
**“The True Story of a Court-Ordered Book Burning in America:
Publications of Research Physician-Scientist Wilhelm Reich, M.D.”**

**A Presentation by the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust
on the Occasion of the American Library Association’s
“Banned Books Week - 2011”**

Saturday – September 24, 2011 – 1:00 p.m.

Monroe Township Public Library
4 Municipal Plaza
Monroe Township, N.J.

Statistics from the American Library Association tell us that the two major reasons for books being challenged and banned are: sexually explicit content and offensive language. The A.L.A.’s statistics also reveal that the overwhelming number of challenges by far comes from parents who disapprove of school reading materials for their children.

Interestingly, the lowest number of challenges comes from religious groups, government, elected officials and clergy. In fact, from 1990 to 2010, the A.L.A. recorded 150 challenges from religious groups, 145 from government, 115 from clergy, and 48 from elected officials, as opposed to *over 6000 challenges from parents*.

But censorship comes in many stripes. And the historic, but little-known example from 1950s America that I’ll discuss today involves no parents challenging their children’s schoolbooks. It involves no school boards, school libraries or public libraries. No religious organizations or clergy. No community group, no local authorities, no college or university.

Rather, it is an alarming example of censorship that conjoins the worst excesses of government authority with the deeply ingrained politics and powers of the major medical, psychiatric and psychoanalytic organizations, together with the recklessness of irresponsible journalism.

It is a true cautionary tale of these disparate forces which coalesced into a perfect storm, culminating in the *court-ordered banning and burning* of several tons of published books, research journals and bulletins...published materials that documented over 25 years of one man’s medical, scientific and socio-political work.

And yes, it also involves sexual content.

The facts are these: On August 23, 1956, dozens of boxes of ten hardcover book titles, written by Austrian-born research physician and scientist Wilhelm Reich, were removed from the storage facility of his private press in the Greenwich Village section of New York City, and loaded onto a truck.

In addition to these books, boxes of Wilhelm Reich's softcover research journals and bulletins—which he had published regularly from 1942 to 1953—were also loaded onto this truck. The cumulative weight of these hardcover books and softcover publications amounted to several tons.

The truck then drove several blocks north to one of the Sanitation Department's incinerator plants located on Gansevoort Street by the Hudson River, a place where New York City garbage trucks routinely dumped their trash into a large concrete pit. This dumped trash would be subsequently scooped up from the pit by large metal jaws affixed to an overhead crane, and then dropped into an enormous incinerator.

And this was to be the fate of that truckload of Wilhelm Reich's publications: all of the boxes of books, bulletins and journals were tossed into the pit, and then the overhead crane dropped them into the nearby incinerator.

This was actually the second court-ordered destruction of Wilhelm Reich's literature in America, and by far the largest. Two months earlier—on June 26, 1956—a much smaller destruction of literature had taken place at Reich's home, laboratory and research center in Rangeley, Maine. At that time, a handful of boxes of Reich's softcover publications had been burned outside of his laboratory.

A third destruction of Reich's literature took place four years later in New York City—on March 17, 1960—when additional boxes of Reich's publications were taken to that same incinerator plant on Gansevoort Street and destroyed.

All of which, at this point, raises three key questions:

- What were the specific titles of these books and other materials that were banned and destroyed by order of a Federal Court injunction?
- What specifically was deemed so offensive and so objectionable in these materials that a Federal Court in America ordered them to be banned and destroyed?
- And who *was* this man, Wilhelm Reich?

To the first question, regarding the specific titles of these banned and burned materials, these included ten hardcover books by Reich: [*holding up each book*]

- ***Character Analysis*** – first published in Europe in the spring of 1933, a few months after Reich had fled from Nazi Germany, with two enlarged English editions published in America in 1945 and 1948.

Regarded then and now as a classic, pioneering text of psychoanalytic technique, written by a man once considered Sigmund Freud's most promising student.

- ***The Mass Psychology of Fascism*** – also published in 1933 in Europe, six months after Reich—an outspoken anti-fascist—had fled from Nazi Germany. With this enlarged English edition published in America in 1946.

This book is still considered a classic psychological analysis and criticism of fascism as manifested in both Naziism and Communism.

- ***The Sexual Revolution*** – first published in Europe in 1936, in which Reich draws upon his experience as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst to critique the sexual conditions and conflicts in Europe and the Soviet Union.

With two revised English editions published in America in 1945 and 1949.

- The next book has a long, intriguing, and what some might consider a rather provocative title. The first part of the title is ***The Discovery of the Orgone, Volume I***.

This word “orgone” is spelled O-R-G-O-N-E. And I’ll discuss it more in a few minutes, as it has tremendous significance in explaining why Reich’s publications were burned in this country.

But the full title of this book is ***The Discovery of the Orgone, Volume I – The Function of the Orgasm***. It was first published in 1942 in New York where Reich had emigrated in 1939, arriving in America just four days before the outbreak of World War Two.

Reich wrote this book specifically to introduce American readers to over two decades of his clinical psychoanalytic and psychiatric work in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

- This next book is entitled ***The Discovery of the Orgone – Volume 2: The Cancer Biopathy***. And there’s that word “orgone” again.

Published in 1948, it documents the first decade of Reich’s biological and clinical cancer research starting in his laboratory in Oslo, Norway, and continuing in his laboratories in Forest Hills, New York and in Rangeley, Maine.

- ***Listen, Little Man!*** – also published in 1948, Reich’s reflection upon his inner turmoil as a research physician and scientist who is observing irrational and destructive responses to his work.

With 34 pages of illustrations by cartoonist and children’s author William Steig—a supporter of Reich’s work—who would later go on to write the book ***Shrek***, upon which the hit movies were based.

- ***Ether, God and Devil***, published in 1949, in which Reich describes the methodology of his scientific research.
- ***Cosmic Superimposition***, published in 1951, in which Reich discusses how man is biologically rooted in nature.
- ***People in Trouble*** – published in 1953, an autobiographical work recounting Reich’s involvement as a physician with the Communist and Socialist movements in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and his profound disillusion with those movements.
- And finally, ***The Murder of Christ*** – also published in 1953, Reich’s unique exploration of the meaning of Christ’s life.

All ten of these hardcover book titles burned in America in 1956 and again in 1960.

As for Reich’s research bulletins and journals that were also burned, here are the major titles: [*holding up each publication*]

- ***International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone Research***. There’s that word “orgone” again. This was Reich’s first American research journal which he published regularly from 1942 to 1945, comprising a total of 980 pages.

6,261 copies of these journals were incinerated in New York City in 1956.

- ***Annals of the Orgone Institute***—published in 1947 and 1948. 2,976 copies were burned in New York City in 1956.
- ***Orgone Energy Bulletin***—published in five volumes from 1949 to 1953, comprising a total of over 900 pages. And now we see that word “orgone” conjoined with the word “energy.”

12,189 copies of these bulletins were burned in New York City in August 1956, while hundreds more were burned in Rangeley, Maine in June of that same year.

Which leads us logically to our second key question: “What specifically was deemed so offensive and so objectionable in these published titles by research physician and scientist Wilhelm Reich that they were banned and destroyed by order of a Federal Court injunction?”

The simple answer is this word “orgone,” which appears in the titles of *some* of these publications and within the pages of *all* of them.

And to adequately explain this word “orgone” and why it was deemed so offensive and so objectionable as to merit its actual destruction, we need to address our third key question: “Who *was* this man, Wilhelm Reich?”

Reich was an Austrian, born in 1897 and raised on a large farm in Bukovina at the easternmost edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, an area that is now part of Ukraine. After serving as a lieutenant in the Austrian Army during World War I, Reich enrolled in medical school at the University of Vienna.

During his first semester, Reich was among a group of medical students who organized a seminar on sexology, a subject they felt was essential to their studies but which was not a part of the medical curriculum. However, Reich was disappointed with the seminar’s initial speakers and lectures.

He later wrote, “Those first lectures I attended made sexuality seem bizarre and strange. A natural sexuality did not seem to exist.” Reich subsequently embarked upon his own rigorous study of the leading literature in the areas of sexology, natural science, and natural philosophy. This included the writings of Dr. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis *and* one of Vienna’s most prominent citizens.

Reich was particularly impressed by Freud’s theories about the “Libido” which Reich felt were more concrete and scientific than anyone else’s. Reich said, “Freud’s consistent use of energy concepts derived from natural science fascinated me. His thinking was realistic and clear-cut.”

Whereas the pre-Freudians discussed the “Libido” as a person’s conscious sexual desire, Freud spoke of the Libido as a quantifiable physical energy in the human body that was capable of increase, decrease, displacement and discharge. Reich agreed and believed—as Freud did—that some day it might be possible to actually measure the body’s physical sexual energy.

Reich became leader of the sexology seminar during his second semester. And to procure literature for the seminar he visited numerous scientists, physicians and psychoanalysts in Vienna, including 63-year old Sigmund Freud.

Freud knelt down by his bookshelves and got out some books and pamphlets for Reich to take with him. Reich later wrote, “I had come there in a state of trepidation, and left with a feeling of pleasure and friendliness. That was the starting point of fourteen years of intensive work in and for psychoanalysis.”

Reich’s relationship with Freud thrived and deepened, so much so that months later—with Reich still in medical school—Freud was sending him patients for psychoanalysis. By late 1920, 23-year old Wilhelm Reich had delivered two papers before the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and had become its youngest member.

During his last year of medical school, Reich did post-graduate work in internal medicine at University Hospital in Vienna. And after graduation, he did two years of post-graduate work at the Neurological & Psychiatric University Clinic of Dr. Julius Wagner-Jauregg, the man who would win the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1927.

Thus, by the age of 25, Reich had the distinction of studying with both the “Father of Psychoanalysis” *and* one of the world’s premier neuropsychiatrists.

And from 1922 to 1930, Reich was the First Clinical Assistant and then Assistant Chief at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Polyclinic, also known as the “Ambulatorium.” This Polyclinic was the psychoanalytic community’s practical effort to provide free clinical services to the poor and working class of Vienna.

“The clinic was always crowded,” Reich later wrote. “The patients were industrial laborers, employees, homeworkers, students and farmers.”

In addition to treating patients at this Polyclinic, Reich studied over 300 case histories of other individuals who had come to the Polyclinic for treatment. And as if his schedule wasn’t full enough, from 1922 to 1930, Reich participated in the Technical Seminar for Psychoanalytic` Technique, founded by Freud *at Reich’s suggestion* to improve therapeutic technique through systematic case studies.

At the age of 27, Reich became the Technical Seminar’s third director, a position he would hold for six years.

And it was through Reich’s extensive practical work with this wide variety of patients in his private practice, at the psychiatric hospital, and at the Polyclinic—plus his study of hundreds of case histories from the Polyclinic and the Technical Seminar—that Reich began to see patterns, to draw conclusions, and to establish therapeutic goals that would set him on a collision course with Freud and the older psychoanalysts.

And Reich’s conflicts with Freud and the traditional psychoanalytic community in Europe would intensify and eventually take root in America, with profound personal and professional consequences.

Reich’s wide-ranging patient work and statistical research provided disturbing insights into the sexual climate of Vienna in the 1920s. For example:

- In case after case after case, the severity of a patient’s neuroses was directly related to the patient’s inability to achieve healthy sexual satisfaction *without guilt*.
- And neurotic symptoms would disappear only when a patient reported having emotionally and sexually satisfactory experiences *without guilt*.

- Furthermore, Reich observed, sexual misery and neuroses were “widely prevalent like an epidemic,” leading Reich to conclude that “individual psychotherapy has very limited scope...that only a small fraction of the psychically sick could receive any treatment.”

Gradually, Reich came to believe that the only real solution to eliminating these widespread neuroses was not individual therapy, it was *prevention*: preventing sexual problems and repressions *before* they occurred. Which meant changing the social conditions and institutions responsible for repressing the individual’s ability for healthy sexual and emotional expression.

Most significantly for Reich’s future scientific and medical research, his extensive patient work and statistical study further convinced him that the Libido was far more than just a sexual *desire*, as most psychiatrists and psychoanalysts believed. But rather, it was a *tangible biological energy* that built up naturally in the body and required healthy, periodic release which prevented and alleviated neuroses.

By 1925, however, 69-year old Sigmund Freud had already backtracked from his earlier thoughts about the Libido as an authentic biological energy. “The libido theory,” Freud wrote, “may therefore for the present be pursued only by the path of speculation.”

But Reich was undissuaded in his belief that preventing neuroses needed to be emphasized more than just individual treatment. And starting at the age of 30, Reich’s emphasis on prevention became manifested in very concrete ways in an exhaustive agenda of socio-political activities conducted within the Communist and Socialist movements.

In his diaries and publications, Reich identifies July 15, 1927—an infamous day in Austrian history—as the day he was politicized.

On that day, Reich was in the streets of Vienna as an eyewitness to a bloody confrontation where police opened fire on hundreds of demonstrators from the Vienna Workers Union. The shooting lasted three hours, leaving 85 dead and over 1000 wounded.

What struck Reich on July 15th was the complacency of most of the crowds, the lack of any effective leadership in the streets, and his impression that the police were acting like a “senseless machine.”

These and other issues of group psychology and behavior troubled Reich deeply as he was already starting to conceptualize a link between the power of European fascism and the repression of man’s basic emotional, sexual and economic needs.

That same day, July 15th, Reich joined the medical group of the Arbeiterhilfe—the Worker’s Help—an affiliate of the Austrian Communist Party. Reich’s membership in the Arbeiterhilfe marked the start of his struggle against fascism in Austria and against Naziism in Germany as a physician, psychiatrist, public speaker and writer.

Within the Socialist and Communist movements, Reich participated in demonstrations and spoke out on sexual, emotional, and medical issues to factory groups, medical groups, high schools and universities. He and a group of Socialist physicians founded six sexual counseling centers in the working districts of Vienna where they could apply their psychoanalytic insights on a mass scale.

These centers provided free counseling and lectures on birth control, sexual and marital problems, child-rearing, mental hygiene, and sex education for children. They quickly became so overcrowded, said Reich, “that any doubt as to the significance of our work was promptly removed.”

These centers also confirmed and broadened Reich’s insights from the Polyclinic that sexual misery and neuroses were indeed widespread. 70% of all clients proved in need of treatment, said Reich, but only 30% could be improved by counseling or social work. Authoritarian families, repressive child-rearing, religion, compulsory marriage, lack of birth control, restrictive divorce laws and abortion laws, all contributed to this sexual misery and neuroses.

So did inadequate housing: Reich noted that 80% of the population in Vienna lived four or more in a room, making any real intimacy virtually impossible.

Reich moved to Berlin in 1930, where he continued his psychoanalytic, social and political work. He established a network of sexual counseling centers for the working poor and lecturing continually about the social reforms needed to prevent sexual misery and neuroses: reforms in birth control, abortion rights, marriage and divorce laws, better housing for workers, factory nurseries for working mothers.

In 1932, Reich published a 152-page pamphlet entitled *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*. In his Foreword, he wrote, “This pamphlet is written for the young without age limit ...it aims to give young people specific answers, according to scientific fact, about the great problem of their sexual maturation.”

Within six weeks, four thousand copies were sold and it found its way to young people in various circles: Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats, and even National Socialists, the Nazi’s.

Ultimately, the Communist Party condemned this publication, as well as Reich’s activities within the Party. And several weeks later, as Hitler assumed power in February 1933, Nazi stormtroopers searched Reich’s apartment. Days later, the Nazi newspaper publicly condemned *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*.

Reich fled from Berlin the next day, taking a night train to the Austrian border.

Later that year, the Berlin Psychoanalytic Association—in an effort to appease the Nazi government by purging its membership of all Jews and left-wing sympathizers—removed Reich’s name from its list.

The following year, 1934, this removal was used as a pretext by Reich's enemies in the psychoanalytic community to expel him from the International Psychoanalytic Association, after 14 years of membership.

In 1934, 37-year old Reich returned to the laboratory for the first time since medical school a dozen years earlier. And for the next 22 years—until 1956—he would devote his life to scientific and medical research in his laboratories in Oslo, New York City, and Rangeley Maine.

And it is here where we will encounter those words “orgone” and “orgone energy” and the term “orgone energy accumulator.” This was an experimental scientific and medical research tool developed by Reich from early 1939 to October 1940.

And starting in 1947 and continuing until today, this research tool—the orgone energy accumulator—would be publicly and dishonestly misrepresented, distorted and slandered in the mainstream media as some sort of sexual device or supposed cancer cure.

In fact, the most recent slander is in this weekend's *New York Times Book Review*, in a review of a book whose smarmy title refers to Reich's scientific and medical research tool as an “orgasmatron.”

The facts are these: Starting in a laboratory at the University of Oslo—where Reich had been invited to lecture on his therapeutic techniques—Reich verified the electrical nature of a biological sexual energy in human subjects in a series of experiments that expanded upon previous 19th and 20th century experiments which had already verified and measured electrical charge on human skin surfaces.

From this, Reich concluded that the concept of the Libido as a measure of psychological energy was not simply a metaphor, but rather, it was a “measurable electro-energetic phenomena.” Furthermore, said Reich, the source of this electrical energy is the body's autonomic nervous system and the body's electrolyte functions, which are the body's abilities to generate and conduct electricity.

Next, Reich wanted to investigate the nature of biological energy functions in the most primitive life-form of all: *protozoa*.

Protozoa is traditionally produced by infusions of dry grass soaking in water, and over time protozoa allegedly develop from air spores that are everywhere. To record, observe and study every stage of protozoal development, Reich used time-lapse motion picture cameras affixed to high-magnification microscopes.

Which distinguishes Reich's biological work in three ways:

- He was working with microscopic magnifications higher than most scientists.

- He was one of the early scientists to use time-lapse filming.
- And he is, to my knowledge, the first scientist to film the actual development of protozoa.

Much to Reich's surprise, the development of protozoa—as captured on these time-lapse films—was very much at odds with biology's prevalent “air-germ theory.” Reich's films revealed a biological process not found in any scientific literature: in fact, the grass disintegrated into micro-organisms, which grew larger and eventually developed into amoeba, a type of protozoa.

As a control against the possibility of any air-germ infection, Reich carried out experiments using various organic substances—grass, plants, earth, foodstuffs, coal, blood, etc.—in sterile preparations. To Reich's amazement, all of these sterilized substances disintegrated into these micro-organisms, which were often bluish in color.

Reich believed these micro-organisms were transitional stages between living and non-living matter. And he called them “*bions*” after the Greek word for “life.”

Further experiments—some with mice—revealed that certain bions could immobilize or kill bacteria, staphylococcus, streptococcus and *cancer cells*. And it was *this* discovery of the effects of these micro-organism, these bions, on cancer cells that propelled Reich into the area of cancer studies and experimental treatment.

In other experiments with sterilized preparations of sarcoma tissue—which are cancer tumors in connective tissue—Reich's time-lapse films showed the presence of a second type of bion: smaller (.25 micron), rod-shaped and reddish-black.

When Reich injected these smaller, rod-shaped bions into *healthy* mice, most of the mice became ill and died, many with cancerous growths.

Reich called this second type of bion “T-bacilli” after the German word “Tod” for “death.” And he theorized that these smaller micro-organisms *might* be one of the causative agents of cancer.

From autumn 1937 until January 1939, Reich injected both types of bions into different groups of healthy laboratory mice to test their biological effects. Injections of the T-bacilli appeared to produce illness, cancer and death in a large percentage of these healthy mice; while injections of the bluish bions appeared to act as a biological antibody against cancer cells and against the effects of the T-bacilli.

Reich's published monograph of his earlier experiments on the electrical nature of sexuality, *plus* his published book about his early bion experiments, *plus* his ongoing cancer research precipitated a newspaper attack against him and his work.

This attack on Reich in the Norwegian press lasted for an entire year.

From 1937 to 1938, Reich was publicly accused in dozens of articles of being a Jewish pornographer, of sexually manipulating his patients in therapy, and of being a medical and scientific charlatan.

These personal and professional slanders against Reich came from journalists, scientists, psychoanalysts, and from his political enemies in the Communist, Socialist *and* right-wing fascist parties. None of whom ever took the time to factually investigate and understand Reich's therapeutic work, or his scientific and medical research in biology and cancer studies.

And many of *these* slanders would precede Reich to America.

But before Reich finally emigrated to America in August 1939, his biological experiments were to yield another significant discovery. In January 1939, Reich discovered a radiation phenomenon in a specific culture of these bions, these micro-organisms.

These particular micro-organisms glimmered a deeper blue and they exerted a stronger biological effect on bacteria and cancer cells than other bions. "Brought together with cancer cells," Reich wrote, "they killed or paralyzed the cells even at a distance of approximately 10 microns."

Reich filmed all of these phenomena. And for weeks he examined these bions daily under a microscope at magnifications as high as 4000-times.

Soon Reich developed a conjunctivitis in his eyes and he felt a heat and prickling sensation in his hands from holding the test-tubes containing these bion cultures. Metal laboratory instruments—scissors, pincers and needles—became magnetized. And in a photographic dark room, the photographic plates became fogged when they were in the proximity of these cultures.

All of which led Reich to believe that he was dealing with a radiation phenomenon, and that this radiation *might be* either electromagnetic or possibly radioactive.

This wasn't an unreasonable assumption given that radioactivity had been discovered in other natural materials such as uranium salts in 1896; *and* in pitchblende, a mineral ore from which the Curies distilled polonium and radium in 1898.

Reich observed these bion cultures in total darkness, often for hours at a time, and saw what appeared to be grayish-blue radiation emanating from them and dispersing throughout the room. Reich's laboratory co-workers also confirmed many of these phenomena.

To isolate and study this visual phenomena from these bions—to determine if what he was observing *might be* simply electromagnetism—Reich conducted experiments, microscopic work and observations inside of small and large Faraday cages.

A Faraday cage is a standard scientific tool—invented in 1836—which is an enclosure of any size comprising either mesh or solid metal walls that keep out any external electricity, so that the enclosure itself is free of any electrical charge.

Reich also observed that organic substances such as glass, rubber gloves, porcelain and wool absorbed the radiation from these bions and could subsequently produce a reaction in laboratory electrosopes, which are instruments that measure electric charge.

Copper and iron, however, seemed to attract this radiation and quickly reflect it.

From his experiments and observations over many weeks, Reich concluded that while this bion radiation had some electrical properties, it was not specifically electricity, magnetism, nor radioactivity. Reich concluded that it was a distinct, specific and previously undiscovered biological energy in living substances.

By March 1939—about two months after discovering this radiation—Reich’s laboratory notebooks, his diaries, and his letters to a Dutch physicist with whom he had been consulting, were all containing a particular name that Reich had given this radiation.

Reich was calling it “orgone energy.”

He derived the word “orgone” from two words: from the word “orgasm” because this biological discovery had evolved from his clinical and experimental work about the nature of the energy of the orgasm; and from the word “organic,” because this biological energy charged organic substances such as wool, rubber, glass, cellulose, etc.

In his diary, Reich hypothesized that this energy was *the* specific form of biological energy in living matter, and that within the human body, among orgone energy’s many properties and functions, it was also the energy of the Libido.

Reich continued using Faraday cages for his research, placing test tubes and Petri dishes of these bion cultures inside the cage to isolate the orgone energy radiation from any outside electromagnetism.

And he and others often sat inside large Faraday cages to observe the visual effects of orgone energy, as well as their subjective bodily reactions to this energy.

Because of the orgone energy’s ability to paralyze and kill cancer cells when these bions were brought into proximity with cancer cells, Reich wanted to take his experiments a step further: he wanted to inject these bions into laboratory mice that *already had cancer*.

But these experiments would have to wait a few months: in May 1939, Reich packed up his laboratory and sent it on ahead of him to America with his laboratory assistant, with instructions to locate a suitable home in the New York City area where he could reestablish his laboratory and therapeutic practice.

Meanwhile, two American psychiatrists—former students of Reich’s in Europe—were arranging a college teaching position for Reich, which would provide the visa necessary for his emigration.

Reich arrived in New York on August 28, 1939 with a contract to teach at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan, starting in January, a course entitled “*Character Formation – Biological and Social Aspects.*”

He settled in a house in the Forest Hills section of Queens, New York where he reestablished his laboratory, supporting his cancer and orgone energy research by practicing and teaching his therapeutic techniques.

In December, one of Reich’s students—a physician in the pathology laboratory at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital—provided Reich with several cancer mice. And on December 16, 1939, Reich injected a culture of bions radiating with orgone energy into his first cancer mouse: a mouse with a mammary tumor that was hard and the size of a large bean.

Over the next few days, Reich cautiously recorded in his laboratory notebook and his diary that the tumor was shrinking. Six days later, he recorded that the tumor was now 50% smaller.

These promising results with this first cancer mouse motivated Reich to continue these bion injections with over 100 cancer mice in the subsequent months.

And the results were astonishing to Reich, *and consistent*: injections of these bions—these micro-organisms radiating with orgone energy—were able to shrink tumors in cancer mice; while injections of the other, smaller type of bion—the one he designated as T-bacilli—were able to induce illness, cancer and death in healthy mice.

On a darker note, however—and unknown to Reich at the time—just as his cancer research was progressing so hopefully, the State Department and the FBI had begun to investigate him due to his left-wing political activities in Europe, the first in a series of government investigations that would plague Reich until the end of his life.

In July 1940, Reich made his most significant scientific discovery, one that many have called fantastical, while others are less kind and completely dismissive of it.

While on a summer vacation in the Rangeley Lakes region of western Maine, Reich discovered that this same orgone energy—which exists as a biological energy in living substances and which was visible and scientifically usable in these micro-organisms he called bions—that this same orgone energy existed as a ubiquitous physical energy in the atmosphere.

And through subsequent experiments with large and small Faraday cages, Reich discovered that by modifying the design of these cages—first by adding organic material

to the exterior of these metal enclosures—that this atmospheric orgone energy could be collected, concentrated, measured quantitatively with electroscopes, and visualized within these enclosures.

Reich called these modified Faraday cages “orgone energy accumulators,” and they would become his principal scientific and medical research tool.

Reich’s first medical experiments with orgone accumulators involved placing cancer mice into *small* accumulators where the interior metal walls were fairly close to the animals. And in dozens and dozens of cancer mice, over a period of days the tumors would soften and shrink.

In many cases, however, the cancer mice died because the detritus of the dissolving tumors clogged their lymph nodes, causing suffocation.

All of this is meticulously recorded in Reich’s laboratory notebooks, and in his published diaries, books, research journals and bulletins.

Next, to study human physical responses to atmospheric orgone radiation that was collected and concentrated in these modified Faraday cages, Reich built the first *large* orgone energy accumulator in the fall of 1940. It was large enough for a person to sit in, much as Reich and other scientists for decades had sat and worked inside the metal enclosures of Faraday cages.

And inside this first large orgone accumulator, Reich and others—co-workers, students and patients—often felt prickling sensations on the surface of their skin, much like the prickling that Reich had felt in January 1939 when he held those test-tubes of bion cultures in which he had first discovered biological orgone energy.

Because of the impressive results that Reich was getting by placing cancer mice into small orgone energy accumulators, he decided to test the possible medical effects of orgone radiation on human subjects.

And starting in March 1941, Reich began experimental orgone radiation treatment of several terminal cancer patients whose physicians had exhausted all remedies and hope.

All patients signed an affidavit saying that Reich had promised them no cure, nor charged them any money. And they came to Reich’s laboratory in Forest Hills to sit in this large orgone accumulator for varying periods of time, several times a week.

Within a short period of time, all of these terminal cancer patients showed marked improvement: relief of pain, healthier blood condition, weight gain, and the shrinkage and elimination of tumors.

Despite these positive results, within a few years these terminal patients died, leading Reich to theorize that the disease we call cancer is a bio-energetic contraction and shrinking of the body; and that the tumors are not the disease itself, but rather a local manifestation of a deeper systemic biological disorder.

And all this, too, is meticulously documented in Reich's case studies, his diaries, and in his publications in which he candidly reports his successes and his failures.

Consequently, Reich came to believe that the only real cure for cancer was prevention.

Initially, patients came to Reich's office to use these large orgone accumulators for the experimental treatment of cancer and other diseases. But over time, Reich saw the value of people having orgone accumulators at home for more frequent use, which would also provide Reich with more data from these patients for his research about any physical and medical effects of orgone radiation.

By the mid-1940s, Reich's "Orgone Institute Research Laboratories"—a non-profit organization that supported his work—had begun to rent and sell orgone accumulators to patients as prescribed by the numerous physicians who were studying with Reich. Patients who couldn't afford the fees paid nothing.

All of these monies supported further orgone energy research. And Reich's published research bulletins and journals—which I showed you earlier—included reports of his laboratory work, as well as medical case histories from Reich and other physicians, documenting the efficacy and limitations of the orgone accumulator.

And contrary to widespread rumors that persist to this day, Wilhelm Reich never claimed or promoted the orgone accumulator as a cancer cure. In patient affidavits and in his publications, Reich clearly states that despite many promising results, orgone radiation via the accumulator is not a cure.

The other common misconception and willful misstatement about the orgone accumulator is that it was some sort of sexual device for enhancing one's potency, a salacious allegation that conflated prurient misunderstandings about Reich's psychiatric work for alleviating neuroses with confusion and outright contempt about the medical and scientific uses of the orgone accumulator.

In fact, Reich's detractors and admirers alike—including famous writers, artists and musicians who were drawn to Reich's sexual theories—share the blame for disseminating this damaging falsehood.

For example, the published writings of Jack Kerouac, Norman Mailer, William Burroughs and others include irresponsible expectations and claims about the orgone accumulator as a sexual device to enhance one's potency.

In none of Reich's writings does he ever claim or promote the orgone accumulator as a way to increase one's sexual potency.

The first time that this misrepresentation of the orgone accumulator appeared in print was in May 1947 in an article in *New Republic* magazine entitled "*The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich*".

In it, the writer claimed—among other things—that Reich was renting and selling orgone accumulators for the purpose of increasing one's "orgastic potency" or as a cure-all for diseases, including cancer.

This article was brought to the attention of the Food and Drug Administration several months later. And in August 1947, an FDA agent from the Boston District appeared at Reich's laboratory and research center in Rangeley, Maine, asking specifically about the orgone energy accumulator.

This was the beginning of a seven-year investigation by the FDA which was convinced from the beginning—despite Reich's extensive published research—that Reich was a scientific and medical charlatan, profiting from the proceeds from the sale and rental of fraudulent empty boxes.

The FDA's official narrative—then and today—of Wilhelm Reich as a "quack" running some kind of sex-and-medical racket was fueled by the active cooperation and resources of the American Medical Association, the American Psychoanalytic Association, and the American Psychiatric Association, as well as numerous state chapters and affiliations of these powerful professional organizations.

And the inaccuracies and distortions about Reich and his work which appeared in that *New Republic* article would be repeated and exaggerated ad nauseum in well over a hundred subsequent articles over the next few years, including in the official publications of the American Psychoanalytic, Medical and Psychiatric Associations.

The FDA's so-called investigation—in which their files clearly show that their minds were already made up—was characterized by FDA agents visiting Reich's doctors, their patients, and Reich's employees and asking salacious questions about any sexual uses of the orgone accumulator. Doctors associated with Reich were also harassed in many way by their employers and medical regulators.

The FDA also engaged in careless so-called "replications" of Reich's medical and scientific research that often failed to follow proper protocols as documented in Reich's publications.

It is perfectly understandable, I think, to doubt the value of what seems, at first glance, to be just an empty metal-lined box with alternating layers of organic and metallic material on the outside. Although people *have been* sitting and working inside of Faraday cages since 1836 when physicist Michael Faraday invented it as a foiled-lined room.

Less understandable, however, is the intellectual and professional laziness and dishonesty, *plus the pornographic sensibility* with which this seven-year campaign was conducted.

In September 1950, Reich moved permanently from New York to his laboratory and research center in Rangeley, Maine, and organized all of his activities under the title of the Wilhelm Reich Foundation.

And in February 1954, the FDA brought a Complaint of Injunction against Reich to the U.S. Attorney for the State of Maine for his signature. This Complaint for Injunction contained the following statement:

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

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

“...is not effective in the cure, mitigation treatment, and prevention of the diseases, conditions, and symptoms hereafter enumerated...”

—after which the Complaint listed the titles of Reich’s published research bulletins and books, all of which the FDA felt constituted labeling and promotion for these accumulators .

The Complaint’s final paragraphs asked that Reich, the Wilhelm Reich Foundation, and anyone affiliated with them be “perpetually enjoined” from introducing orgone accumulators into interstate commerce; and to be perpetually enjoined from “any act whether oral, written, or otherwise ...with respect to any orgone accumulator device...”

In other words, the FDA wanted to stop all interstate shipment of orgone accumulators *and* stop the sale and dissemination of Reich’s publications which they felt constituted labeling and promotion for fraudulent devices.

The U.S. Attorney, Peter Mills—who for many years had been Reich’s lawyer in Maine—signed this Complaint of Injunction against his former client. And the Complaint was subsequently delivered to Reich in Rangeley, Maine.

The next legal step for Reich was an appearance in court with an attorney to defend himself against this Complaint. And here, Reich would ultimately take a unique and controversial position that people understandably argue and debate to this day.

After consulting seriously with numerous attorneys—all of whom had their own ideas for challenging this Complaint for Injunction—Reich opted for an entirely different approach.

Reich honestly felt that it was not the jurisdiction of any court of law—of any judge or jury—to pass judgment on scientific issues; rather, that scientific matters required honest discourse and exchange among scientists and not the legal decision of a judge.

And so—after much thought and discussion, and against the wishes of his attorneys—Reich’s response to this Complaint for Injunction was a lengthy letter to the Judge in which he clarified his position.

And in this written Response to the Judge, Reich said among other things:

“Scientific matters cannot possibly ever be decided upon in court. They can only be clarified by prolonged, faithful bonafide observations in friendly exchange of opinion, never by litigation.

Man’s right to know, to learn, to inquire, to make bonafide errors, to investigate human emotion must, by all means be safe, if the word Freedom should ever be more than an empty political slogan.

If painstakingly elaborated and published scientific findings over a period of 30 years could not convince this administration or will not be able to convince any other social administration of the true nature of the discovery of the Life Energy, no litigation in court anywhere will ever help to do so.

I therefore submit, in the name of truth and justice, that I shall not appear in court as the defendant against a plaintiff who by his mere complaint has already shown his ignorance in matters of natural science.

I do so at the risk of being, by mistake, fully enjoined in all my activities.”

The Judge did not accept this as a legal response. And, at the request of the FDA and the U.S. Attorney, a Decree of Injunction was issued on default as if Reich had never responded at all.

But this Decree, drawn up by the FDA and the U.S. Attorney—Reich’s former lawyer—went much further than the original Complaint. This Injunction called for the *destruction* of orgone accumulators.

It also called for the *destruction* of Reich’s published research bulletins and other materials, which they saw as instructions and labeling for the accumulator.

As for Reich's hardcover books: it was Reich's custom to update earlier editions of his books, with references to his latest work and discoveries. So all of these books I've showed you contained references to orgone energy.

Consequently, the FDA felt that all of these books were labeling for orgone accumulators because they "contain statements and representations pertaining to the existence of orgone energy." As a result, the Decree of Injunction called for all of these books to be withheld from distribution until these statements and representations about orgone energy were deleted.

And so, on the morning August 23, 1956, when FDA agents showed up in the storage facility of Reich's publishing house in Manhattan, Reich's employees expected that all of the boxes containing his research journals, bulletins and other softcover materials were to be loaded onto a truck and taken away to be destroyed; while all of the boxes of these hardcover book titles were simply to remain where they were: withdrawn from circulation until such time, if any, that Reich deleted all references to orgone energy and republished new editions.

But a day or two earlier, the FDA's attorney on this case arbitrarily decided that the hardcover books should be destroyed as well. He relayed these instructions to one of the FDA agents who, upon his arrival at the publishing house, told the employees that Reich's books would be destroyed as well.

And then, under the watchful eyes of several FDA agents, Reich's employees loaded several tons of boxes of hardcover books and softcover publications onto a truck, and these materials were subsequently transported to the municipal garbage incinerator where they were burned.

[*Questions and Answers*]

—*Kevin Hinchey*
The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust