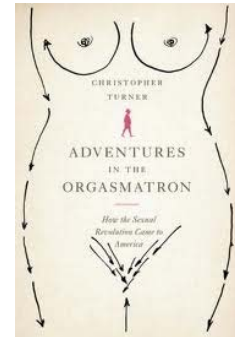


Wilhelm Reich -- Depth Psychology and Bodywork

Holotropic Breathwork facilitators can gain dimension for their practice by increasing their understanding of its historical antecedents. Christopher Turner's *Adventures in the Orgasmatron: How the Sexual Revolution Came to America*, a recent cultural/political biography of Wilhelm Reich, provides insights into the development of breath and bodywork in depth psychology.



Early on, Reich was Freud's star trainee. Although he became progressively psychotic later in life and died in prison in 1957 at age 60, he significantly influenced the beatnik and hippie eras. His direct trainees included A.S. Neil, who founded Summerhill School, and Fritz Perls, of Gestalt fame. He indirectly influenced Allen Ginsberg and Norman Mailer, and he was a stimulus, which angered him, for introducing psychoanalytic ideas to the American advertising that promoted mass consumption.

Turner, in his *Economist*-designated book of the year, paints Reich's biography against a background canvas of events, ranging from the activities of Freud and his psychoanalytic spawn to the societal tumult and cataclysms of twentieth century Europe and America.



Young Freud

A twenty-two-year-old medical student at the University of Vienna on leave to begin study after serving on the Italian front in the First World War, Reich came as a pilgrim to Freud's doorstep in 1919. They immediately connected. Freud was so taken by Reich that he soon referred a patient to him, even though Reich had not quite begun his own psychoanalysis.

When he did begin, Reich chose an analyst who had a practically pornographic interest in sex, and for the first time he confided the guilty secrets and tragedies of his scarred childhood. Reich was sexually precocious, masturbating his younger brother's nurse at age five and losing his virginity to his parents' cook at age eleven and a half. He was privy from age ten to his mother's affair with his tutor, which his jealous father forced him to reveal. His father's fury drove his mother to repeated, injurious suicide attempts. Finally she succeeded and died when Reich was thirteen. Reich's first published psychoanalytic article, *A Case of Pubertal Breaching of the Incest Taboo*, portrayed a fictitious patient who was in fact Reich himself.



Young Reich

Four years after his mother's death Reich's father purposefully contracted a fatal pneumonia by standing to his waist in freezing water and pretending to fish (Turner, 2011, p. 47). He had taken out a life insurance policy, whose proceeds he hoped would compensate for major investment losses. At age seventeen Reich became an orphan responsible for a large estate and guardian of his younger brother. In less than a year the Russians invading Austria confiscated the estate. Destitute, Reich enlisted in the Austrian army.

With psychoanalytic brilliance, Reich took Freud's early stipulation that neurosis was caused by sexual repression and began a run to the extreme that dominated the rest of his career. At first covertly, but then openly to his professional peers, Reich professed that the work of therapy was to release inhibition in order to promote profound and frequent orgasm. Reich progressively generalized orgasmic intensity into the fundamental vital force in the universe — orgone energy. With psychotic intensity he eventually ran far beyond psychotherapy, building devices to

accumulate and deploy orgone energy to cure physical disease, including cancer, and ultimately to battle UFOs.

I - Early Career

Reich's sexual charge resonated both with the sexual preoccupation of the depth psychology community as well as the historical climate of the larger culture. Affairs with patients were not at all uncommon in the early days of psychoanalysis, according to Turner. Freud warned against it, but he acknowledged that because of the matter of psychoanalysis it would never be possible to avoid "little laboratory explosions" (Turner, 2011, p. 54). Freud's warning only deterred Reich with active patients, but caused him no reluctance once analysis ended. An early post-analysis affair with a young woman, whom Reich declined to marry when her parents applied pressure, indirectly led to the young woman's death and then the suicide of her distraught mother (Turner, 2011, p. 57). Less than two months after his lover's death Reich began an analysis of another that lasted only six and a half months before she terminated upon Reich's confessing his attraction to her. Shortly after, they began an affair. This time Reich acceded to parental pressure, and Annie became his first wife.



Wilhelm, Annie and children

Although Reich's theory, enunciated in *The Function of the Orgasm*, may be seen as a projection of his own preoccupation, it compelled attention and put Reich in the forefront of the psychoanalytic movement just as Freud was withdrawing from the scene, afflicted with oral cancer. According to Turner, "As the second generation of therapists sought to redefine the relationship between the erotic demands of an increasingly liberated youth and the repressive measures that constrained them, Reich's theory of the orgasm became the defining metaphor for their sexual revolt" (Turner, 2011, pp. 74-5). Reich's brilliance as a diagnostician and effectiveness as a therapist added support to his prominence.

Reich's eminence was also established by his social radicalism, which heeded Freud's 1918 stipulation that mental hygiene should be as available to the common man as physical medicine. He became a major actor in the Abulatorium, a free psychoanalytic clinic opened in Vienna in 1922. The clinic not only treated an impressive number of patients, but also served as a significant training facility for analysts. Reich became leader of its technical seminar and deputy medical director.

Vienna, Paris, Berlin, and London had been the stellar cities of Europe before the First World War, but now the Austrian empire had disintegrated. Vienna became critically starved of food, deprived of transport, and devoid of commerce as the victorious Allies exacted crushing war reparations. Crowds, swollen with demobilized soldiers from the broken army, wandered the streets. Riots exploded. Ingenious economic management by future-famed Joseph Schumpeter averted revolution or foreign takeover. But the population still starved, and tuberculosis became rife. Freud wrote to a friend, "All four years of the war were a joke compared to the bitter gravity of these months, and surely the next ones, too" (Nasar, 2011, p. 211). At one point Freud was reduced to taking potatoes in payment for psychoanalytic sessions.

Freud distanced himself from the crowds, but Reich felt their energy. He had joined the growing Communist party. Visiting Freud at his summer retreat, Reich asked Freud to analyze him, was rejected, felt very disappointed and insulted. The rift grew over all the succeeding years. Reich strongly disagreed with the project of psychoanalysis as Freud and his conservative followers

finally conceived it, that is, to reconcile people with the status quo, which in the end reflects the everlasting struggle of *Eros* and *Thanatos*. Instead, Reich believed that psychoanalytic revolution could break the chains of repression and allow orgasmic energy to propel people to their highest potential. He found encouragement in Marx and dreamed of a fusion of psychoanalysis and Marxism. Early Communism embraced sexual freedom, and Reich maintained that ideal even after Stalin made an about face and rejected it.

II – Later Career and Influence

In 1927, at age 30, haunted by memories of his father's and brother's death, Reich withdrew to the famous sanatorium at Davos, suffering with Vienna's rampant tuberculosis. Annie Reich "felt that a 'deterioration process' set in during Reich's recuperation in Davos, [marking] the beginning of an incipient psychosis," according to Turner (Turner, 2011, p. 108). Exposure to Thomas Mann's novel, *The Magic Mountain*, set in Davos, may have intensified Reich's sexual theorizing.

In 1929 Reich appointed himself "scientific director" of the Socialist Society for Sex Counseling and Sex Research and funded it himself. Over three years it established six free clinics in Vienna, but it never got support more than Reich's personal funding (Turner, 2011, pp. 113-4). It was the first of a number of movements he tried to instigate with little success. They brought him only small followings, although he pursued them with passion and charisma. And his earnest pursuit often brought him trouble. Most calamitous of all was his development of orgone theory.

Reich had a last visit with Freud in 1930 at Grundslee, a lake near Salzburg. Freud and his daughter Anna were staying at one end of the lake, while an annual free-love festival of analysts and other bohemians played at the other. Reich and Freud argued. Freud angrily told Reich that his viewpoint was "no longer compatible with the middle path of psychoanalysis" (Turner, 2011, p. 122). In the midst of their argument, however, Freud recommended two analysts in Berlin from whom Reich should seek therapy. Even though it was their final break, Reich, father-transference intact, obediently headed to Berlin.

Besides obedience to father figure Freud, Reich moved to Berlin in pursuit of his utopian goal of free sexuality through therapeutic and political efforts. Reich left Annie and their children behind in Vienna, his affairs having impacted their marriage. Annie, who eventually became an analyst herself, was in analysis with Anna Freud, adding another tangle to Reich's relation with Freud.

Hitler's ascent required Reich to flee Germany. As a psychoanalyst, a Communist, and a Jew he was in the Nazi crosshairs, to say nothing of his challenge to the fascist repression and perversion of sexuality. Reich returned briefly to Vienna and a failure of reconciliation with Annie. Then after a brief and dangerous and necessarily furtive return to Berlin, he escaped to Denmark. Unable to find permanent asylum there, he tried Sweden, then Norway, where he hoped to collaborate with Trotsky. Finally, in 1939, he got to America. Shortly thereafter he met Ilse Olendorff, who became only his second legal wife. He had regarded the dancer Elsa Lindenberg, his lover and partner during his European search for asylum, as a wife all but legally, but both of them shared radical opposition to marriage. Her Dionysian dance exemplified the sexual liberation Reich promoted. Finally, however, she would not follow him to America, and Reich was bereft.



Ilse, Wilhelm, and son

Ilse Olendorff devoted herself to Reich as secretary and lab assistant for almost fifteen years, even though his preoccupation with orgone energy grew to psychotic proportions.

Reich proclaimed more and more aggressively that constriction of the “biopsychic energy” he believed he had discovered resulted not only in neurosis but also physical disease, especially cancer. Reich devised instruments to observe orgone and administer it therapeutically. The most notable device was an “orgone accumulator,” a box with a door, big enough for a person to sit in. It had an inner layer of sheet iron that was insulated by rock wool from an outer layer of plywood. A small window was in the door. A person sat in the box for an extended time to absorb the orgone that it accumulated in hopes that varied from curing or preventing disease to achieving spontaneous orgasm.

Norman Mailer tried the box. William Burroughs used the box off and on through his later life. He excitedly recommended it to Jack Kerouac and later introduced it to Kurt Cobain. It gets an appearance in *Barbarella*, Vadim’s 1968 film, where the evil scientist Durand-Durand, modeled partly on Reich, uses a device like an orgone box to cause Jane Fonda, the title character, to die of overwhelming pleasure. The orgone accumulator becomes an “orgasmatron” in Woody Allen’s 1973 comedy film, *Sleeper*.



An Orgone Accumulator

The unintended consequences of Reich’s work loom larger in many ways than his psychoanalytic importance. The psychoanalytic sexualization of American culture owes at least as much to him as to Freud, although it is not as either would have had it. Freud’s American nephew, publicist Edward Bernays, used psychoanalytic strategy in the 1920’s to encourage smoking as an expression of women’s liberation.



Ernest Dichter, another refugee from Vienna, became the corporate hero of applied psychoanalysis by pioneering motivational research to uncover the hidden desires and urges of consumers. As a prolific consultant to the advertising industry, he advised on the development of images and other ways of tempting consumers’ hidden desires. Among the many results of Dichter’s influence were the phallic shape of lipstick and its portrayal in sexually suggestive images. Dichter counseled the automobile industry to use sexual suggestion for advertising and marketing automobiles. Plymouth boosted its lagging sales of sensible family sedans by using the sex appeal of convertibles to draw men into its showrooms, where wives then prevailed to choose the practical sedans. Many ideas that Dichter introduced obviously underlie media advertising across the spectrum from print to TV to the Web.

As the beatniks morphed into the hippies, a contrary influence of Freud came to the fore in the writings of Herbert Marcuse, who linked polymorphous perversity with the idea that some repression was necessary to the function of society, and proposed that liberation could lead to a disruptive but nonaggressive force for social change.

Reich finally came under scrutiny by the Food and Drug Administration. After investigation, the FDA lodged a complaint for “false and misleading claims” about the orgone accumulator. It sought to prohibit sale of the “influencing machine” and recall all the devices. Reich refused to reply to the complaint, and the court issued an injunction. Reich was brought to trial for ignoring the injunction. He chose to defend himself rather than have a lawyer. He performed so bizarrely that the judge privately suggested to Ilse, who had left the marriage but continued to attend to Reich’s affairs, that he should plead insanity. Ilse was afraid to convey the suggestion, because she thought it would infuriate Reich (Turner, 2011, p. 406). A jury convicted him. He was sentenced to two years in prison and required to destroy all the accumulators and relevant literature. He went to prison on March 22, 1957. On November 3 he was discovered dead in his cell of a heart attack.



Reich in custody

III - Therapeutic Method

Turner masterfully depicts Reich against the canvas of personal history and contemporary cultural events. He describes Reich’s therapeutic capacity primarily as it dramatizes the history, but our focus here is on Reich’s therapeutic antecedents and his methods as of particular interest to Holotropic Breathwork practitioners.

When Reich first approached him in 1919 Freud had been practicing “psychoanalysis,” the new treatment method he invented, for 23 years. Ten years prior to that Freud, the 29-year old neurologist, had spent four and a half months studying under Jean-Martin Charcot at the famous Salpetriere Hospital in Paris, an asylum with 5,000 patients. Charcot used hypnosis to induce and dissolve symptoms of patients deemed hysterics.

Before Charcot, hysteria (a term from Greek meaning ‘wandering womb’) was considered only a female problem, sometimes treated by mechanical genital stimulation to induce orgasm. In 1878, a doctor at the Salpetriere describes a stimulated patient first throwing back her head, then her body arching, then solely moving her pelvis. She cries with pleasure, moves salaciously, and subsides, turning onto her vulva (Turner, 2011, p. 75). Charcot was party to such physical treatments, despite his pioneering hypnotic treatment.

Returning to private practice in Vienna, Freud practiced physical treatments such as hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, and massage before turning exclusively to hypnosis, based on the method of a colleague, Josef Breuer. Freud would hypnotize patients, apply pressure to their foreheads or hold their heads in his hands to distract them from their conscious defenses, and then instruct them to recall traumatic events (Turner, 2011, pp. 20-1).

Freud ultimately moved away from physical methods to the sparse verbal encouragement of free association that became the main method of psychoanalysis. Reich moved oppositely, more and more incorporating physical methods with psychoanalytic assault on patients’ defenses.

Embracing Freud’s early idea that sexual repression was the core of neurosis, Reich worked therapeutically to break through defenses that inhibited free expression of sexuality. He pushed beyond individual therapy to proselytize for the overthrow of societal constraints against sexual freedom, advocating such matters as youthful sexual exploration, easy availability of abortion, and use of diaphragms — the one available means of birth control.

Freud and many other analysts in Vienna were not comfortable from the outset with Reich's ideas about sexuality, but they agreed on his brilliance, excellence as a diagnostician, and his flair for psychic dynamics. They saw an impressive and intense personality, a forceful speaker, gifted with clinical astuteness and technical skill that made him an excellent teacher. Anna Freud called him an inspiring teacher (Turner, 2011, p. 89). He had an unusual gift of empathy for his patients. A knowledgeable patient describes him:

...as naturally and absolutely concentrated on the patient. His acuity to detect the slightest inflection of the voice, a passing shadow of a change in the expression was without a parallel, at least in my experience. [He was tenacious] in bringing home to the patient what he had discovered (Turner, 2011, p. 91).

This approach clearly went beyond the conduct of conventional psychoanalysis, in which the therapist maintains a distant and nondirective stance.

Fritz Perls, already a psychoanalyst himself, turned to Reich in Berlin 1930 after an unsatisfactory experience with a very conservative conventional analyst. The analyst would not shake Perl's hand, limited his verbal response to one sentence per week over multiple sessions, and signaled the end of a session by scratching his foot on the floor. In contrast Perls found Reich vital, alive, and rebellious, eager to discuss anything, including politics and sex. Perls, who saw Reich for three years, said Reich was the first person he had been able to trust, and said he learned brazenness from Reich (Turner, 2011, p. 127). Reich was clearly a major influence on the style of Gestalt therapy Perls developed.

Freud originally conceived psychoanalysis as catharsis for trauma that inhibited instinctual gratification. But by the time of his 1930 publication *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud had come to believe that a certain degree of inhibition was required to adapt instinct to the reality of civilization. Reich, on the other hand, encouraged overcoming all inhibition to sexual freedom and total orgasm in order to replace existing society with utopia.

Reich published *Function of the Orgasm* in 1927 in support of his increasingly radical ideas. He became the champion of young analysts who dissented from Freud's increasingly authoritarian views (Turner, 2011, p. 120). This polarized the psychoanalytic profession and provided unfortunate cover for Reich's developing psychosis.

Reich's radical ideas about sexuality in psychoanalysis merged with enthusiasm for Bolshevism, which he believed supported sexual freedom. History proved him wrong, but he correctly judged Nazism, which he saw perverting libido into orgiastic fascist enthusiasm. Mainstream psychoanalysis, not least because of Freud and its other important Jewish figures, was trying to fly below the Nazi radar. Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* waved a dangerous red flag that attracted attention.

Reich's 1933 book *Character Analysis* advanced a therapeutic approach, later called "character analytic vegetotherapy," that treated a person's entire character — not just individual symptoms — as a manifestation of neurosis. Reich theorized that character incorporated "body armoring," which repressed orgasmic energy. Reich's book immensely influenced the subsequent development of psychoanalysis. Though she did not acknowledge it, Anna Freud's famous book *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, published in 1936, drew significantly on the idea of character analysis (Turner, 2011, p. 164). Reich's new method



Anna Freud

of analyzing a patient's defenses evolved into what became known as ego psychology. It became the dominant therapeutic practice in the 1950s, especially in the United States, according to Turner, and *Character Analysis* became a standard training manual, even though Reich had moved far beyond verbal therapy (Turner, 2011, p. 91).

By 1934 Reich was in political and personal exile in Norway, excluded professionally from the International Psychoanalytic Association. His rejection by mainstream psychoanalysis had its seeds in his divergence from Freud about sexual repression, but his monomaniacal evangelism for "vegetative currents" put him beyond the pale (Turner, 2011, p. 169).

Exiled from the psychoanalytic profession, Reich no longer felt bound by its code of professional conduct (Turner, 2011, p. 176). He abandoned the talking cure entirely. Excited by the ecstatic dance of his new partner Elsa Lindenberg, he began to assault patients' tense muscular armor by having them breathe vigorously and deeply as he worked aggressively on their bodies.



Elsa Lindenberg

Reich discovered the biopsychic energy that he came to interpret as orgone by chance, as far as he was concerned. He was working on a Danish patient who evidenced an extremely stiff neck that Reich thought was a symptom of severe repression. Aggressive work broke down the patient's defenses, producing vegetative shock for three days. His face changed rapidly from white to yellow or blue; his skin was mottled with various tints. He had severe head pains front and back, rapid heartbeat, diarrhea, exhaustion, and lost hold on reality. Reich thought vegetative currents had been released (Turner, 2011, pp. 168-9).



Reich with the Orgone Gun

Freud had originally conceived libido as electrical or chemical in nature, and Reich also began to conceptualize the vegetative current he believed he had discovered in terms of physics. He bought an oscillograph for a substantial sum and began to try to measure electrical discharge from the nipples and genitalia of sexually excited volunteers. He thought he could measure the difference between ordinary and "total" orgasm. Thus began Reich's quasi-scientific quest to measure and therapeutically use orgone with a variety of instruments, mostly self-designed. He became more and more delusional about the results of his efforts, but he was so forceful that he even briefly got Einstein to listen to him. His last invention was an orgone 'gun' that he used to drive away UFOs.

Despite Reich's insanity, his original idea that orgasms were necessary for good health became widely accepted by the 1960s, although few knew enough to attribute the idea to Reich. U.S. President John F. Kennedy used the idea to justify his hypersexual philandering (Turner, 2011, p. 432).

Turner devotes the final chapter of his book to accounts of how popular culture adopted ideas about sexuality and liberation that owed much to Reich, although many of the ideas got played out in ways thoroughly at odds with Reich's intentions. In 1964 *Time* magazine published a cover story on Reich and "the Second Sexual Revolution" that was playing out in the 1960s.

Turner argues that Fritz Perls was "the biggest freedom peddler of them all" and portrays him as a central figure in an unflattering account of Esalen and the human potential movement. In 1969, at

age 76, Perls left Esalen, dismayed that it had become a corporate venue for the commercial reentry of the discarded soul (Turner, 2011, p. 440). Fleeing Nixon as well as Esalen, he founded a small therapeutic community on Vancouver Island, Canada. Less than a year later he fell ill while returning from travel and died of a heart attack.

Turner closes by raising Herbert Marcuse's doubt that sexual pleasure may not be revolutionary, but may be offered by the establishment in a manner that effectively represses real political and economic freedom.

IV – Commentary

If Turner's critique obtains, the 1960s degenerates into a meaningless Reichian orgy, and the foundation of the transpersonal movement collapses under the weight of corporate co-optation while the sound track plays psychedelic rock music.

Alternatively, we can salvage the durable building blocks from the crumbling Reichian foundation of the New Age and build a new structure from the best work of Freud and Jung, held together by holotropic cement and supporting a truly transformative transpersonal psychology.

The most durable material from Reich is his understanding that healing requires consideration of a person's entire character, not just individual symptoms, and that character is both psychic and bodily. We can also appreciate how Reich demonstrated the therapeutic power of combined intense breathing and bodywork.

On the other hand, we must introduce four major critical issues:

1. The idea that repressed libido is the sole cause of neurosis severely limits understanding of the psyche.
2. Therapist-initiated bodywork does not facilitate expression of the whole range of material that needs resolution, plus a therapist's presumption of expertise can compromise the healing potential of bodywork.
3. Reich wrongly conceived biopsychic energy in terms of materialist physics. The phenomena Reich attributed to orgone are immaterial but have reference to an objective process whose animation is spirit.
4. Group process and music are very helpful to amplify psychic opening, in addition to breathing and bodywork.

1 – The Psyche is Vast

While sexuality and its distortion by trauma powerfully affect human behavior, many other factors must be considered in order to understand human behavior in individuals, groups, and societies. Freudian psychoanalysis at its beginning focused on the individual person and the person's post-natal psycho-sexual development, culminating in genital organization at puberty. The Viennese and surrounding European cultural context provided substantial reinforcement for this perspective. Shrinking the perspective of psychoanalysis to such causes would be dangerously simplistic, but it is important to think about how the paradigm of European culture influenced the cognicentric and ethnocentric orientation of psychoanalysis.

By late life Freud himself had expanded psychoanalytic consideration to the large issue of civilization. His early follower Alfred Adler broached the importance of social issues in development. The societal significance of psychoanalytic ideas played out in spades when co-opted by corporate American advertising and merchandising.

Carl Jung significantly conceptualized psychic function in terms of overarching anthropological and spiritual factors. Otto Rank introduced the psychic significance of birth trauma. Stanislav Grof has expanded Rank's idea into an extensive characterization of perinatal dynamics. Grof has also provided a clinical account of how Jungian archetypes can become infused into the psyche during perinatal experience. Grof's investigations have illuminated not only the function of the psyche in terms of the individual but also as a portal that opens out upon the vastness of history, culture, and the universe at large.

2 – Bodywork

Reich's repudiation of talk therapy breached the dike that limited depth psychology to the cognitive method of talk therapy. His character analysis identified the importance of bodily cues in the expression of character, but he went further with hands-on work. It is one thing for the therapist to take account of body cues for forming a diagnosis, but even commenting on them to a patient goes only part way. Hands-on bodywork uses a bodily method to address the body's expression of character in the selfsame mode. Also, using bodywork in therapy is more holistic than using only verbal means. It is an irony of conventional therapy in the contemporary United States that physical contact between therapist and patient is mostly considered a breach of professional ethics. Perhaps it is a major advance that handshakes are allowed, and even the occasional hug.

Despite his advance, Reich stopped short of meeting the body completely on its own terms, because he left it to the discernment of the therapist to decide how to administer to the body. It is unlikely that any therapist could infallibly discern the most effective approach for hands-on work didactically. The preference of Holotropic Breathwork to use the participant's information to focus bodywork is more likely to meet the body on its own terms. The fact that the Holotropic Breathwork model basically undertakes bodywork simply by offering resistance to a push from the participant also diminishes the aspect of the facilitator as expert.

When a therapist presents as an expert to a person in therapy, the therapist does not convey a message that the source of healing is the inner capacity of the person. An experienced emergency room physician who trained as a Holotropic Breathwork facilitator has explained the situation this way: "If you show up in the emergency room with a wound, I can clean and disinfect it and bind it up, but I cannot make it heal. I can create a favorable condition for healing, but the actual healing depends on the resources of your own body." So with the psyche. The facilitator must supply a safe space and bring from previous experience patience, compassion, and courage to attend and protect participants even in their extremity of experience, but the participant's healing comes from within, not from the facilitator. From its ancient Greek origin, 'therapist' is the temple attendant who waits on the steps with the sufferer, who has come to dream the healing dreams.

A therapist's presentation as expert compounds the very well-known clinical problem of transference, wherein the patient projects on to the therapist a characterization of some authority figure from the patient's past. At the very least, even the cleverest therapist is hard pressed to grasp the nuances of that projection. At the worst, the therapist may be blindsided by an assault.

A therapist's presumption of expertise, whether in administering body work or diagnostically interpreting a patient's process, may be completely wide of the mark. A story from Zen Buddhism is to the point.

According to custom, a wandering monk could present at the gate of an abbey, ask to engage in a disputation, and if winning, receive a meal and lodging for the night. On such an occasion at an abbey, the abbot, who usually undertook the dispute, was preoccupied and could find no one to send to the gate but his brother, who was not only somewhat dim of wit but lacking one eye. Later, the abbot was surprised to have the wondering monk appear only to acknowledge his defeat and pay formal thanks before departing. Astounded that his brother had bested the fellow, the abbot inquired about the event. The monk said a dialogue of gesture had been agreed on, and he made the first move as visitor by raising one finger, to signify oneness. The brother had held up two fingers to indicate the rise of duality in the face of oneness. The monk had responded with three fingers to signify that out of duality emerged the process that gave rise to the chaos of all existence. The brother had held up a closed fist to remind the monk that ultimately oneness encompassed all, and the monk had capitulated.

When the abbot later came across his brother, he decided to double check. His brother reported being insulted when the monk held up one finger to call attention to the brother's one eye. The brother managed to restrain himself and held up two fingers to congratulate the monk for having two eyes. But when the monk held up three fingers to mock their having only three eyes between them, the brother's anger broke, and he threatened the monk with his fist.

A person who has a psychological problem would not have that problem unless the person were connected to the cause of that problem on some level. The level may be unconscious and very deep, but the person's acting out as a consequence of the problem demonstrates unquestionably the connection with its cause. The work of therapy is to create the conditions under which understanding of that cause can emerge into consciousness.

3 – Energy

Reich conceived biopsychic energy wrongly in terms of prevailing physics, because he wanted to stand on the authority of science. Science rose above the pervasive chaos of Europe, with increasingly powerful discoveries that drove a burgeoning technology. Physics was the supreme science and Einstein a god whose blessing Reich in psychotic extremity sought. Einstein had shown a profound connection between matter and energy. Despite Einstein's pushing beyond the Newtonian paradigm, however, physics still falls short.

The concept of energy in physics remains a simplistic characterization of a highly complex phenomenon. Energy is characterized in relation to mechanism. Although mechanical metaphors yield useful understanding of many aspects of nature, they fail to address its full complexity. As Walt Whitman exclaims, "the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery" (*Song of Myself*, Stanza 31).

Reich's discovery of 'biopsychic energy' was not an illusion. He observed a real phenomenon; he was mistaken only in conceptualizing it within the limited framework of the physics of his time.

The noted physicist Abner Shimony says that physics will not succeed ultimately until it renders its notion of energy under the rubric of a generalized psychology (Shimony, 1993, p. 320). He does not mean psychology narrowly defined in today's mainstream positivist, materialist context,

but a much larger conception. Aristotle understood a larger context, although he was limited by a primitive mathematics and the lack of modern experimentation. Nonetheless, he realized that matter, form, and force were not enough to constitute a complete explanation of things. He realized that explanation also had to account for the spirit that animates life, the Greek word for which is 'psyche.' What is more, Aristotle also realized that psyche expresses the desire that lures the universe toward perfection. And what 'perfection' meant to Aristotle then is what we now call 'wholeness.'

The Aristotelian concept of perfection got tangled up with Christian theology. Medieval science, such as it was, achieved little because it always tried to explain perfection as a Divine purpose. Modern science began when Galileo disentangled phenomena from Divine purpose. Although he consequently suffered the wrath of the Church, he freed science for dramatic progress. Unfortunately, instead of just settling for getting God out of the bath, physics drained the whole tub of purpose and reduced the universe to a blindly driven mechanism.

Freud's interpretation of that mechanism was a simplistic hydraulic setup in which the free flow of libido was constricted by trauma. Freud's mechanistic conception of the psyche was influenced by the success of science in his day. The spectacular subsequent development of science and the technology it has spawned have magnified their influence. They have influenced psychology to build electro-mechanical, chemical, neurocognitive, informational, computational, and quantum models of the psyche that reduce spirit to a wandering ghost. In consequence, many who feel the reality of spirit who have turned away from the whole scientific project.

The phenomenon Reich observed in his Dutch patient can be seen in Holotropic Breathwork and other experiential work. The need to explain it in materialistic terms has been set aside in some of these quarters, which possibility might have spared Reich aggravation of his psychotic tendency. On the other hand, when the phenomenon is plainly spoken to as some kind of energy, it is often characterized as an energy that does not have any substantial scientific comparison, and quasi-spiritual explanations inimical to science have arisen.

There are alternative explanations that draw on discoveries of quantum physics to try to build a bridge to spirit, but unfortunately even the discoveries of modern physics that upset the Newtonian paradigm have not led to a complete renunciation of materialist theories of perception. Such theories ultimately deny that we can have direct experiential access to the nature of things. These theories tend to characterize experience in terms of sensory perception, but infer from it a reality that is essentially mathematical in character and not accessible by direct experience. This is another approach that sets mystical experience and scientific understanding asunder. One consequence is the difficulty of finding an adequate explanation for the phenomenon of consciousness. A juxtaposed consequence is the treatment of consciousness as an entity unto itself, exercising agency.

A metaphysic that explains both direct experiential access to the processes that comprise the fundamental nature of the universe as well as the capacity to objectively characterize and communicate that experience must discard both the materialist myth of science and the religious prejudice that myth is the only adequate means of addressing the reality of spirit. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead crafts such a metaphysic. It stipulates feeling as the fundamental instance of actuality — not the emotionally laced feeling of ordinary experience, but feeling that is effectively compassion, gathering in itself the diversity of everything that is not itself. Feeling, so conceived, also manifests purpose, aiming at the goal of becoming perfectly itself, but perfection beyond itself, the manifestation of self-creating, self-organizing process that begets the energy for healing and growing toward wholeness.

4 – Group Process and Creativity

Reich's work involved neither group process nor music. His closest brush with music came from his time with the avant-garde dancer and choreographer Elsa Lindenberg.

Turner refers to the culture of the sixties only summarily, mentioning it mostly to reflect his disdain for Fritz Perls at Esalen. Turner paints Esalen as a wallow of mystical psychoanalysis that indulged Perls until he fled, overfull of fashion and faddishness.

Turner is tone deaf to the profound role music played in the counterculture. That music opened ears of people to subsequently appreciate the varieties of music whose synergy with breathing is so very effective for deepening the Holotropic Breathwork experience.

Turner also completely overlooks the importance of Esalen's developing group dynamics, which has become a fundamental element in the Holotropic Breathwork process. The development of group dynamics grew from diverse sources, psychodrama, Gestalt, and the work of Kurt Lewin, founder of modern social psychology and Director of MIT's Research Center for Group Dynamics, whose ideas influenced the small study groups at Tavistock Institute in England and the T-groups of the National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Bethel, Maine (Shaffer & Gallinsky, 1974, pp. 12-16).

Besides Fritz Perls's use of Gestalt at Esalen, William Schutz developed the Encounter group there. The power of groups was demonstrated over and over at Esalen, and its examples became significant in the development of groups generally. In his disdain for Esalen, Turner seems to have missed at least the indirect influence of Reich's psychoanalytically-based aggressive, non-verbal techniques.

The dynamics of group process have been studied per se and speculated about in terms of psychological and anthropological theory. The tribal origins of humanity establish the value of the group as an ancient phenomenon critical to human survival. Antecedents seem apparent in the behavior of our animal ancestors. New discoveries from 1990 at the University of Parma, Italy, provide suggestions that neurocellular activity plays a role in group behavior. Certain brain cells, dubbed mirror neurons, seem to operate in complex copying behavior and may play an important evolutionary role in supporting empathy that binds social groups.

Aside from the therapeutic power of group process, the group can be a profound resource that mitigates against a facilitator's being seen as an expert. The perception of facilitator as expert undercuts the basic principle of Holotropic Breathwork that healing comes from within.

V – Conclusion

Turner has written a masterful and extensively researched account of Reich's life, informatively portrayed against the tumultuous cultural background of Europe roiled by its wars and America preoccupied with sex and Communism. Turner details the trajectory of Reich from brilliant, young analyst to ranting, paranoid victim and the collateral impact of psychoanalytic weaponry on American culture. He painstakingly portrays Reich's psychic degeneration in American, abetted by charges of medical quackery, investigations by government agents, and UFO mythology, and he chronicles Reich's unintended influence across the range from beatniks to hippies, to mainstream corporations, to President John F. Kennedy.

Reich pioneered the psychoanalytic development of intense breathing combined with bodywork, which has yielded central elements in Holotropic Breathwork. His theory of character analysis broached the importance of considering body and psyche as a whole in order to achieve therapeutic effectiveness.

Holotropic Breathwork practitioners can benefit not only from studying Reich's positive contributions to psychotherapy, but they can also learn caution by contemplating his dangerous shortcomings. Reich's self-assured expertise left no room for criticism that might have caused him to become aware of his slide into paranoia. Also, Reich operated mostly alone or in an authoritarian way once he was exiled from the psychoanalytic community. A peer community such as the group of Holotropic Breathwork facilitators helps its members stay grounded. The directive way Reich managed patients metastasized into authoritarian demands for subservience that begot a quasi-cult around him, a cult that survives to this day, still championing orgone theory.

Experience with Holotropic Breathwork demonstrates over and over no expert can effectively dig up the material that participants need to work on. Non-directive facilitator support for the adventure of self-discovery is not only singularly effective, but the humility it requires is the best guard against the pitfalls of therapeutic self-aggrandizement.

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