delusions. Is it not also conceivable that Reich's own weirdly active unconscious played its part in producing the phenomena on cue? For example, T. R. Constable states in *The Cosmic Pulse of Life* that clouds can be dissipated by a form of psychokinesis, a claim that has been substantiated to some extent by parapsychological research.[3] Yet it never seems to strike Constable that, in that case, the success of the cloudbuster might be due—to some extent at any rate—

to the same powers. I can never read Reich's account of his experiments in spontaneous generation of life without wondering how far his own unconscious mind was aiding and abetting the procedures. His later concept of 'the emotional desert'—the notion that violent and destructive emotions were partly responsible for the deterioration of our environment—suggests that he also began to suspect that the mind can even exert psychokinetic effects on nature.

All this is not to suggest that Reich's orgone experiments were only some more bizarre and paranormal kind of 'wishful thinking'; only that the 'discoveries' involved could be more complex and bewildering than anyone has so far realized.

There is, it seems to me, still one major problem that remains unexplained: the nature of that obscure anguish that tormented Reich all his life. Reich behaved like a man with a thorn in his side: a thorn that no one was able to reach. The behaviour that led to his downfall was paranoid—insanely defensive and suspicious. But it was also masochistic; he *brought about* his downfall as if he was his own worst enemy. Three times Reich began to be psychoanalysed; three times he broke it off without explanation. He seems to have been singularly lucky in his relations with women; we receive the impression that he was a 'good chooser', and that Annie Pink, Elsa Lindenberg and Ilse Ollendorff were all gifted with patience, understanding and the ability to adjust to Reich's unpredictable moods. Yet a point always came when Reich seemed compelled to destroy the relationship. When Ilse Reich came to England in 1953—by which time their relationship had already deteriorated badly—he wrote her letters that show that he loved and missed her. Yet he admits to a kind of fear of expressing his love: 'But this time I feel somewhat safer, although I still do not quite grasp the change ... ' The moment they were back together again, he felt the compulsion to destroy. The final relationship—with Aurora Karrer—never reached this stage, since they were together for less than two years; yet on Reich's past showing, it seems fairly certain that it would only have been a matter of time. There was an element in Reich that treated happiness with fear and suspicion, as if he felt he had no right to it.

The obvious explanation is that he was obsessed by guilt about his mother's death, and his part in 'betraying' her. But if this is the answer—and it seems to be by far the most traumatic event of his childhood—then it is complicated by his relation to his father. Normal boys usually 'identify' with their fathers; the father is their first model; he provides the basic 'self-image'. Because Reich's father was a despot, a Right Man, Reich's attitude to him seems to have been ambivalent. Ilse Reich's description of him makes him sound very like his son.

‘The father has been described as a rather brutal man, with feudal attitudes towards his fieldhands and family, given to violent temper outbursts, but very much in love with his wife and very jealous ... ’ She says that for one of the Reich brothers to tell the other ‘You behave like Father’ was close to being an insult. She adds: ‘All through his life Reich idolized his mother ... ’ But Reich not only caused his mother’s suicide; he also caused his father’s breakdown. ‘The father was so devastated by the death of the mother that only the thought of his two sons kept him from taking his own life ... ’ But he tried to contract pneumonia by standing in a pond, so that the boys would receive the insurance money. It seems, then, that the tyrant was humanized by his wife’s death, and began to show his love for his sons.

From now on, Reich showed a powerful father fixation. He seems to have been the kind of person whose friendships easily soured, who turned on those who had been close to him. Yet throughout his life he showed rigid loyalty towards Freud. After the ‘Einstein affair’, he might have been expected to turn against Einstein and to dismiss him as a time-server, a man who had become part of the establishment and so was afraid to look closely into Reich’s heterodox ideas. Again, he showed the same kind of loyalty to Einstein. Finally, when the FDA was persecuting Reich, in the name of the American government, Reich declined to believe that the government—and more particularly, President Eisenhower—could be concerned. The Response to Judge Clifford—that did all the damage—went out of its way to make the point that it was not correct to say that the American government was complaining against Reich—although it made no practical difference whatever.

So although Reich revealed a mistrustful and suspicious nature from his early days, there were certain men whom he would on no account mistrust or accuse of wishing him harm. It was as if these men had become mental landmarks, whom he could cling to in his sea of general mistrust. Again and again he became a prey to a despair and mistrust that made him believe that everyone was plotting against him; yet the mental landmarks were never touched by it; he believed to the end that Eisenhower was watching over him through the Air Force.

A Jungian might conclude that these father figures were Reich’s ‘gods’, his substitute for the God whom, as a young agnostic, he had dismissed. Freud would simply have talked about the father substitute. But in this case, since Reich and his father were so much alike, it seems reasonable to speculate that, in some strange way, these men also represented Reich’s essential self. To have turned against Freud or Einstein would have been to turn against himself, a kind of suicide. A healthy, mentally pliable man would have denounced Freud as

intellectually timid, and called Einstein an old humbug; and although neither accusation would have been true, it would have been a healthy explosion of annoyance. Reich would have been incapable of such an explosion because it would have destroyed something inside himself.

So, if this interpretation is valid, Reich's guilt about his mother was deepened and exacerbated by guilt about his father. In which case, the destruction of his own happy marriages could have been based on a feeling that *he* had no right to a happy marriage, when he had destroyed that of his parents. (Conversely, his relationship with his children seems to have been powerful and normal—particularly with his son—which is as might be expected if Reich 'identified' with his father.)

Where the development of his own ideas was concerned, Reich's loyalty to Freud was disastrous. For the heart of Freud's thinking is his doctrine of the unconscious. Reich expressed it in the Peer Gynt chapter of *The Function of the Orgasm:* 'You imagine that you can determine your actions by your own free will? Indeed not! Your conscious actions are only a drop on the surface of an ocean of unconscious processes of which you can know nothing, and besides, you would be afraid of knowing them. You pride yourself upon the "individuality of your personality'' and the "breadth of your mind"? Naive! Really, you are only the plaything of your instincts, which do with you what *they* want ... ' In short, man is 'a little worm in the stream of his own feelings'.

Yet having embraced this doctrine, Reich spent the rest of his life trying to escape from it. For by temperament, he was an optimist. Freud was willing to spend years on a case like that of the Wolf Man, then admit that the results were minimal. Reich's optimism demanded results. His first major step was to formulate the orgasm theory, according to which, the great 'stream of feelings' finds its outlet through the loins. And this, said Reich, provides the doctrine. On the contrary, it was a rigorously logical development of Freud. The next step, into revolutionary politics, could also be justified as an attempt to 'bring Freud to the masses'; in fact, it was another attempt to escape the cul de sac created by Freud's denial of the will. But here Reich was on dangerous ground; for if man is a 'worm in the stream of his feelings', a plaything of his instincts, how can he attempt to shape his own political destiny?

It is after the 'discovery of the orgone' that it becomes possible to see the precise nature of Reich's inner contradictions. Orgone energy is, according to Reich, the basic life energy. But if this is so, then the accumulator should be a universal cure, instantly increasing the vitality of anyone who sits in it. Instead, Reich observed that some patients seemed to respond instantly, while others responded slowly or not at all. This should have suggested to Reich that there is

another factor involved: the *mind* of the patient and its attitudes towards its problems: its 'joy in life' (or lack of it). In short, that mental health is not simply a matter of the patient's bank balance of psychic energy, but of how that energy is spent: that is to say, what Reich was ignoring was the *organizing principle* that decides what to do with the energy: whether to direct it towards important objectives, or to waste it in some pleasant and mindless activity; whether to use it to write a Ninth Symphony or to commit a murder; whether to fight adversity or surrender.

In short, although Reich spent his life talking about human freedom, he totally failed to grasp its fundamental role in psychology. He might conceivably have grasped the point if he had come across Professor Harold Burr's researches into the 'life field' of trees and animals. For in the mid-1930s, Burr not only showed that living things are surrounded and permeated by electrical fields—just as Reich said they were—but that the fields *organize and control* them. Burr described these fields as 'nature's jelly moulds'. According to Burr, the 'L-fields' shape matter in much the same way that a magnetic field will cause iron filings to fall into a pattern. And if a lizard loses its tail or a worm is chopped in half, the reason it can grow another half so easily is that the molecules are poured into a pre-existing electric mould.

This is what is lacking in Reich's orgone theory—the notion of organization and control. But then—if this analysis is correct—Reich would have been incapable of developing such a notion. It would have been in total contradiction to his Freudian reductionism—that is, it would have involved a repudiation of Freud. And this would have produced a psychological upheaval that might have destroyed Reich.

As it was, Reich tried to convince himself that orgone energy was the key to all problems of health—both physical and mental. After all, if orgone energy *is* life—the libido—then free will becomes irrelevant. A sick person is suffering either from stagnation, or from a kind of withdrawal of the energy (the 'shrinking' that produces cancer). And the physican's problem is to restore the flow. It was almost a mechanical problem, like servicing a robot. In effect, Reich ceased to be a psychologist after the 'discovery of the orgone'. He had banished the psyche from psychology.

And it was now, in the early 1940s, that Reich found himself in an intellectual cul de sac. This was already becoming clear to him by the time he began to write *The Cancer Biopathy*. He says: 'Additional practical experiences are needed before any conclusive observations can be made ... ' But by that time he had been experimenting with the accumulator for more than five years, and it was quite clear that it was not the universal solution he had hoped. In *Character*

Analysis (the later edition) he describes the treatment of a schizophrenic woman patient in which he used the accumulator; it went on for more than two years, and although it was finally successful, it would probably have been so if Reich had treated her with the old methods of 'character analysis'. It seemed that the accumulator could stimulate the vital powers, but could not guarantee a cure. For the cure—particularly in cases of mental illness—depended ultimately on the patient's own attitudes. Where psychotherapy was concerned, Reich was—in effect—back where he was before the 'discovery of the orgone'. And, at this point, he switched his attention conclusively from psychology, and refused to take any more patients. Instead, he turned to cosmic theorizing, and to such down-to-earth matters as weather control. For in fact, he had come to the end of the road.

It is probably a pointless exercise in speculation, but it is tempting to wonder what might have happened if Reich had not handicapped himself with the Freudian ball and chain. If, for example, instead of falling under Freud's exclusive influence, he had encountered the psychology developed by Freud's eminent French contemporary Janet. For Janet's starting point was identical with Freud's. Both had received their initial stimulus from the work of Charcot on hysteria. From that point, their paths diverged considerably.

Pierre Janet was three years Freud's junior; in 1885, when Freud was at the Salpêtrière with Charcot, Janet was a young Professor of Philosophy in Le Havre. His chief interest was in psychology, and he was considering a thesis on hallucinations. At this point, someone told him of a woman called Léonie who could be hypnotized telepathically, from a distance. Janet investigated this claim, and found it to be true; Léonie could be put into a trance at a distance, and called from her house to Janet's. What was equally curious was that Léonie possessed two totally distinct personalities. The 'everyday' Léonie was a dull peasant woman; under hypnosis she became gay and vital. This 'second' Léonie flatly denied that she was the same person as 'Léonie one', explaining that Léonie one was 'a good and stupid woman, but not me'. Another patient, Lucie, suffered from fits of terror, and also proved to contain a totally distinct secondary personality named Adrienne. A patient named Irene, at the Salpêtrière—where Janet moved in 1893—was also a dual personality; as with Freud's 'Anna O', the illness began during the lengthy nursing of a dying parent—in this case, her mother; from then on, Irene had been subject to attacks of 'somnambulism', in which she was subject to hallucinations. Janet cured her through hypnosis.

Like Freud, Janet realized that these strange manifestations revealed the presence of an 'unconscious mind' (although Janet preferred the word

‘subconscious’—which, in fact, he virtually invented). But how could a piece of consciousness become split off from the rest, and then take on a separate identity? Janet made an interesting observation that supplied part of the answer. If he spoke to a hysterical patient in a low voice—for example, commanding her to raise her arm in the air—she would obey unconsciously. When he asked her, in a normal voice, why she had raised her arm, she would look at it with bewilderment. Her ‘conscious self’ had ignored the order, concentrating on her obsessive anxieties. But beyond this conscious self, a kind of ‘penumbral’ self had responded normally.

We can begin to grasp the implications if we think of the conscious mind of a healthy person as a large, wedge-shaped fragment, rather like a segment cut out of a circular cheese. The rest of the cheese remains in ‘shadow’; it is unconscious (or subconscious). When a person becomes tense with anxiety, this wedge-shaped segment becomes even narrower; the person’s ‘field of attention’ is contracted. Yet on either side of this contracted field of attention, the rest of the wedge continues to exist in a kind of half-light. *This* is what responded to Janet’s order to raise the arm. The task of the psychotherapist is to persuade the hysteric to ‘unwind’, to relax back into the ‘wider personality’.

This image also provides an explanation of what happens in those moments of intense happiness—sudden semi-mystical experiences—when the world becomes self-evidently a richer and more fascinating place than we usually realize. This is the *opposite* of hysteria. Instead of narrowing, the personality widens; consciousness ‘relaxes’ into an area that would normally be subconscious. Yeats once used a similar image in describing what happens in such experiences:

> Something drops from eyes long blind,
> He completes his partial mind.

Ordinary consciousness is ‘partial’, like the moon in its last quarter. Yet the rest of the moon is still there, hidden in darkness. Ordinary consciousness is only a narrow sliver of this complete circle.

This is far from being a complete explanation of the phenomenon of multiple personality; but it is a step in the right direction. Janet regarded multiple personality as a special form of hysteria; it is as if the ‘penumbral’ part of the mind is tired of being denied its proper ration of consciousness, and has seized its own share by a kind of *coup d’état.* Again, such cases can best be understood if we think of the ‘total mind’ as a complete circle, and the ‘everyday self’ as a mere segment. In which case, there are presumably dozens—perhaps hundreds

—of other ‘selves’ waiting their turn to emerge, or to be integrated smoothly into consciousness through ‘widening’.

There is an important corollary to all this. The hysteric also experiences a *limitation of vital powers.* (We are all familiar with the nervous person who says: ‘No, I *can’t* do it’—then relaxes and discovers that he can.) ‘Narrowness’ not only brings a sense of separation from the outside world (schizophrenia) but also a sense of impotence. ‘Widening’ brings a sense of the richness of the universe, and also of increased powers. In such a state, nothing seems impossible.

How is this widening brought about? By what Janet called ‘psychological tension’. The mind has the power to contract, to concentrate. When this power is used negatively—in mere anxiety—the field of consciousness contracts, and the result is hysteria. When it is used positively, to grasp ‘something interesting’, the result is a widening, an expansion.

It is important to grasp the distinction between ‘psychological tension’ and mere force. A man wheeling a barrowload of stones needs force, but very little tension. A jeweller repairing a Swiss watch needs a great deal of tension, but very little force. Tension is *organized* force.

It is this vital concept of ‘creative tension’ that is missing from the psychology of Freud and Reich, with the inevitable result that they overlook the mind’s primary function: the act of choice. In ‘creative tension’, the mind’s scattered energies are drawn together and organized, and such ‘concentration’ is as much a function of the conscious will as breathing is of the lungs. (Unfortunately, it is not an automatic function, like breathing; so that human beings can cease to exercise ‘psychological tension’, and experience a kind of mental suffocation: neurosis.)

This basic function of the will could be expressed by an image of billiard balls on a tabletop. When I am tired and bored, they lie in a random pattern all over the table. The moment something captures my interest, I ‘summon’ my energies, and the balls move together. (In fact, I use the phrase ‘pulling myself together’.) When I become deeply absorbed, the balls draw together into a tight mass. At this point, I may begin to experience the ‘feedback’ effect of creative excitement, and the tension pulling the balls together may become so great that some of them move on top of others, to form a second tier. In ‘inspiration’, they may even build up into a pyramid. If I become tired, or lose my concentration, the tension vanishes, and the pyramid collapses.

Weak personalities have very little power of inducing psychological tension; their minds are almost permanently in a scattered state, at the mercy of every passing impression. (We even speak of ‘scatterbrains’.) When threatened by serious problems, their response tends to be purely defensive—a negative

tension. This is the hysterical ‘narrowing’ of personality we have been discussing. It is the opposite response that is the most fundamental expression of human freedom: to ‘pull ourselves together’, to fight back. Yet this may still have no obvious advantage; the problems may still be overwhelming. The point at which ‘fighting back’ becomes self-evidently the right decision is when psychological tension becomes *creative*—that is, when it begins to reveal new vistas of meaning which, in turn, reinforce the tension: the ‘feedback effect’. This is the point at which a man who has been struggling with some difficult task suddenly begins to feel equal to it, then actually to enjoy the struggle. His ‘personality’ has widened, giving him access to more energy.

It can be seen that this picture of the mind throws the emphasis on decision, on ‘intentionality’. It also brings a new meaning to the concept of the unconscious. This ceases to be a vast, impersonal ocean, in which man is a floating worm. The ‘worm’ (the ego) is now seen to be a segment of self-awareness—the segment I call ‘me’. But it now becomes clear that this is my mistake. This ‘identity’ can be contracted by anxiety or expanded by pleasant anticipation or creative excitement. The ‘true me’ is the *full* moon. And the ‘unconscious’ is an invisible extension of my conscious identity, a kind of immense *Lebensraum* into which the ‘I’ is free to expand—provided it has the courage and the intelligence to make the effort.

All this enables us to state precisely what is wrong with Reich’s psychology. Because his concept of the mind is basically mechanical, he leaves out the most important factor: freedom. So his concept of a healthy being is, like Freud’s, limited and static.

Now in any science but psychology, this would hardly matter. When a physicist talks about horse power, it makes no difference whether he means a living horse or a machine; all that matters is how many foot-pounds per minute are involved. A materialist who regards the human body as a machine makes as good a doctor as a Plymouth Brother who regards it as the temple of the Holy Spirit. But effective psychotherapy depends basically upon the will of the patient—upon a certain determination and optimism. The psychotherapist’s most important task is to persuade the patient to start *fighting back.* If courage could be bought in bottles, psychotherapists would be unnecessary.

Even on the physical level, we are all aware of the importance of optimism. We all know, for example, that it is possible to stop feeling sick by making a certain kind of mental effort. It involves, first of all, thinking about something else—not brooding on the feeling of nausea; then a further effort can somehow summon vitality, and lift us beyond the sickness. The same principle applies to neurosis, even if the problem is more complex. This means that anyone who can

grasp the basic principle of Janet or Frankl or Maslow—that the 'unconscious' regions of the mind contain enormous reserves of power—is in an admirable position for fighting off the invisible bacilli of neurosis. Conversely, anyone who accepts the major premise of Freud and Reich—that the unconscious is nothing more than a repository of dangerous repressions—has been robbed of his most powerful weapon against discouragement and defeat. For man is ultimately an evolutionary animal: that is, the only animal who seems to remain permanently unsatisfied. He struggles for security, for love, for respect and recognition; and even if he is fortunate enough to achieve them all, he is still unsatisfied. He seems to come closest to fulfilment in *problem-solving*; but his nature is such that he never remains satisfied with the solution of any particular problem; if he runs out of problems he will invent them. It is as if his deepest sense of purpose is geared to problem-solving—that is, to creativity. He is the only creature on earth who wants to know how the universe got here, and what man is doing in it. And this, in turn, seems to be closely connected with what goes on in his own mind; for one of the main reasons he is so obsessed by problem-solving is that when he has successfully overcome some difficult challenge, he receives a strange glimpse of unsuspected powers inside himself. And this glimpse also seems to reveal the world around him in a new light—as in some way *unknown*, as if his mind normally imposed a completely false familiarity on it. It is not even necessary to overcome problems to obtain the same tantalizing insight; it can happen on any spring morning or autumn afternoon.

The familiarity through which our minds force us to see things is undoubtedly necessary; it provides us with a basic stability. But our deepest hunger is for the strangeness that lies on the other side of this familiarity. And if we remain fundamentally optimistic and curious and *expectant*, we can keep tugging aside the curtain of familiarity and glimpsing the strangeness. Thinkers—and artists—who deaden this sense of curiosity by insisting that human life *is* as limited as it seems, are performing the worst kind of disservice to humanity.

Now as a human being, Reich possessed this curiosity and expectancy in abundance. This is the reason that 'Reichians' hold him in such high esteem. The 'elephant's child' never lost his 'satiable curtiosity'. Where sex was concerned, he was a liberator in the tradition of Blake, Whitman and Lawrence. By instinct and conviction, he was what Shaw called a 'world betterer'. In *Cosmic Superimposition* he even emerges as a kind of mystic. Yet this liberator and visionary tied himself into a strait jacket of old-fashioned nineteenth-century materialism that prevented him developing his instinctive insights. And since, with German thoroughness, he connected all his ideas together into a 'system', it is difficult to take what is valuable and reject the rest.

The effort is nevertheless worth making. For although Reich's thinking was limited by his Freudian premises, his intuitions can leap out like flashes of lightning. This can be seen, for example, in the remarkable concluding pages of *Cosmic Superimposition*, where he drops the role of the scientist and takes on that of the visionary. Like Blake, he is attempting to explain just what went wrong with human beings, searching for an explanation of the 'Fall'. 'Before there was any life, there was the streaming of cosmic orgone energy. When climatic conditions were sufficiently developed on the planet, life began to appear, most likely in the form of primitive plasmatic flakes ... From these flakes, single-cell organisms developed over the eons. Now cosmic energy was flowing not only in the vast galactic spaces but also in tiny bits of membranous matter ... ' And so life on Earth began its long, slow struggle. Finally, man developed. And little by little, 'man slowly began to reason *beyond* his strong orgonotic contact and harmony with nature ... ' But then man turned reason in upon himself; he became self-conscious. And so the Fall occurred. ' ... *in attempting to understand himself and the streaming of his own energy, man interfered with it, and in doing so, began to armour, and thus to deviate from nature.* The first split into a mystical alienation from himself, his core, and a mechanical order of existence instead of the organic, involuntary, bio-energetic self-regulation, followed with compulsive force.'

And now follows a passage which reveals Reich plumbing new depths of insight:

> The fright that still overcomes man in our time when he thinks about himself; the general reluctance to think at all; the whole function of repression of emotional functions of the self; the powerful force with which man resists knowledge about himself; the fact that for millennia he investigated the stars but not his own emotions; the panic that grips the witness of orgonomic investigations at the core of man's existence; the fervent ardour with which every religion defends the unreachability and unknowability of God, which clearly represents nature *within* man—all these and many other facts speak a clear language regarding the terror that is connected with the deep experience of the self.

And here, suddenly, Reich has formulated a new concept of evolutionary purpose: not merely to get 'back to nature', but to explore the depths of his own being. Already, some men have learned to do this. 'And the few who, far from being frightened, enjoy submerging in their innermost selves are the great artists, poets, scientists and philosophers who create from the depths of their free-flowing contact with nature inside and outside themselves; in higher, abstract mathematics no less than in poetry or music.' Are these few men, these 'outsiders'—Reich asks—the exception to the rule? Or are they the norm from

which the rest of the human race has deviated? If, in fact, the majority is 'the exception', then 'it would become possible, by the most strenuous effort ever made in the history of man, to adjust the majority to the flow of natural processes'.

This, Reich firmly believes, will come about as the human race gradually absorbs the discovery of 'cosmic orgone energy'. The 'armoured' majority will fight against it bitterly; but then, fighting is in itself a method of acknowledgement, and slowly, 'the hardest, toughest and cruellest character structure will be forced to make contact with the basic fact of the existence of a life energy ... ' And so the conclusion will not be a simple 'return to nature', but a man who possesses both 'naturalness' *and* self-awareness.

When this happens, says Reich, the politicians will realize that man is far more than a political animal; religion will revise its foundations and recognize that the god-like lies *within* man.

'In this manner, the blocking of natural contact with the self and the surrounding world will slowly, possibly over several centuries, diminish, and finally ... will complete vanish from the surface of the earth.'

And the last sentence of the book is almost unrecognizable as coming from the man who once proclaimed that human beings have no free will:

> This is no prophecy. Man, and not fate, is burdened with the full responsibility for the outcome of this process.

Reich may have been responsible for his own misfortune. But in passages like this, he reveals a remarkable power to transcend them. He may have had many faults, but he also possessed the courage of a visionary and the intuition of genius.

Notes

Chapter One

1. *The Sexual Offender*, selected by Robert Ollendorff London, 1967.
2. *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work,* Vol. 1, p. 415 *et seq.*
3. Paul Roazen, *Freud and His Followers,* p. 224.
4. *lbid.*, p. 73 *et seq.*

Chapter Two

1. See *Abnormal Hypnotic Phenomena, A Survey of 19th-Century Cases,* ed. E. J. Dingwall, 4 vols., 1967: particularly Vol. 1, p. 158 *et seq.* See also Brian Inglis. *Natural and Supernatural,* Chapter 19.
2. Axel Munthe, *The Story of San Michele*, Chapter 19.
3. See *Powers of Mind* by Adam Smith, New York, 1975. p. 49.
4. Ed. Muriel Gardner, Hogarth Press, London, 1972.
5. A full account of the relations between Freud and Kraus can be found in *Karl Kraus and the Soul-Doctors* by Thomas Szasz, London, 1977.
6. *Brother Animal: The Story of Tausk and Freud.*

Chapter Three

1. *Free Associations: Memories of a Psychoanalyst*, London, 1959, p. 169.
2. Republished in America in 1971 as *Hidden symbols of Alchemy* (Dover).
3. Unpublished.
4. When I wrote *The Outsider* in 1955, I was unaware that Reich had already used this term in the sense of rebel or outcast; I borrowed it from Shaw, who uses it in this sense in the preface to *Immaturity.*
5. Quoted in *Reich Speaks of Freud,* p. 148. It was never sent.
6. This first version of the book—published in 1927—has little in common with the more autobiographical work published in 1942 as Vol. 1 of *The Discovery of the Orgone.* It is this later version that has been quoted in these pages so far. The earlier version is a more strictly clinical work, with analyses of case histories.
7. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* p. 147.

Chapter Four

1. ‘The Logic of Tacit Inference’, in *Knowing and Being.*
2. See *The Nature of Human Consciousness, A Book of Readings*, ed. Robert Ornstein, p. 72.
3. Chapter 9, p. 203 (Modern Library edition). He is quoting Starbuck.

Chapter Five

1. *Reich Speaks of Freud*, p. 45.
2. *Selected Sex-pol Essays*, 1934-7, Reich and Teschnitz. Socialist Reproduction, London, 1972.

Chapter Six

1. *Reich Speaks of Freud*, Part 2.
2. *The Sexual Anomalies and Perversions*, ed. Arthur Koestler.
3. This account is taken from letters and cassettes sent to me by Gerd Bergersen (now Hay-Edie). In the autumn of 1978, Gerd Hay-Edie heard me broadcasting on the BBC’s *Desert Island Discs* programme when, in answer to one of Roy Plomley’s questions, I mentioned that I was working on a book on Reich. She wrote to me; and as a result I learned of this fascinating—and so far unrecorded—episode in Reich’s life.
4. After her separation from Reich she discovered the writings of Jung, and became a convinced Jungian. Jung’s view of the psyche seemed to her altogether closer to the truth.
5. She later married—as she admits—‘on the rebound from Reich, someone completely different: a safe English gentleman—only to learn there is no such thing as a safe partner’.

Chapter Seven

1. Vol. 3, No. 1, March 1944: ‘A Sex-Economist Answers’ by Theodore P. Wolfe.
2. In fact it was published by the Orgone Institute Press in 1948.

Chapter Eight

1. See Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* and *The Art of Memory.* Also my *Mysteries,* Part 2, Chapter 1.

Postscript

1. Thelma Moss, *The Probability of the Impossible*, 1974.
2. C. G. Jung: *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*, 1959.
3. See, for example, Rolf Alexander's *The Power of the Mind*, which contains newspaper photographs of an apparently successful experiment in cloud dissipation.

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Who was Wilhelm Reich? Sexual liberator, dedicated early follower of Freud, was he a misunderstood genius, an ‘Outsider’, a man driven by an inner vision of truth, which he had to pursue at the cost of health and sanity? Or was he an egoist tormented by a desire for ‘recognition’, by the hunger for self-esteem? Colin Wilson writes: ‘I became fascinated by this enigma of a scientist turning, against his will, into a metaphysical philosopher ... What I wanted to know was how this Freudian Marxist had come to abandon the scientific and political materialism of his early days.’

The quest for the real Wilhelm Reich is a continuously intriguing voyage of discovery.

Colin Wilson left school at sixteen. He worked in a wool warehouse, a laboratory, a plastics factory and a coffee bar before his first book, *The Outsider*, was published in 1956. It was an immediate bestseller. His subsequent novels and books on philosophy, the occult, crime and sexual deviance have won him an international reputation. His work has been translated into Spanish, French, Swedish, Dutch and Japanese.