

**Sexuality
and
freedom**

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**Wilhelm
Reich
and the
sexual
revolution**

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Wilhelm Reich

a reassessment

ILSE OLLENDORFF REICH has just published a book on the life of her husband, Wilhelm Reich.* I will review the book shortly before discussing the theme of this essay, the influence of Reich's work on modern anarchist theory.

The book is a simple statement of Wilhelm Reich's life, his achievements and his theories. Ilse O. Reich is clearly concerned not to hurt anybody, or not to paint too rosy or too grim a picture of a man who must have been difficult and frightening to live with.

There is little doubt, one feels after reading her book, that he was a genius, that he had a colossal drive, that he had unending energy and application—Goethe's dictum that "genius is industry" could properly be applied to Wilhelm Reich—but also there remains no doubt that he was a sick man who unconsciously manipulated his life in such a way so as to conform to some of the most potent of his delusional patterns.

His identification with Christ is patent and the woolly overclouding of his disturbed childhood, his real or fantasy role in the death of his Mother, made self-acceptance impossible. Thus he became the victim of his paranoid delusions in life and, probably, in some aspects of his work. He was intolerant, humourless, and to judge from my contact with the author and the Reichian scene in the USA, a man frightening to almost everybody who were intimidated by him in some way or another.

***WILHELM REICH. A personal biography by Ilse Ollendorff with an introduction by Paul Goodman. (Elek, London 42s., St. Martin's Press, New York \$5.95.)**

Even now, twelve years after his death, there seems to be a complete veil of anxiety-stricken conformity to the MASTER's work. Thus we find the Wilhelm Reich Foundation in the hands of a trustee who keeps the very beautiful Orgonon Laboratory in Maine like a dead museum (reminding one of the Circus millionaire Ringling's palace which floats at Sarosota in the Mexican Gulf) and the archives seem to be closed to everybody except the one chosen disciple. On the other hand the American Medical Association of Orgonomy has become a very conservative and rigid body who would refute any connection of Reich's work with the love of freedom and with anarchist thought. In fact Reich's delusion that Eisenhower and the American Air Force were protecting him personally made these people into strict conservatives. Elsworth Baker, who is the leading Reichian therapist in America, has written a book *Man in a Trap*, which in my view is the first crack in the wall of the inevitable process of making Reich respectable. Both the need for respectability and the economic advantages accruing from it are an American invention. In the very clever introductory paragraph to his Chapter 13 on the social, political character types, Baker writes, "The previous discussion of character types dealt with the world's sickness from the point of view of the individual, the manner in which his own life is moulded from birth by an unhealthy environment. The following description of character types pertains rather to the individual's attempt to mould society (his environment) to fit his own irrational needs." This again is already leaving off the basic idea that a human being and society are one, that they are one in their sickness and that the dynamics of how an unhealthy society makes a sick person and how in turn the sick person perpetuates sickness in society is given up. Baker says that the individual attempts to mould society to fit his own irrational needs and from this Paulinian interpretation of course he has not only a very healthy disregard for the liberal, here we concur, and in contrast to the liberal character he praises the conservative whom he considers to be a healthier and better type of person. Page 197 Chapter headed "Genesis" . . . "The conservative maintains his contact with health and naturalness because he has contact with his core or healthy layer. (Identification with the Father helps to maintain his core contact.) His attitude is, however, closer to the criteria of the genital character than the liberal's, for he maintains considerable healthy aggression and ideals." The ultimate in ritualistic conservatism is now the American College of Orgonomy in which a group of chosen people are sitting around in blue nylon robes with velvet cuffs and, no doubt, must feel very close to the Master's spirit by evocation.

ROBERT OLLENDORFF is a general practitioner and social psychiatrist in South East London. He is a Visiting Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Florida. He has written on drug trials in schizophrenia, drug addiction, alcoholism, and a book on Juvenile Homosexuality and its effects on Adult Sexuality (Julian Press, New York, 1966).

Needless to say numerous sectarians are having a heyday on all the thousands of potential misinterpretations to which Reich left himself quite open.

Let us discuss now some of the material Ilse O. Reich gives us on his history.

Wilhelm Reich was born on 24th March, 1897 into an anomalous Jewish "gentry-like" family in Austrian Poland. He came into a world which contained either very poor indigenous peasantry or even poorer ghetto-confined Yiddish-speaking small ghetto-bound Jewish communities. The fascinating contrast, the German speaking rather "county style" Germanophile land-owning bourgeoisie, reducing their Jewishness to a minimum adherence or, very often, becoming baptised—note here the Christian name of Wilhelm on the one hand—and compare this to the explosive ghetto revolutionaries who were the breeding grounds for Zionism and militants of the Russian Revolution on the other. The shady side of the moon: These ghettos were full of cunning confidence tricksters who were called *Luftmenschen*, people who live on hot air, by hot air, and who tricked the poorest of the poor out of what little they had.

Although families like the Reich's were not affected by it, the horrifying and sadistic pogroms in the Polish towns, especially Russian Poland, which sent many hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews over the borders to Austria, Germany, France, England and America, must have left a mark on the young Wilhelm Reich, as Hitler, for instance, would have impressed himself on a young Dutch boy growing up in the 'forties.

The strong non-identification with his Jewishness, however, remained with Reich all his life. And it was not the rationalistic, nay, agnostic, quasi-atheistic/Freudian approach, because in his books *Ether, God and Devil; People in Trouble; Murder of Christ*, there is a strong theistic note.

If such non-identification were to turn up in the character-analysis of a patient, the denial or obliqueness in respect of the adherence to the group of one's birth and cultural make-up would be a major point of the therapist's attack. This does not mean that one needs to be robbed of one's critical faculties in respect of these or any other groups' characteristic irrationalities and rigidities.

The next strange field in which we find Wilhelm Reich is as a very young Lieutenant of the Imperial and Royal Army of the Hapsburg dynasty, losing their final battle. He saw himself discharged at the end of the war, and a penniless young student in Vienna. Vienna, which was a capital of an Empire, had suddenly shrunk to be a hydrocephalos with no Empire, and a hostile rural population making up the rest of

the rudimentary Austrian state. Vienna itself was a hotch-potch of Czechs, Hungarians, Poles, Jews and Germans. Most of them, except the Jews, belonged to the reactionary Catholic petit-bourgeoisie. They, in turn, were bitterly hostile to the active socialistic working-class of Vienna, who were trying to achieve brilliant reforms in housing, working-class management—co-operation and modern culture, but who had neither the revolutionary impetus of their brethren up and down the River Danube—as for example: up the river in 1918 in Munich where Landauer, Toller and Eisner led the Munich Proletariat to try a Communist-anarchist revolution. Needless to say, they failed dismally. And, down the river, in Budapest the Hungarian working-class led by Bela Kun tried a similar revolution—with the same tragic result.

Into this kind of environment Wilhelm Reich came penniless, and he and his brother were working very hard to make their living, as well as having to support Wilhelm Reich in his medical studies.

The University of Vienna was still a powerful fortress of Modern Science, but the sexology of these days was one great ridiculous blob of chaotic nonsense. Moralistic rubbish of a man like Richard Von Krafft-Ebing and his anecdotal *psychopathia sexualis* was still considered a standard textbook of learning, and every manifestation of sexuality which did not conform to some mythological pattern of normality, was blamed on masturbation.

Sigmund Freud was the outstanding genius. He created sense and gave scientific application to this hot potato of sexuality, and his teaching attracted the best brains in Vienna, and it was not an accident that Reich became, very early on, from 1919 in fact, a co-worker of Freud.

Now here we must mention very briefly the work of Freud, and where Reich has fundamentally corrected, altered or deviated from Freudian theory. Freud's basic theory was that the infantile sexuality, which he called "polymorph-perverse", is undergoing varying stages of libidinous charge in development—thus oral, anal, urethral, phallic stages are described, and it is presumed that the normal child copes with these stages and overcomes them totally, leaving a clear field for genital sexuality to develop in times to come. In the third, fourth, or fifth year, the child enters the Oedipal situation in which the man-child falls in love with his mother, and Electra-wise, the girl with her father. This, Freud accepts as a universal happening of world-wide invariable occurrence. After years of some latency, the normal person grows into patterns of mature heterosexual love-making.

Reich, however, very soon criticised these axioms for very important reasons, as we will see, as they have a bearing on the whole social set-up of the person. His first and basic criticism was that the developmental stages to which an infant is exposed are not so much individual traumata, but are prolonged impacts of a faulty social pattern, and the consequence

of such prolonged permeation of a sick influence makes for what Reich calls a "character structure". This implies that in analysis and reality, it is not the getting stuck accidentally and being traumatised in oral, urethral, anal, phallic stages which are, of course, real stages, but that one does develop a character-formation which becomes the major object of analytical attack. The whole of the person is affected in its entirety and the character-analyst will use every aspect of the total person and its living function to understand the individual armour, the structuring. This criticism is of great theoretical import, because it means really that "normality" is non-existent—that in a sick society, everybody is sick, and it explains the mass-catastrophies, politically and sociologically, to which we are regularly exposed. It explains in part the irrationalities, the hatreds, the aggression, and many other features of social illness which are all part and parcel of ourselves.

A further valid criticism by Reich of the Freudian theory referred to the fact that Freud remained in the realm of the purely psychological. The energetics underlying sexual activity, which Freud called "libido", had solely a psychological and schematic value, and Reich had the good sense to visualise this energy as a bio-energetic force and to localise its regulation in the function of orgasm. This, too, brought reality into a metapsychological concept and was of direct influence on peoples' lives, because it brought a much clearer understanding of the role of sexuality in the life of people.

It is unfortunately impossible to continue endlessly and to repeat and discuss in detail the differences in the works of Reich or Freud, but a period in Reich's life which must, however, be described at some length is Reich's attempt to be a Communist and his total identification with the Communist movement, which again is so strangely bedevilled by his later violent and overt anti-Communism which in fact (after his failure to interest Einstein in his work), became a paranoid delusion that Communist agents were trying to destroy him and his work. In 1929 Reich joined the Communist Party and he remained an active member until 1933.

Now let us be quite clear that in spite of all the protestation to the contrary, he was no child but was a practising, well-trained doctor and analyst, a man in his early 30's who was an active Communist at that time. Reich, at that period, was trying to build up a working-class movement for sexual reform but, needless to say, as in this country nowadays and in every other country including Russia, the working class is most reactionary and sticks to the moralistic attitudes of its forefathers. Reich very quickly became a disappointed man and at that time, of course, the Hitler movement in Germany got under way and he shared the fate of the rest of the left-wing intellectuals and opponents of the Third Reich. His visits to Moscow when he tried to bring psychoanalytic methods into Russian education fell flat and his theoretical attempts to marry dialectical materialism and psychoanalysis

shared the fate of all other attempts of Marxists with analytical leanings and analysts with Marxist leanings—a misalliance. It is here of interest that the latest swinger of Red flags, the Red Guru of California—Herbert Marcuse—in his critique of neo-Freudian revisionism which appears in the Epilogue to his book *Eros and Civilisation* (published by Sphere Books Ltd. at 7s. 6d.) writes a book which is meant to dissect Freudian theory and equate it to the reality of Western civilization. Such are the goals set in his book that he has nothing else to say about the whole of Reich's work than this (on page 190):

"It might be tempting to speak of a split into a left and right wing. The most serious attempt to develop the critical social theory implicit in Freud was made in Wilhelm Reich's earlier writings. In his *Einbruch der Sexualmoral* (1931), Reich oriented psychoanalysis on the relation between the social and instinctual structures. He emphasized the extent to which sexual repression is enforced by the interests of domination and exploitation, and the extent to which these interests are in turn reinforced and reproduced by sexual repression. However, Reich's notion of sexual repression remains undifferentiated; he neglects the historical dynamic of the sex instincts and of their fusion with the destructive impulses. (Reich rejects Freud's hypothesis of the death instinct and the whole depth dimension revealed in Freud's late metapsychology.) Consequently, sexual liberation per se becomes for Reich a panacea for individual and social ills. The problem of sublimation is minimized; no essential distinction is made between repressive and non-repressive sublimation, and progress in freedom appears as a mere release of sexuality. The critical sociological insights contained in Reich's earlier writings are thus arrested; a sweeping primitivism becomes prevalent, foreshadowing the wild and fantastic hobbies of Reich's later years."

* * * *

The Nazis chased Reich out of Germany. He lived and worked in Norway. A smear campaign made his life intolerable and work practically impossible there. He went to the USA. He fell foul of the American Food and Drug Administration in the middle fifties. They prosecuted him, burned his books and he was sentenced to two years in prison, because he refused to be indicted by the American law, considering his work to be outside its reach and understanding. He died in gaol in the USA in 1957.

The rather obscure part of Reich's work, which often leads people to shy away from him, is the identification of libidinous energy with a life energy, which he perceives to be all pervading and all present and which he calls "Orgone".

This concept of a vital energy, very much in the mind of thinkers and philosophers for many centuries, has been declared by the straight-laced orthodox scientist to be non-existent and phantasy. They say: "Energy has to follow the laws of physics. It has to run down from a source of higher concentration to lower concentration and, if it does not behave according to these laws, it does not exist."

The orgone energy of Wilhelm Reich flows from an all-pervading, all-enveloping source of low concentration charging up living units of higher orgone concentration, as, for instance, the living body.

Parts of Reich's proof is the enormous energy needed in the growth of the foetus, of the infant. He felt that the whole human organism is regulated in its orgone economy by the function of orgasm, and it is the energetic discharge in orgasm which he considers to be an essential process of sanity and mental hygiene. His whole further work was built up on the realisation of the maladjustment of the human being unable to reach orgasm, to achieve orgasmic potency especially in Western civilised people. The energetics which are mis-used in non-orgasmic outlets are the reasons for the innumerable human disorders which are not only showing in neurotic or psychotic aspects, but which affect the physical being as a whole. Hence the therapeutic approach of the Reichians which goes towards the whole person and not only towards a given neurotic symptom or symptomatology.

If we agree with Reich that orgasmic dysfunction is part of our misery and that orgasm has to be approximated as part of our social integration, we will understand the overwhelming importance of the idea of a sexual revolution. It is really the freeing of the human being from the bondage of a sick moralistic straitjacket, which is very much more important than political emancipation. It is the liberation of the infant, the child, the adolescent, the woman, from sick patriarchal rape-and-masturbation-pornography, which enables us to envisage a new world.

It was the merit of Reich that he saw that the young voted with their spirits, their bodies against our sick moralistic sex restrictions, and accepted more and more a positive sexual existence as their birthright. That is in fact what he calls for and describes in his book: *The Sexual Revolution*. Not his best book by any measure. He always expected instant recognition and thus he was blinded by the very slow process of the sexual revolution. He was very optimistic about its rapidity. In fact his flirtation with Marxism led him to the same false optimism by which Marxists produce their ideas of the inevitability of revolutions, and Reich did not really understand that once our misery had been implanted in infancy, one has to cope with it in an understanding and human way. His intolerance, for instance, towards homosexuality, revealing in this respect his own jealousy, his paranoid ideas and revulsion from self-insight, was ludicrous. Imagine an analyst, a physician of standing stating: "I don't want to deal with such filth"!

Whatever the political changes, the basic *structure*, the subjective living existence of man, the basic rigid fabric of his individual emotional feeling and behaviour, remain unaltered. The sexual moralistic patterns continue, in fact usually a puritanical streak is concomitant with most revolutionary movements of the past.

The decisive difference in the quality of the revolution of the young of our days, is a break-up of the patriarchal structure. It is intrinsically non-political, non-violent, loving in a functional sense, and this makes it so un-understandable for the soothsayers, interpreters, wise guys, and intellectuals, who try to relate this new world and the phenomena of the new revolution to the old rebellions, which each generation showed in turn.

The terror of the structured, rigid authoritarian representatives felt against the new pattern of spontaneous anarchistic non-participation is very real.

In this issue of ANARCHY there is a re-print of Marie Louise Berneri's assessment of Reich's *Function of the Orgasm*. Her penetrating understanding of the basic ideas of Reich is still a worthy memorial to her greatness. She appreciated the nature of Reich's break-through from psychoanalytical conceptualism into sex-economic reality. She understood the intrinsic interrelationship of sexual and social organisation.

She appreciated the denial of Reich of the role of the oedipus conflict as a universal phenomenon and the relegation of this complex with the function of sexual suppression. Ultimately she was able to see the therapeutic importance of a total attempt of the neurotic and she understood the character-analytic vegetotherapy which involves the whole person and not only the mind.

However, time has not stood still and by now we have continued the development of ways and means by which a sick society affects every individual in a given society.

This concept of the sick society becomes, more and more, important. In fact I consider it the corner-stone of modern anarchistic thought. It makes it clear that nobody can be exempt from the permeation of the sick-making elements of our society and thus everybody—and that means everybody including the healer, the doctor, the politician, the leading figure in whatever branch of life he sets up a God-like sacrosanct image of him or herself—in a sick society carries a measurable and demonstrable amount of sickness. Reich must have had an inkling of that when he wrote *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and in September 1969 when members of the working class in Britain refuse to mix their shit and pee with those of a Pakistani and go on strike to prevent such a fusion of faecal matter, one cannot doubt that the sickness in our society has not been overcome; least of all in our working class population.

This is a reproduction of the projection of sexual fears and anxieties with an unhealthy by-mixture of repressed homosexuality which made the lynching of negroes so beastly, which made the anti-semitism of the Third Reich so deadly to six million Jews, and which still continues unabated in our midst.

This sickness, of course, means the death knell to all concepts which assume that there is a basic health, a basic sanity, a basic normality in all of us and that those who are not sane, healthy or normal are to blame by factors which are either in themselves or in their genetic make-up, or who are being victims of a conspiratorial model, as it is so well described by the Americans Siegler, Osmond and Mann in their article in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, August, 1969 which demolished the psychiatry of R.D. Laing under the title *Laing's Models of Madness*.

The concept of the sick society and the mechanisms, by which a sick society is continued, generation after generation, will find more and more attention and has been described by me essentially in two processes, one in childhood which I call "induction" and one in adolescence which I call "conditioning". These are described in my book *Juvenile Homosexuality and its Effect on Adult Sexuality*.

Reich did not go as far as that, in fact it is important to remember that Reich did remain all his life a psychoanalyst and that his working methods and his ideas of a cure were based on psychoanalytic optimisms which, on the other hand, were counter-balanced by a doctrinaire refutation of all criticism which was immediately labelled "emotional plague".

There is a very fine borderline between the potential work-load anybody can get through and the idea of Reich that anybody has to observe everything more or less in the raw before being able and equipped to give a critical judgement or an opinion and, I repeat here, an opinion not a scientific finding is, of course, very doubtful.

It is impossible to check on very personal and highly subjective impressions, for instance, lichen formation on rocks or on the way rain or sunshine or cloud formations are gathered, made or dispersed. Reich's work on this level is probably worth while repeating on a very systematic observational basis but unless it is done nobody will ever accept his cloud-bursting and rain-making experiments.

Nevertheless, the decisive role of Reich in modern anarchistic theory cannot be doubted. Anarchistic thought and theory in an affluent society have, without doubt, to look for new formulations of their basic credo.

One is aware that social equality has not been achieved. We know that freedom for woman, children, religious and racial groups has not become self-understood the world over, not even in England! However, the more wealth there is produced and accumulated, the more this wealth is distributed amongst the populations of the world, the more it will become clear that the Marxist assumption that economics are the *leit-motif* of our existence will break down, and the emotional disturbances which are the outflow of a sick society and have many more causes than the economic or even purely sexual

repressive ones, will have to be elucidated to find a way and a goal for the efforts of man to evolve into a somewhat less destructive society. His concept of work-democracy leans heavily on old anarchistic models—and is infused by a pompous Prussian over-estimation of the intrinsic value of *work*. Reich declares work to be a life-function. Only if work means essentially “doing one’s own thing” do I agree.

The real genius of Reich was most likely on this level, that he did realise that the sane, healthy, normal human being seen outside his total social setting is a fictitious construct and that Freud and the Freudians ultimately must perish on the rock of respectability.

A further aspect of Reich’s role in modern anarchy is the understanding we are slowly gaining that it is not only authoritarian states, not only the law, not only the aggressive anti-life machinery which makes people rebel. In the student revolts all over the modern world it has become more and more clear that the greatest of all gaps in communication between the upholders of the establishment and administration and the young was the horror of the young of any kind of rigid structure.

Even in progressive schools the hurtful confrontation remained. That there was not necessarily a demand for this, that or the other “right” for a share in power, or a diminution of the disciplinary machinery but that the great mass of the young people are neither willing nor able to live and bow down to any kind of structural existence.

That does not mean that all of them are necessarily opting out altogether of disciplined learning or of the self-discipline which every community will introduce as basic standards of co-existence, but that structure, as a foreign body superimposed from the outside, and irrespective of the semantic prettifications it may be given, is not bearable and, ultimately, will not be tolerated.

Of course, this will be enforced over and over again by modifications and the necessity to eat and find jobs and feed their children and wives must make the young conform, but this conformity is ultimately a very treacherous and cynical affair which will end in the non-participation of masses of young people in serious civil activities.

The Reichian ultimate wisdom that primary sexual happiness is being achieved by the young earlier and earlier and that moralistic censorship and regression is not holding up this process becomes clearer and clearer every day.

These were, of course, the reasons why really great men like A. S. Neill and Ola Raknes, the Norwegian Professor of Psychology,

have both loved Reich and honoured his friendship all their lives and kept their loyalty to him under the most trying circumstances.

Thus we can finally say that we agree with Ilse Ollendorff-Reich who finishes her preface by saying, “I have no doubt that he was a great man and that his influence has been felt in much of present day thinking and writing.”

Paul Goodman on Reich

MORE THAN ANY OTHER FIGURE of our times, Reich has had things to say—and do—essential for the chief revolutionary actions of the young, whether their politics or their hippie life style; indeed, he is the connecting link between these contrasting tendencies. The most trenchant political ideas of Marcuse and Fromm, about the fear of freedom and the co-opting of spontaneity and sexuality by modern corporate institutions, were stated first and more powerfully by Reich. And he was able to demonstrate the material and efficient causes involved e.g. in incomplete gratification, anxiety, and introjection, whereas the others are rather abstract. Conversely, Reich would not have been surprised, as Marcuse has been, at the theoretically “impossible” youth revolt, for it was on the cards for the children of affluence, brought up without toilet training, freely masturbating, and with casual clothing, to be daring, disobedient, and simple-minded. Human nature is very malleable, but there are material facts that cannot be altogether co-opted.

Self-regulation, and the cosmic streaming that relaxes and transcends ego, are axioms of the hippie way. Here again, in vegetotherapy, Reich invented a practical yoga in familiar Western terms and without drugs, so that it is possible to tune in without dropping out, without having to lose one’s wits, although of course not without conflict and suffering. And these exercises are a fundamental part of the sensitivity training and Artaudian theatre which are prevalent. Similarly, Reich is an existential psychologist, but unlike the others he does not have to

rely on extreme situations and peak experiences, but can make something out of the everyday.

Reich's work ethic, the human need for absorption in productive work that is one's own and gets one beyond oneself, does not sit so well with the radical young, for it is true that the majority of professions and economic jobs are corrupted and often useless or worse. Yet this Lutheran doctrine of justification by vocation is probably true, and Reich's work democracy is the decentralized "participatory democracy" that the radical young hanker after, though they have not thought through the meaning of work. Doing one's thing is not a whimsical way of being in the world. Reich here went back to the young-Marxian conception of actual alienation in the work process, which the later Marx tended to forget, as he became a more formal sociologist and politician. (My guess is that Reich's glancing references to anarchist thinkers as a source for these ideas stem solely from a single conversation with myself.) In his own life and work, to be sure, Reich was obsessional and Calvinistic about work; he was driven by his furies. I think he over-estimated the power of the paraphernalia of the laboratory and methodical science to solve humanistic problems. And he was a very autocratic democrat.

—from PAUL GOODMAN'S Introduction to *Wilhelm Reich: A Personal Biography* by Ilse Ollendorff Reich (Elek 1969)

A. S. Neill on Reich

I HOPE I AM NOT a follower of anyone. No one should remain a disciple. One should take from others what one thinks of value. To label oneself is to stand still. In the psychoanalytical movement one sees the narrowness of discipleship; if one follows—say—Jung or Melanie Klein, anything that Adler or Reich says is not even considered. I hasten to add that none of us are free from narrowness. If the head of an English public school wrote a book about education I should most probably find nothing in it of any value to me.

I met Reich in Norway in 1937. I was fascinated with his new

theory that neurosis is linked up with bodily tensions. I became his patient and learned the technique of his therapy. By releasing the muscular tensions he released the emotions, often violently, so that I had more emotional abreaction in six weeks with Reich than in years of talky analysis. Apart from this I found his writings great and deep and, to me, true. My association with Reich, however, had no effect on my school work. . . . I had run Summerhill for twenty-six years before I met him, and the meeting did not alter my school in any way. Indirectly it may have done, for Reich's therapy helped me enormously.

I never understood his later work in orgone energy, for I have no gift for, nor training in, science. I never saw his rain-making apparatus, but my friend Dr. Walter Hoppe in Tel Aviv tells me that he has had some wonderful results in cloud bursting.

Reich died in prison of a heart attack. He was much maligned in America; he had many enemies, a fact by the way that in itself suggests that he was a great man. Doctors and scientists stormed against his orgone theory, but one does not usually storm against what is called a crank theory. Folk do not hate a man who believes that the earth is flat. They laugh at him. They did not laugh at Reich; they dismissed him as a paranoid. All I can say is that if Reich were mad and—say—the men in the Pentagon and Westminster are sane, the world is an odd sort of place.

I am not a Reichian; I am only a humble fellow who saw in Reich a genius, a man of great vision and infinite humanity, a man who was pre-eminently on the side of youth and life and freedom. I consider him the greatest psychologist since Freud.

—from *Talking of Summerhill* by A. S. NEILL (Gollancz, 1967)

Sexuality and freedom

MARIE LOUISE BERNERI

“THE PROBLEM OF SEXUALITY permeates by its very nature every field of scientific investigation”. This is too often ignored by revolutionaries who are willing to discuss Marx’s economic doctrines or Kropotkin’s sociological theories, but who regard with the greatest suspicion the work of psycho-analysts. Yet the existence of mass neuroses is only too obvious today. It is glaringly displayed in the cult of leadership which has taken an acute form in the totalitarian states, but which is equally evident in so-called democratic countries. It has given rise to outbursts of public sadism, in the glamorised versions of Hollywood producers or, in their crudest form, at Buchenwald and Belsen. It appears more obviously in the numerous cases of war neurosis, sadism, impotence and frigidity.

To reduce these problems to a question of family allowances, maternity benefits or old age pensions is ridiculous; to resolve it in terms of insurrection, of overthrow of the ruling class and the power of the State, is not enough. Human nature is a whole. The worker is not merely the producer in the factory or the field; he is also the lover, the father. The problems which he faces in his home are no less important than those at his place of work. By trying to separate biological and psychological problems from the sociological ones, we not only mutilate our theories, but are bound to reach false conclusions.

Very few scientists claim to be interested in science for its own sake. Almost all of them want to put their knowledge at the service of mankind. But the specialisation of their knowledge has made this task extremely difficult, one could almost say impossible. They have reached conclusions which, instead of helping man to reach a happier life, have

MARIE LOUISE BERNERI was an editor of War Commentary and later FREEDOM until her death at the age of 31 in 1949. She was the author of Journey Through Utopia (Routledge) and Neither East Nor West (Freedom Press). Her article “Sexuality and Freedom” originally published in Now in 1945, was one of the earliest appreciations of Reich’s work published in this country.

taken him along the wrong path. The more involved and artificial the system, the more harmful it has been. When scientists merely encouraged men to follow their instincts, the effect might not have been very deep, but it was in the right direction. But when elaborate systems of organisation were suggested, the harm done by them was great, as they orientated man towards an artificial way of life completely divorced from his own nature.

The value of Wilhelm Reich’s writings is that he is “a socially conscious scientist”, and it is as a socially conscious scientist that he is of particular interest to us. His work on psychotherapy, on biology and physiology are too specialised to be considered here. We are unable to judge how successful his clinical method has been, or the value of his experiments in orgonotherapy and cancer research. These are subjects for doctors and psycho-analysts to discuss, but we believe that the less specialised part of Dr. Reich’s writings deserve to be studied by anyone who is dissatisfied with the present system of society and wishes to see a free and happy world. Unfortunately, there is only one book of his available in this country, *The Function of the Orgasm*,* and it is from this book that we attempt to give a summary of Dr. Reich’s theories.

As a whole, Dr. Reich’s work has been ignored by Left-wing and revolutionary movements. It has been left to the forces of reaction, both on the right and on the left, to recognise in him an enemy of authoritarian society. A violent newspaper campaign which lasted about ten months was carried out against Dr. Reich in Norway in 1938. He emigrated to America, but even there he was not free from police persecution. On the 12th December, 1941, at 2 o’clock in the morning, he was taken out of his bed by agents of the F.B.I. (equivalent of Scotland Yard) and taken to Ellis Island. Not until the 5th January was he released unconditionally. His publications have been banned by the Communists as well as by the Fascists, by the Socialists as well as by the Liberals. The explanation for this unpopularity is that Dr. Reich has attacked dictatorship under whatever name it disguised itself. In the October, 1944, issue of the *International Journal of Sex Economy* he reasserts his belief that “Even after the military victory over German fascism, the fascist human structure will continue to exist in Germany, Russia, America and everywhere else”.

Though Dr. Reich has been described as a Marxist, he declares, as Marx did before him, “I am not a Marxist”, and indeed he bitterly attacks the followers of Marx who have distorted the thought and the scientific discoveries of their master. Reich can be called a Marxist in as much as he adheres to the laws of economics formulated by Marx (in that sense, as Malatesta said, “We anarchists are all Marxists”), but his conception of the State is nearer that of Bakunin

**The Function of the Orgasm*, by Wilhelm Reich, M.D. Orgone Institute Press, New York, 1942.

than that of Marx. In the article quoted above he declares:

"*State and Society mean two basically different social facts. There is a state which is above or against Society as best exemplified in the fascist totalitarian state. There is society without a state, as in the primitive democratic societies. There are state organisations which work essentially in the direction of social interests, and there are others which do not. What has to be remembered is that 'state' does not mean 'society'. In the course of 20 years, I have not heard one Soviet economist mention this fact. According to Marxian principles, there is, in the Soviet Union, no socialism, that is, no abolition of market economy; there is state capitalism, that is, capitalism without individual capitalists.*"§

What he does not say is that Marx advocated a workers' state as a transitional stage and did not realise that it would give rise to a new privileged class which would use *market economy* for its own ends. However, in the work-democracy advocated by Dr. Reich the state would not exist ("The 'well-ordered legal state' is an illusion, not a reality"), goods would be produced for needs and not for profit, each individual would be responsible for his own existence and social function.

Dr. Reich's understanding of the economic structure of society prevented him from falling into the errors of most psycho-analysts, who have seen in the Soviet Union or in planned authoritarianism the hope of a free and happy society. Reich realised the need to introduce "psychological methods into sociological thinking". Marx had concerned himself with the problem of work in relation to man, Freud with the rôle sexuality played in the conscious and unconscious of man. Reich tried to solve the conflict between these two scientific systems, or perhaps it is better to say that he tried to find a point of contact between them. In the article already quoted he explains this in the following way:

"The two basic biological functions of the living, then, 'work' on the one hand, 'sexuality' or 'pleasure function' on the other, were treated apart from each other, in two separate scientific systems, Marx's sociology on the one hand, and Freud's psychology on the other. In Marx's system, the sexual process led a Cinderella existence under the misnomer, 'development of the family'. The work process, on the other hand, suffered the same fate in Freud's psychology under such misnomers as 'sublimation', 'hunger instinct', or 'ego instinct'. Far from being antithetical, the two scientific systems, their originators being altogether unaware of it, met in the *biological energy of all living organisms* which, according to our functional method of thinking, expresses itself in *work* on the one hand and *sexuality* on the other."

§Individual capitalism also exists on a small scale, and is admitted in a Communist pamphlet entitled *Soviet Millionaires*.

This brings us back to the subject of the book we are considering, *The Function of the Orgasm*. For Reich the central phenomenon of sexuality is the *orgasm*; it "is the focal point of problems arising in the fields of psychology as well as physiology, biology and sociology". The title of the book is obviously chosen in defiance of those who think that sexuality is offensive and the book itself has been written, declares Dr. Reich, not without humour, at an age when he has not yet lost his illusions regarding the readiness of his fellows to accept revolutionary knowledge. Reich had before him the example of Freud who in later years watered down his theories on sexuality, so as to contradict his own earlier work. Reich has been expelled from the Association of the psycho-analysts and their publications have been barred to him, as he was accused of attaching too much importance to sexuality. He knows therefore how the pressure of hypocritical and moralistic society can bring scientists to change their views so as to make them palatable to the general public.

Reich adheres to the basic psycho-analytical concepts, but he refused to follow the psycho-analytic school when it relegated sexuality to a secondary rôle so as to gain approval even in reactionary quarters. Theodore P. Wolfe, who translated Dr. Reich's book from German into English, points out that:

"Freud's original theory of sex was revolutionary and evoked the most violent reactions. The story of psycho-analysis is essentially the story of never ending attempts to allay these reactions on the part of a shocked world, and, to make psycho-analysis socially acceptable, sexuality had to be robbed of its real significance and to be replaced by something else. Thus, Jung replaced it by a religious philosophy, Adler by a moralistic one, Rank by the 'Trauma of Birth', etc., etc."

In America, says Dr. Wolfe,

"... we are witnessing the development of various 'sociological' schools of psycho-analysis. Theirs is, because it misleads so easily, a particularly dangerous argument. Whether explicit or buried in a great deal of academic or neologistic language, the argument is this: 'The important agent in the etiology of the neuroses is *not* sexuality, *but* social factors'. The appeal of such reasoning, because of the prevailing fear of sexuality and a general, though vague and confused realization of the importance of social factors, is enormous."

Dr. Reich, on the other hand, adheres to Freud's original etiological formula of the neurosis, "*the neurosis is the result of a conflict between instinctual demands and opposing social demands.*" In order to understand neuroses therefore one must study both sexuality and social forces.

"Dr. Reich," says Wolfe, "was the first to study not only the orgasmic process itself but also the social conditions which influence this process in such a manner as to produce neuroses *en masse*."

He gathered his material not merely in the drawing room of the psycho-analyst, but also in working class clinics, in mass meetings, by a daily contact with the people. His conclusions were bound to be different from those of psycho-analysts whose patients came from sheltered bourgeois families.

This does not mean that he found that neuroses are petit bourgeois ailments. On the contrary, the working class is as prone to neurosis as the more sheltered classes, and among it the neuroses take a violent and brutal aspect undisguised by intellectual niceties. From this vast clinical experience and from statistics which he obtained, Reich formed the conclusion that the vast majority of the population suffers from neurosis in a more or less attenuated form. All these neuroses are due *without exception* to a disturbance in the sex life of the man or woman. This became apparent to Reich, particularly in the case of men, only when he had strictly defined what healthy sexual life is. "Psychic health," he discovered, "depends upon *orgastic potency*, that is, on the capacity for surrender in the acme of sexual excitation in the natural sexual act."

Before Reich, psycho-analysts had considered men sexually healthy who could have sexual intercourse, and they could therefore claim that neurotics could have a normal sexual life. Reich by analysing in great detail the orgasm reflex found that no neurotic is able to be orgasmically potent. He further established that the widespread existence of neurosis to-day is due to the sexual chaos brought about by a society based on authority. It is not found in human history before the development of the patriarchal social order, and it is still non-existent to-day in free societies, where:

"The vital energies, under natural conditions, regulate themselves spontaneously, without compulsive duty or compulsive morality. The latter are a sure indication of the existence of antisocial tendencies. Antisocial behaviour springs from *secondary drives which owe their existence to the suppression of natural sexuality*."

"The individual brought up in an atmosphere which negates life and sex acquires a *pleasure-anxiety* (fear of pleasurable excitation) which is represented physiologically in chronic muscular spasms. This pleasure-anxiety is the soil on which the individual re-creates the life-negating ideologies which are the basis of dictatorship. . . . The average character structure of human beings has changed in the direction of impotence and fear of living, so that authoritarian dictatorships can establish themselves by pointing to *existing human attitudes*, such as lack of responsibility and infantilism."

How have men succeeded in crushing their instincts for love and life? Are they biologically unable to experience pleasure and enjoy freedom? The causes, say Reich, are not biological, but economic and sociological. It is the compulsive family and compulsive morality which have destroyed the natural self-regulation of the vital forces. Malinowski's study of the sexual life of savages in the South Sea islands has shown that sexual repression is of sociological and not biological nature. It has further destroyed the Freudian concept of the biological nature of the Oedipus conflict, by showing that the child-parent relationship changes with the social structure of society. The Oedipus complex of the European does not exist among the Trobriand Islanders.

This is an all important point as, if sexual repression is biologically determined, it cannot be abolished, but if it is determined by social factors, then a change in those social factors will put an end to it. Malinowski observed that:

"Children in the Trobriand islands know no sex repression and no sexual secrecy. Their sex life is allowed to develop naturally, freely and unhampered *through every stage of life, with full satisfaction*. . . . The society of the Trobrianders knew, in the third decade of our century, no sexual perversions, no functional psychoses, no psycho-neuroses, no sex murder; they have no word for theft; homosexuality and masturbation, to them, mean nothing but an unnatural and imperfect means of sexual gratification, a sign of a disturbed capacity to reach normal satisfaction. . . . The Trobrianders, therefore, are spontaneously clean, orderly, social without compulsion, intelligent and industrious. . . . At the time when Malinowski made his studies of the Trobriand islanders, there was living a few miles away, on the Amphlett Islands, a tribe with patriarchal authoritarian family organization. The people inhabiting these islands were already showing all the traits of the European neurotic, such as distrust, anxiety, neuroses, perversions, suicide, etc."

The conclusion from these observations is that, "The determining factor of the mental health of a population is the condition of its natural love life."

A further important fact arises out of Malinowski's studies. Among the Trobriand islanders there is one group of children who are not allowed sexual freedom because they are predestined for an economically advantageous marriage. These children are brought up in sexual abstinence and they show neuroses and a submissiveness which do not exist among the other children. From this Reich concludes,

"*Sexual suppression is an essential instrument in the production of economic enslavement*. Thus, sexual suppression in the infant and the adolescent is not, as psycho-analysis—in agreement with traditional and erroneous concepts of education—contends, the prerequisite of cultural development, sociality, diligence and cleanliness; *it is the exact opposite*."

This is corroborated by the observations carried on by Reich on his own patients. When neurotic patients were restored to a healthy sex-life, their whole character altered, their submissiveness disappeared, they revolted against an absurd moral code, against the teachings of the Church, against the monotony and uselessness of their work. They refused to submit to a marriage without love which gave them no sexual satisfaction, they refused to carry on with work where they did not have to use their initiative and creative powers. They felt the need to assert their *natural rights* and to do so they felt that a *different kind of society* was needed.

"To the individual with a genital structure, sexuality is a pleasurable experience and nothing but that; work is joyous vital activity and achievement. To the morally structured individual, work is burdensome duty or only a means of making a living . . . *the therapeutic task consisted in changing the neurotic character into a genital character, and in replacing moral regulation by self regulation.*"

Dr. Reich shows in case reports how this was done. He had observed that "the essence of a neurosis is the *inability of the patient to obtain gratification*" (in the sense of orgasmic potency defined before). Freud had declared before him in his earlier works "*the energy of anxiety is the energy of repressed sexuality*", but the psycho-analysts thought that the disturbance of genitality was one symptom among others, while Reich established that it was *the symptom of neurosis*.

"*The energy source of the neurosis lies in the differential between accumulation and discharge of sexual energy.* The neurotic psychic apparatus is distinguished from the healthy one by the constant presence of undischarged sexual energy.

"Freud's therapeutic formula is correct but incomplete. The first prerequisite of cure is, indeed, to make the repressed sexuality conscious. However, though this alone *may* effect the cure, it *need not* of necessity do so. It does so only if at the same time *the source of energy, the sexual stasis* (damming up of sexual energy), is eliminated; in other words, *only if the awareness of instinctual demands goes hand in hand with the capacity for full orgasmic gratification.* In that case the pathological psychic growths are deprived of energy at the source."

In his description of the formation of actual neurosis (which he calls stasis neurosis) and psycho-neurosis, Reich begins by stating that sexual excitation is definitely a *somatic* process and that neurotic conflicts are of a *psychic* nature. A slight psychic conflict will produce a slight somatic stasis or damming up of sexual energy which in its turn will reinforce the conflict, which will reinforce the stasis. The original conflict is always in existence in the sexual child-parent conflict, and if this is nourished by the actual stasis it gives rise to neurosis

and psycho-neurosis. But the actual stasis can be eliminated by positive sexual gratification, so that the original psychic conflict lacks energy to transform itself into a neurosis. The cycle between the psychic conflict and the somatic stasis must be interrupted, even if it is only by gratification through masturbation. For the patient to obtain sexual gratification, it is necessary to destroy his character-armour against his sexuality. Dr. Reich has elaborated a technique of *character-analytic vegetotherapy*. Its fundamental principle is the restoring of bio-psychic motility by means of dissolving rigidities (armourings) of the character and musculature. The term 'rigidity' must be taken literally; it is by a contraction of his muscles, particularly around his sexual organs, by holding back his breath, that the neurotic builds himself an armour against sexual pleasurable excitation.

Considering the tremendous number of neuroses in existence to-day, it will be obvious that Dr. Reich does not believe that his vegetotherapy can be applied to all of them, but he has attached a particular importance to the development of the *prophylaxis of the neuroses*. His experience in sex hygiene clinics, the statistics gathered in mass meetings and youth groups, convinced him that the situation called for "*extensive social measures for the prevention of the neuroses*". His practical suggestions are very interesting, but it is impossible to discuss them here. Suffice to say that Dr. Reich wants to see the complete liberation of the child and adolescent sexuality from the oppression of the authoritarian family, of the church, of the school. He wants to see the adult freed from compulsive marriage and compulsive morality. He wants a return to instinctual life, to reason, which he qualifies by saying, "*That which is alive is in itself reasonable.*"

This freedom of love, of work, of science can be obtained, he thinks, in a "work democracy, that is a democracy on the basis of a *natural* organisation of the work process." How this work democracy is to be attained and what shape it is going to take, are still left rather vague, but that it will be a free society there can be no doubt. "*Natural moral behaviour presupposes freedom of the natural sexual process*". And again:

"The social power exercised by the people . . . will not become manifest and effective until the working and producing masses of the people become psychically independent and capable of taking full responsibility for their social existence and capable of rationally determining their lives themselves."

Had Dr. Reich witnessed the formation of industrial and agricultural collectives in Spain during the revolution it is probable that his "work democracy" would have taken a more concrete shape. He also seems to consider the development of industry as a factor in the sexual emancipation of men. This as well is probably due to his lack of knowledge of agricultural countries such as Spain and Italy where

neuroses seem to be far less numerous than in industrialised countries.

The only practical examples he gives of "genuine democratic endeavour" are the "labour management committees" in the U.S.A., where workers participate in the management of production and distribution. The example is unfortunate; it is true that the workers share the responsibility in the management, but they are not their own masters. The capitalist is always there and can dictate to them.

Dr. Reich does not look at the world through pink glasses. He sees all its corruption and misery, all its absurdity and ugliness, but he does not despair. He has confidence in that which is alive because he knows that man is only anti-social, submissive, cruel or masochistic because he lacked the freedom to develop his natural instincts.

The importance of Dr. Reich's theories is enormous. To the sophisticated, to the lover of psycho-analytic subtleties, his clarity, his common sense, his direct approach may appear too simple. To those who do not seek intellectual exercise, but means of saving mankind from the destruction it seems to be approaching, this book will be an individual source of help and encouragement. To anarchists the fundamental belief in human nature, in complete freedom from the authority of the family, the Church and the State will be familiar, but the scientific arguments put forward to back this belief will form an indispensable addition to their theoretical knowledge.

DEFINITIONS.

Orgasm reflex. The unitary involuntary contraction and expansion of the total organism in the acme of the sexual act. This reflex, because of its *involuntary* character and the prevailing pleasure anxiety, is suppressed in most humans today.

Orgastic impotence. The absence of orgastic potency. It is the most important characteristic of the average human of today, and—by damming up biological energy in the organism—provides the source of energy for all kinds of psychic and somatic symptoms.

Orgastic potency. Essentially, the capacity for complete surrender to the *involuntary* contractions of the organism and complete discharge of sexual excitation in the acme of the sexual act. It is always lacking in neurotic individuals. It presupposes the presence or establishment of the genital character, *i.e.* the absence of a pathological character armour and muscular armour. The concept is essentially unknown and usually not distinguished from erectile potency and ejaculative potency, both of which are nothing but prerequisites of orgastic potency.

Stasis. The damming-up of sexual energy in the organism, thus the source of energy for the neuroses.

Stasis anxiety. The anxiety caused by the stasis of sexual energy in the centre of the organism when its peripheral orgastic discharge is inhibited. Same as Freud's "actual anxiety".

Stasis neuroses. Originally the same as Freud's "actual neuroses", the concept now includes all somatic disturbances which are the immediate result of the stasis of sexual energy.

Vegetotherapy. The sex-economic therapeutic technique. So called because the therapeutic goal is that of liberating the bound-up vegetative energies and thus restoring to the patient his vegetative motility.

(From *The Function of the Orgasm*.)

Father in mother's pride

VIV BROUGHTON

*I went to the Garden of Love,
And I saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.
And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;
And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.*

WILLIAM BLAKE

WHEN THE PROCESS OF MEETING TRUTH becomes too painful, most people cut out and hide—behind a fantasy barrier of religion or clichés. Or behind clothes. Think how vulnerable men feel without their trousers, imagine Ian Paisley or Enoch Powell trying to do their power bit without clothes on and you can get some idea of the link between sexual inhibition and authority. Clothes are a very potent symbol of fear, and it is this fear, of people and of love, that is at the root of all aggression. We don't want people to know us too intimately and we don't want to know too much about them, for we might find that they need us in some way and that would take up our time and energy, of which we have none to spare. Knowledge makes us vulnerable to truth, and knowledge of people makes us vulnerable to their insatiable demands on our love. We would have to share, we would have to give, we would have to waste time and, as our conditioning has taught us, none of this is productive as society understands productivity.

VIV BROUGHTON's article is reproduced from the October issue of *The Catonsville Roadrunner*, a "monthly Jesus show" or revolutionary Christian journal (1s. for trial issue or 15s. for 10 issues from Roadrunner, 132 Muswell Hill Broadway, London, N.10).

Just as governments make war on the people they need to survive, so we erect a thousand barricades against people who are no threat to us. If we were able to view from a distance the scurrings and hoarding, the putting up and putting down of little Man by little Man, we could see that the one thing above all others that keeps the whole circus going is the fear of loving too hard, the feeling that *without some sort of protection against people like us, we shall not survive.*

* * * *

The function of the Christian church within this circus has nearly always been to sustain rather than destroy such a fear, and never more hysterically than when it suspects that men and women are getting inside each other too often or too much. Sexual hypocrisy is the second great hang-up of the Christian church and the clue as to why lies in the attitude that most Christians have towards the relationship between Man and God. The most sexually repressed Christians are usually those who practice religion as a masochistic sport, seeing themselves as passive and almost inanimate pawns in the games that God is supposed to be playing with Man. They feel themselves driven rather than led and all that follows in their dealings with other people are seen as duties and sacrifices to be carried out "for the master". Loving, giving, sharing then, become activities with no value of themselves except as some kind of painful step on the road to "salvation". As Erich Fromm says: "for them, the norm that it is better to give than to receive means that it is better to suffer deprivation than to experience joy".¹ Since sexual intercourse is such an intense act of giving, receiving and experiencing joy, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that so many hung-up Christians look upon non-essential sexual activity with horror and, what is worse, impose upon their own and other young people the same fear of a natural and free delight in sex. "The defeat of sexual desires has to be accomplished anew in every child that is born. It is accompanied by denial of the breast, often by denial of affection; by discipline with regard to toilet and the establishment of an identification of the excrements with the ideas of filth and dirtiness; by punishment and fear of touching the genitals and deriving pleasure therefrom; and by inhibiting the free release of energy, both in bodily activity and in emotional release, whether in affection or in anger—the whole mystique of self-control and 'not showing one's feelings'. And over and above all this preliminary defeat of infantile sexuality, there comes the rigid prohibition of masturbation, of sexual games, and finally of the sexual act itself. And when the child is able to understand the attitudes of its elders it begins intellectually to absorb the sexually negative orientation of society at its conscious level, and in its turn to pass it on to the next generation also."²

* * * *

Although it is difficult to imagine the consequences of a society that is truly liberated in its sexual attitudes, there is no doubt that such

a society is possible, but we first have to learn, or rather re-learn, a free delight in the sexual gifts of God. Children should be encouraged in their natural curiosity, at physical as well as academic levels, and skill/satisfaction not prohibition/safety made the aim of all sex "education".

Malinowski's³ study of the Trobriand Islanders has done much to show that all this is not only possible but totally desirable, and that sexual liberation is essential to the development of a healthy society.

Commenting on Malinowski's (factual) study, Wilhelm Reich wrote: "Children in the Trobriand Islands know no sex repression and no sexual secrecy. Their sex life is allowed to develop naturally, freely and unhampered *through every stage of life, with full satisfaction.* The children engage freely in the sexual activities which correspond to their age. Nonetheless, or rather, just for this reason, the society of the Trobrianders knew, in the third decade of our century, no sexual perversions, no functional psychosis, no sex murder; they have no word for theft; homosexuality and masturbation, to them, mean nothing but an unnatural and imperfect means of sexual gratification, a sign of a disturbed capacity to reach normal satisfaction".⁴ In contrast to the distrust, anxiety, neuroses, perversion, suicides and general repressions of our Western "civilizations", Reich concludes that "the determining factor of the mental health of a population is the condition of its natural love life".

* * * *

Straight society has rules governing the use of your genitals . . . straight society makes war in *every* direction. So revolution must be total in every direction if we are to be liberated from *all* the systems of violence and exploitation. The rules should not be fought, they should be ignored and a whole new life-style lived in place of them. So we experiment . . . we start by believing that all life is sacred, that the body and all its functions are sacred, that the only obscenity lies in doing violence to another and the only perversion is to withhold our love. Moving freely, but gently so that our mistakes cause as little pain as possible, we discover and share the spiritual commune by looking at each other, by giving to each other, by touching each other, by working for each other, by sleeping with each other. By loving each other.

Maybe one day that preacher will be heard saying: "I want you to get up out of your clothes and come to Jesus" but until then it's just you and me. Hold on very tight.

1 Erich Fromm: *The Art of Loving.*

2 John Hewetson: *Sexual Freedom for the Young.*

3 Malinowski: *The Sexual Life of Savages.*

4 Wilhelm Reich: *The Function of the Orgasm.*

Unmasking the anxiety makers

ALAN ALBON

ALL ALEX COMFORT'S BOOKS are complementary, and his *The Anxiety Makers* now available in paperback (Panther Books 8s. 6d.) follows quite naturally from his *Nature and Human Nature* (Pelican 6s.), particularly as it is concerned with the forces that Comfort thinks must be understood if mankind is to look forward to a society that is relatively free from anxiety and is satisfying to live in.

In the earlier book Comfort shows how man inherited from his past certain anxieties chiefly in relation to sex and its associated relationships. Unfortunately, as he points out "Man is historically and mentally prone to confuse expertise in practical and verifiable matters with expertise in morality and conduct." In many fields however, man accepts expertise in a wide variety of subjects where experimental verification is possible. In fields of morality, politics, economics and human relationships (though increasingly capable of objective evaluation) we still have subjective pronouncements by judges, politicians, priests and doctors. Unfortunately much of social life is still directed by these subjective evaluations. Comfort has devoted a large part of his life to securing a more rational approach to these matters but, as he sadly observes, large numbers of seemingly intelligent people still wait on the advice of the priest in sexual and other important matters.

In the modern scene the doctor appears to be taking over the role of the priest and tends to support the established cultural pattern. Most of the advice on sexual hygiene purporting to be authoritative has been "motivated nonsense" and regrettably survives scientific exposure.

The anxiety-maker aims at making us frightened for our own good, though until the decline of religion this was largely the field of the priests although they were ably supported by the judges, politicians, physicians and other pillars of established society.

Examples of the astonishing things that were written and said about sex in complete ignorance of the physical and psychological facts by people who should have known a little better are related in detail.

The anxieties caused by the attitude to masturbation merit and receive a whole chapter together with illustrations of various apparatus designed to prevent it. The chapter begins, "The Emperor Heliogabalus offered a prize (so far, I understand unclaimed) to anyone who could invent a new vice. Masturbation was invented by an anonymous clergyman turned quack, who in 1710, or thereabouts published a treatise entitled *Onania, or the Henious Sin of Self-Pollution*. He did not invent

it as a practice, for it is fairly general among mammals, even those with no hands, nor as a vice, for an Irish penitential of about A.D. 575 apports a two year penance for its practice by monks (as against thirteen years for guiding barbarian raiders to a Christian settlement). What the author of *Onania* invented was a bogey, and his book inaugurated one of the most curious and unedifying chapters of medico-sexual history."

Medical writers until then had not concerned themselves very much with the subject and the medical consequences of excessive chastity concerned them as much as those of excessive licence—a bit awkward for the celibate priest. The subject then began to excite religious writers particularly as this was a source of sexual pleasure. To quote the view that was going to influence parents, doctors and teachers for a hundred years, "the intrinsic malice of pollution (meaning in this context self-induced orgasm of any kind) consists most probably in the intense sexual enjoyment and satiation of pleasure, occurring outside the legitimate bond of matrimony, which the effusion of seed produces—and not only nor principally in the voluntary frustration of the seed itself. Reason requires its prohibition, for if this pleasure, which nature only permits to entice men into matrimony, were to be lawful outside it, men would avoid the married state, which brings with it vast inconveniences, and the natural and legitimate propagation of the species would be defeated. (However) the effusion of semen would be legitimate for medical purposes only if only it could be achieved without causing pleasure." The physical and psychological measures that were used to achieve this end are fully described in the book and the anxiety and misery caused will probably never be measured. However he concludes the chapter by saying, "The astounding resilience of human commonsense against the anxiety makers is one of the really cheering aspects of history."

Another part of the anatomy that has been the source of much anxiety is the bowels and adults have had a very ambivalent attitude to this area. Fortunately parents nowadays have a much healthier attitude to their infants over the question of training, etc.

"It is not quite clear when we started to worry publicly about our bowels. Melancholics of all ages have been liable to the delusion that their bowels are stopped up. As with the guilty conviction that one is damned for having masturbated, the function of anxiety-making is the dissemination of such psychotic convictions by the authority of knowledge."

The temperature of this particular fetish never rose to quite the same heights as that of masturbation but I am sure many of us remember the residue of such anxieties in our childhood.

There are of course what Comfort calls "God's little allies", the *bacteria venereal*. Since the sixteenth century syphilis and pregnancy have been the two major physical allies of the anxiety-makers. It was only when military needs conflicted with public morals that the prevention of syphilis medically was undertaken. When syphilis was becoming a

menace to the war effort (1914-18), the moralists were out on a limb as they were generally the most vocal militarists and patriots. Contracting VD became a method of evading front line service.

The BMA, in dealing with what should be purely medical questions such as venereal disease, is moralistic and alarmist, giving loaded answers to loaded questions. As recently as 1963 we find the assistant secretary to the British Medical Association declaring that "Chastity removes fear of mixed liaison, mixed marriages and of children of mixed blood that are becoming an increasing problem," and going on, "As a doctor I can tell you that extra- and pre-marital intercourse is medically dangerous, morally degrading and nationally destructive". Although such nonsense is confined to fewer medical men, the old ideas die hard.

100% certainty in birth control means anxiety-free enjoyment of sex, love, pleasure abreaction and spontaneity which our culture fears. It has been reformers not doctors who have generally campaigned for this.

Comfort suggests in his last chapter that, "A sexual ethic based upon what is actually done would be a vast advance upon exhortatory or administrative versions—what these most lack is contact with real life".

We all know what sort of loaded counselling has increased anxiety and most people in this field are more aware of it, "The most balanced and permissive counsel has provided fodder for it, given anxious people under social pressure." Advisers now, instead of using the stick of eternal damnation, hold out hopes of communal approval for conformity. People have become anxious to be normal and healthy.

Speaking of children out of wedlock and their mothers, "Common-sense would suggest that some are disturbed and some are not: if we are anxious about the whole matter we shall generalise wildly as our fathers did about what is normal."

"It is ironical that, despite medical predisposition to moralise it is medicine through its study of the unconscious which has done most to undermine naive ideas of personal blameworthiness so that one now finds the medical right wing with the blimps in opposing the medical as against the moral assessment of delinquency. So long as we can be angry with Hitler, Haigh and Christie, or condemnatory, according to taste over Belsen or the Bomb or racial prejudice or Stalinism, we can at least keep our normality and freedom from comparable delinquent impulses relatively intact. These are wickednesses, having supposedly no causal origins and no intelligible sources but un-moral and vile behaviour. Recognition that the behaviour of Hitler, the sex maniac, or an unpopular prime minister is intelligible, and that its prevention falls within the scope of medicine, at least to some extent, is a shaking experience incompatible with many normal, and possibly salutary defence mechanisms."

It is now accepted that the range of sexual behaviour is wide. Comfort says we no longer ask, "Is this behaviour normal or abnormal?" though we are more or less obliged to ask whether or not

this or that behaviour is tolerable or intolerable. We now ask, "What does this unusual behaviour mean to this person? Of what use is it to him?" Anthropology and psychiatry have disposed of Catholic and Protestant ideas that the deviations they disapprove of are the acts of degenerate civilisation.

This is the first civilisation that has to face adulthood in that it has to deal with aggression and anti-social behaviour without being guided by dogmatic religious rules. The difficulty as Comfort points out is most of us are partly conditioned by old concepts and we have to deal with new ones. Anxiety-making is not only a process of pointing out dangers real and unreal but a particular kind or tone of warning, fear-creation with a large psychosymbolic load.

Recent examples of anxiety-making tend to be political rather than religious, e.g. American anti-communism and Russian anti-capitalism. Paranoia is the stock in trade of "mass" politics.

Targets of traditional anti-sexualism are love, choice and spontaneity in ordinary daily behaviour. General anxiety about urban technology, the bomb, brain-washing and the potentially unlimited coercive power of the state is widespread. There are obvious elements of unconscious aggression in our treatment of mental illnesses.

To make a final quotation from this valuable book:

"It is in sum a fairly safe prediction that in our society any technological interference with the possibilities of human reproductive behaviour, especially if it increases our freedom of choice,

1. will arouse immediate and predictable anxiety and anxiety-making, both from conservatives and from sensitives on the ground that it is hubristic;

2. will encounter uncritical enthusiasm and unselective use by the equally but less evidently anxious, for whom it provides a way of mechanising awkward emotions and reactions in the hope that they will be better able to be managed;

3. in so far as it is eventually adjudged through a shaking down process, usefully and socially beneficial, will encounter legislative stonewalling years beyond the effectual end of the argument in all other quarters, so that a situation of administrative duplicity will arise; and

4. the public will doggedly make up its own mind, ignoring paternalists and the law, making the noises required (as it now does over abortion or divorce) in accordance with the rule of the game imposed by the anxiety-makers, yet in the main setting aside their anxieties in the interests of a fuller unfrightened life. This is the traditional English, and in a more militant and publicly argued form, American expedient. We vote with our genitalia, as the Russians did with their feet. Against newer anxieties centring upon brainwashing and the like, it is a reassuring augury, even if the process is depressing to the progressives who see how much suffering could be saved if only the hold of the aborigines and enthusiasts could be loosened from our institutions."

Workers' control at Burgess Hill School

TONY GIBSON

ANTHONY WEAVER's piece in ANARCHY 103 (*A School Without a Head*) is followed by an editorial footnote which is not quite accurate. It is worth while pointing out this inaccuracy because what happened after Weaver left the school is of considerable relevance to his discussion.

Geoffrey Thorp did not become headmaster when the regime of the "full members" came to an end. The school was owned by New Age Schools Ltd., and when the Directors decided to change the regime they appointed Frank Lea as Headmaster, and when he left to become editor of *Peace News* Hughie Child took his place. The school ran with the Headmaster chosen by New Age Schools Ltd. for a year. During this time a great deal of money was lost and at the end of the summer term the Directors announced to the parents and staff that the school would close down for good. A general uproar ensued. Some of the parents had been persuaded to pay *two terms* in advance and hence were owed money, and the staff were furious at not being consulted. Rather than tamely accepting the sack, they opted for workers' control and approached the parents directly. The people who "got the sack" in a manner of speaking, were the Directors of New Age Schools Ltd.

A staff syndicate was formed; every member put up £5 (some of us could only just about scrape up that sum in 1947!) and we canvassed widely for funds. I think FREEDOM published an appeal, and I remember that a number of anarchists lent us money. Mrs. J. B. Priestley gave us a bank guarantee for £200, and the sum total of our efforts was to raise £800 with which we bought the school lock, stock and barrel from New Age Schools Ltd. This may seem a remarkably small sum with which to buy a school, but the staff syndicate agreed to take over all the debts of the old company.

The staff syndicate opened the school at the beginning of the Autumn Term in 1947. We elected Geoffrey Thorp, who had been working with us for a year, Headmaster, as such an office seemed useful, just as were the offices of housekeeper, handyman, secretary, cook and specialist teachers. But the office of Headmaster was different from that

which had previously been instituted in the school, as described by Anthony Weaver. There was no pay differential: the Headmaster got the same wages as the rest of us. The day-to-day running of the school was in the hands of the staff meeting, which was attended by all the staff, both teaching and domestic. Chairmanship of this meeting rotated week by week, and all matters of common interest were debated and decided on by this meeting. There was no group of self-appointed "full members" as in the earlier days described by Weaver.

The running of the school by staff democracy, the literal exercise of workers' control, was modified by the legal requirements of owning a company. The school had been bought from New Age Schools Ltd., and to accomplish this the staff syndicate created a new company, Burgess Hill School Ltd. This new company was constituted as a non-profit-making Friendly Society. The people who put the money up—the members of the staff syndicate, their friends and many parents—had to elect Directors to be legally responsible for the finances of the school. There was, however, a special rule written into the constitution of the society that although the shareholders should elect five Directors to the board, the staff of the school (who were not *obliged* to be shareholders) should elect two extra Directors to represent the staff meeting directly.

It may be thought that a Board of Directors is redundant to the direct control by the staff, but in order to get things done, to obtain credit, manage a bank account, etc., the Directors were a legal necessity. In the six years in which I was working at Burgess Hill School under this system, there was no friction between the staff meeting and the Directors. The former were largely responsible for appointing the latter for their year of office anyway.

Weaver's article, written in 1946 before the staff syndicate took over, is largely about the division of power. In practice the office of Headmaster which we got Geoffrey Thorp to fill did not bring any great complications. It is a tribute to him personally that he did his job in a climate of workers' control and did not interfere with other people doing theirs. Under the constitution the staff could remove the Headmaster or anyone else if they wished, through their double representation on the board of Directors.

Anyone who has worked in an organisation which is founded on really joint decisions knows the limitations of democracy. The staff was fairly large and diverse in background, skills and outlook. There were domestic staff of no great educational background, intellectual teachers who could hardly boil themselves an egg, idealist teachers, lazy teachers, refugees from the orthodox educational mill, people with very varied reasons for wanting to work in such a community. It worked pretty well on the whole; where there were rows, friction, inefficiency and frustration, it was not the fault of the system under which we worked.

No one could blame the Headmaster or any external authority; we came face to face with our own capacities and shortcomings. This is really how I conceive workers' control in an anarchist society, and I can understand how many people would not like it if they got it.

For myself I found the experience very rewarding indeed. I have not dealt here with the value of a school from the point of view of the pupils. That I tried to assess in *Youth for Freedom*, published in 1948. (Much of that pamphlet is, I am glad to say, hopelessly outdated by the march of events: one aspect of the revolution is upon us.) What I have been concerned to record is the practical example of workers' control which the staff syndicate put into practice, not inspired by any political theory but merely by the logic of the situation. The system of democratic control which we set up worked fairly well for the six years I was there and enabled a great deal to be accomplished on a very tiny budget and a minimum of capital investment. Naturally I am not fully competent to discuss the last few years of Burgess Hill during which it ran to extinction, for I was not there. Practically all of the original staff syndicate had left for one reason and another by 1954, and if those who came later chose to alter the constitution that was their business. Although ex-staff and ex-parents could have retained legal control to a large degree by virtue of our £5 shares, in practice we were not sufficiently concerned to do more than take a distant interest. Had we done otherwise it would certainly not have been "workers' control".

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