
“Orgonomic Infant Research Center (OIRC): Resources in the Archives of the Orgone Institute”

**A Presentation by
The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust
at the Invitation of the
Institute for the Study of the Work of Wilhelm Reich**

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New York City**

Almost a year ago to the day—on October 29, 2007—five days before the fiftieth anniversary of Wilhelm Reich’s death, The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust posted the Index of the “Archives of the Orgone Institute” on our Museum website. An announcement and link to this Index was and continues to be prominently featured on our Home Page.

The Index itself is 141-pages long and lists the contents of 282 archive boxes of Wilhelm Reich’s materials according to Category, Box Number, and File Name. These materials, in their respective archive boxes, have been organized into twelve individual Categories. These twelve categories alphabetically are:

- Audiotapes
- Conspiracy
- Correspondence
- Films
- Manuscripts
- Organizations
- Orgone Institute
- Orgone Institute Photographic Slides
- Orgone Institute Press
- Personal Files
- Photographs
- and finally, Published Work and Unpublished Translations

These materials are housed at “The Center for the History of Medicine” at the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard University, one of the world’s premier medical libraries. The quantity of these Archives comprises a total of 98 cubic-feet of materials, making Reich’s Archives one of the Countway’s largest collections.

Along with the posting of this Index, we’ve included a brief history of the Archives *and* the Access Policies and Procedures by which scholars and researchers may formally apply to The Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust to study these materials. Since then, the Trust has processed numerous applications from scholars and researchers who have subsequently gone on to study archival materials at the Countway or are planning to do so in the near future.

Among the archival materials-of-interest to scholars and researchers thus far are resources pertaining specifically to:

- Work democracy
- Reich's years in Oslo
- Reich's legal fight against the FDA
- Bion research
- Weather engineering & DOR-removal
- and The Oranur Experiment

To date, no one has yet contacted the Trust to study archival materials about Reich's "Orgonomic Infant Research Center"—the OIRC—which Reich founded in late 1949 and about which Dr. Philip Bennett will speak in greater detail today. Hopefully, it will be just a matter of time before this rich area of Reich's work attracts scholars and researchers to the Archives.

And events and seminars such as this one are always a positive way of sustaining and encouraging serious interest and scholarship about the various aspects of Reich's life and work. And so today I'd like to call your attention to the archival resources pertaining specifically to Reich's Orgonomic Infant Research Center.

As the Trust has continually reiterated in our Monthly Updates, at our conferences and at seminars such as today's, with the presumable exception of Reich throughout the course of his life, *nobody* has read, looked at or listened to the entire 98-cubic feet of materials in the Archives of the Orgone Institute.

Indeed, how would such a thing even be possible?

Consequently, in terms of OIRC resources: while these materials are categorized by Category, Box Number and File Name, the *specific contents* of most of the hundreds and hundreds of pages in these files remain unread and unknown.

The majority of OIRC materials reside in the Category entitled "Organizations." The "Organizations" Category comprises a total of 49 archive boxes, which is the largest quantity of boxes in any single category of the Archives. And among these 49 boxes, *two* boxes—Numbers 13 and 14—are devoted exclusively to OIRC resources.

Box 13 contains ten individual files. And we know from some of the Trust projects that we've been working on—including a three-day Archive Workshop that we conducted in July at Orgonon, a documentary film script we're developing, as well as a new manuscript that will be a sequel to *American Odyssey*—from these projects we know that the content of an individual file, in terms of page numbers, can vary from as little as a single page to literally *hundreds* of pages.

The first file in Box 13 is entitled “*Committee on Self-Regulation – A Round Table Discussion*” and is likely a rather small file, perhaps contemporaneous notes or possibly a transcript of a conversation among a group of physicians, educators and social workers involved with the OIRC who had organized themselves into a committee on self-regulation.

The second file is “*Committee on Self-Regulation – Lecture*,” by Richard Singer M.D., which is also likely to be a very small file.

The third file “*Committee on Self-Regulation – Correspondence*” is probably a substantially larger file, based on our knowledge of the dozens of correspondence files throughout the various categories of Reich’s Archives. Which are in addition to an entire Category of materials entitled “Correspondence,” a category that comprises 39 boxes of correspondence dating from 1929 to the 1950s.

And again, we have already seen individual correspondence files throughout the Archives containing a single page, a handful of pages, dozens of pages or even hundreds of pages.

The fourth file here is “*Orgonomic Children’s Clinic – A. Duvall*,” which refers, of course, to physician Albert Duvall who ran a clinic in New Jersey specifically for children. And it’s likely that this file contains a rather significant amount of content and pages.

The fifth file is entitled “*Material compiled under the heading Children of the Future*,” a rather general title which could comprise a wide range of materials in terms of both content and actual page numbers.

The sixth and seventh files are devoted to OIRC materials that have already been published. One file is entitled “*Published material compiled under the heading Children of the Future*.” The other is entitled “*Two papers from the OIRC (a) The First Puberty, and (b) Genital Games of Children*.”

The next file is labeled “*Affidavits and information about persons participating in the OIRC*,” which sounds as if it might be a rather large file with information pertaining to physicians, social workers, educators, parents and children.

The ninth file here is entitled “*Lists – people in the OIRC and interested persons*.” And the last file in Box 13 is the “*OIRC account book*.”

Reich’s Archives are filled with files containing the financial records of his various organizations and activities, such as the Orgone Institute, the Orgone Institute Press, the Orgone Institute Research Laboratories and The Wilhelm Reich Foundation.

And while the titles of such files may strike us initially as being rather dry, the financial materials that we’ve seen—while working on Trust projects—always add to our appreciation of the sheer breadth and logistics and practical real-world challenges of Reich’s endeavors.

Moving on to Box 14: this box contains fourteen individual files of OIRC materials.

The first file is entitled “*O.I.R.C. Correspondence, 1949-51.*” And again, based on what we’ve seen in some of the dozens of individual files devoted specifically to various kinds of correspondence—which can be found throughout six of the twelve categories of archival materials—this single OIRC correspondence file could contain dozens, perhaps even hundreds of pages.

Another file is entitled “*O.I.R.C. Meetings,*” which, I imagine, contains minutes and transcripts of various gatherings, and would probably be a substantially smaller file than the previous correspondence file.

There is also an entire file devoted to a “*Children’s Playgroup*” and a file entitled “*Reports and Observations on Children.*”

Box 14 also includes a file containing reports by five OIRC workers, as well as a file entitled “*Group A Children,*” with information about thirteen children who were observed and studied in the OIRC.

Box 14 also contains five separate files devoted to case histories on at least seven children, and a file with material about three mothers who were involved in the OIRC.

So this is the summary of the two archive boxes devoted exclusively to OIRC materials.

Moving on now to the Category of archival resources labeled “Correspondence”: to repeat, this Category comprises 39 boxes of materials dating from 1929 up through the 1950s, and has consistently proven to be a tremendous resource to scholars and researchers, no matter what area of Reich’s life and work they’re studying.

While many of these “Correspondence” files are listed by specific names, organizations, and subjects, there are many other files that are simply entitled “*General Correspondence*” followed by the years of such correspondence. And while none of the files in these 39 boxes refers specifically to the OIRC, it’s likely that there is additional information about the OIRC among these collections of correspondence.

For example, in “Correspondence” Boxes 14 and 15, the files entitled “*General Correspondence 1948 to 49*” might yield some pertinent information. So might Box 16 which contains “*General Correspondence 1950 to 51.*”

And in Box 32 is what appears to be a large file entitled “*Students and Associates USA*” with a list of twenty-one names, of whom perhaps five participated in the OIRC.

And finally, “Correspondence” Boxes 34, 35, and 36 contain files on twenty-five physicians or co-workers, some of whom were involved—along with their children—in the OIRC. So perhaps there is additional OIRC information in these files as well

There is one other major Category of OIRC resources in Reich's Archives, and that is "Audiotapes."

Those of you who have visited the Index of the "Archives of the Orgone Institute" have noticed that we haven't yet posted any listings in the "Audiotapes" category. However, the Archives contain approximately 80 audio-recordings of Reich, for which the Trust has preliminary notes and listings for our own purposes and projects. And we are going to refine these listings for future inclusion in the Archive Index.

For years several of these audio-recordings have been available for sale at the Wilhelm Reich Museum as either cassettes or CDs:

- *Alone*
- *The Source of the Human "No"*
- *The Pharmaceutical Industry and Medical Practice*
- *Orgone Therapy: Critical Issues in the Therapeutic Process*
a set of six CDs

Other audio-recordings have been played at our Summer Conferences at Orgonon, including recordings specifically pertaining to the OIRC.

There are, in fact, nine OIRC audio-recordings, documenting Reich's meetings and discussions with physicians, educators, social workers and parents. As to when these nine recordings will become accessible to scholars and researchers either at the Countway or through the Museum Bookstore is difficult to say, for two reasons:

First, as we clearly mention in our Access Policies and Procedures, the Center for the History of Medicine at the Countway Library does not currently have any capabilities in their Reading Room for listening to audio cassettes or CDs, or for watching films, videotapes, or DVDs. After all, the Countway's many other medical collections present little or no need for audio, film, or video technologies.

Second, and more important, one of the Trust's major uses for these audio-recordings—including those specific to the OIRC—is the inclusion of audio clips of Reich in the full-length documentary film that we are now developing. Consequently we are spending a considerable amount of time going through *all* of the audio-recordings and identifying key excerpts for possible inclusion in this film.

Therefore, in terms of the Trust's priorities, the use of these audio resources in our film project currently takes precedence over any other application of these materials.

That being said, I'd like to share with you the transcripts of what I consider some of the most revealing and stimulating excerpts from two of these OIRC recordings.

The recording of the first OIRC meeting is 63 minutes long, and documents a meeting that took place at Reich's home in Forest Hills, New York City on December 16, 1949.

During this meeting with physicians, social workers and educators, Reich suggests the initial idea of what he calls an “Armoring Prevention and Service Center,” what would later come to be known as the Ergonomic Infant Research Center.

The recording begins with Reich saying:

“In present day social organization, as it is today, mass mental hygiene is not really possible, and the social organization has to change if we are to fight Emotional Plague.”

Moments later he says:

“The only way to get at the problem is in the newborn infant...”

And a few minutes later, Reich declares:

“Therefore the idea to establish such a research center would be bold, a research center and a service center.”

Reich then goes on for several minutes to discuss the four major focuses of this new research center, which Dr. Bennett will talk more about today. And several times in this recording—and in others—Reich cautions his co-workers to:

“Go slowly, carefully, know exactly what you’re doing.”

And a few times during this meeting, Reich reflects at considerable length upon his past experiences in Europe. He says:

“I was confused for about fifteen years in mental hygiene in central issues because I did not know from which standpoint different people approached the child. Five disagreed, no one knew why. One spoke from the Church, one spoke from the state, a third spoke from civilization and moral values.

I always found myself outside, in disagreement, and I didn’t know why, until I defended the child, judged the problem from the standpoint of the living.”

After that, Reich asserts that: “An organism is a self-governing institution.”

—and then he goes on to discuss the criteria for choosing who will participate in this infant research. He declares that those involved in this research:

“...need to study the child from the standpoint of the living or else they cannot cooperate in this effort. We would have to choose from among available workers—social workers, nurses, educators, doctors, and so on—those who agree with this standpoint: *that we shall not consider anything but the living principle in the newborn baby.*”

Reich goes on to say that:

“The world is a mess, we know that, I hope we can agree on that. And we can only hope that a new type of human being—but not from the standpoint of the church or state or culture, but from the standpoint of the living—will be able to solve its own problems. Let’s go slowly, let’s have three, four, five years to prepare the whole thing.

Another thing would be a clinical training course. I think we’d have to agree on some basic principles of bio-energetic law: that means what are dealing with.”

He told the group that they would:

“...bring cases out of their work into seminars and discuss what’s being done wrong from the standpoint of the living. We would have to keep out politics entirely and thoroughly, since we have distinguished between social service and social biological standpoint *and* politics, and we don’t mix them anymore.”

Further on in the meeting, Reich bemoans circumcision and what he calls:

“...certain medical measures, this ravaging mania of pouring heaps of drugs into a newborn baby without even sensing, knowing, thinking of what you’re doing to a helpless child.”

Reich speaks for about twenty-seven minutes, after which he takes questions from the group for half an hour. What’s remarkable here is Reich’s consistent openness and encouragement of questions, discussion and doubts—including his own. In response to one of the first questions, Reich replies:

“Please do not expect me to solve your problems for you. Will you do me that favor, please? I shall not solve your problems for you, you’ll have to do that yourself.”

And answering another question, Reich says:

“We cannot separate ourselves from the whole social process. We have to be as alive as we can in it.”

And later, to emphasize a point, Reich reiterates that:

“We do not judge anything from the standpoint of morals, and do not let anyone judge us from that standpoint of morals. Only from the standpoint of the living, and living is moral.”

In another OIRC meeting, held a month later on January 20, 1950, Reich spends considerable time discussing self-regulation. Six and a half minutes into the meeting, Reich says:

“The scientific term ‘self-regulation’ has been distorted insofar as no one really, practically knows what it is, how it can be defined or handled. Self-regulation became a kind of ideology or slogan.

Everybody knows more or less clearly what it means. But as you go along in self-regulation—and as a child brought up in self-regulatory manners meets a world which is not functioning in a self-regulatory principle—things become very complicated.

It is very difficult to keep going in a self-regulatory manner, unless you know the laws on which self-regulation is based.

Unfortunately, self-regulation—which is contained in every living substance, every living organism—is not capable of regulating itself as far as a human being is concerned. It is one of the most dramatic and tragic examples of human misery that the human animal has lost its ability to produce and to live out of his own inner nature.

When we observe children two to three years old and we attempt to understand how much Nature is functioning there, and how much is already structuralized social influence, it is not so easy to do so.

The whole psychoanalytic school—and I partook of this mistake for more than twelve years from 1919 to 1931—believes that what they see in a child of two or three is its nature. For instance, the judgment the newborn is a wild animal to be tamed.

And as you go out to explain self-regulation to greater groups, you will meet that judgment: the child is a wild animal that has to be tamed.

That is especially represented by Anna Freud, and I had many, many discussions with her on that.”

And later he declares that:

“We formulate our problems so that they are, at the same time, biological and sociological. You can’t avoid it—it’s both.”

Throughout this meeting and others, Reich constantly and candidly emphasizes the formidable challenges of their infant research. For example, he tells the group:

“Let’s confess, if you would try to apply self-regulation in any average kindergarten or school, it wouldn’t work, it’s perfectly clear. Let’s go slowly. If we take our time, we can find out whether we’re able to give answers to practical questions of social living, of community living.”

A few minutes later, Reich says:

“We are not only interested in individual measures. Education and prevention of emotional disease is a social problem of the greatest magnitude. We don’t have to solve all the problems, but we have to see the problem in its proper dimension.

Our basic problem is prevention of armoring. What you are dealing with is already a severely distorted child, grown up nearly. We have to concentrate on the problem of this armoring and to understand the function of self-regulation.

We always have to draw our consequences clearly from the details into the social setting.”

And in a very forward-looking exchange with his co-workers, Reich says that the acceptance of their infant research will only come when people are finally desperate enough:

“When they get desperate enough, that’s the point. That means in all such processes in sociology it has always been that way and will always be that way, that an idea or fact will not come through, will not gain wide influence unless something meets it from the outside: a *need*.

In order to proceed scientifically, rationally, with clear minds, we not only have to understand where we stand, our bases, what we know and don’t know, but we must understand how the process of enlightenment and education is running outside. Into what are we going? What shall we meet as we get into the public more and more? We must know our own base and what meets us outside.”

Later in this meeting, someone asks Reich:

“Do you think it’s possible to see every problem in every child in the context of the general social setting?”

—to which Reich replies:

“How else can you see it? If you can’t see it that way, then give up any hope of mental hygiene or preventive education. We don’t want to fool ourselves.”

He continues this line of thought further on, saying:

“As an educator and a social worker, you must see in each child the social situations and the possibilities, and one of the possibilities is that this expectation of Salvation ravaging the earth corresponds to actual ability in human beings. These possibilities are there, but they’re held down by armor. If you would consistently—as you work with children—ask yourselves this question:

What is natural, and what would we need now to protect this naturalness in this child, to let it grow; and what, on the other hand, impedes our endeavor?

Then you have derived your social judgments from the needs of the child. What we have to do is derive our whole view of our criticism of society from the needs of the living in the child, and nothing else.

We can only hope that these children will be able to influence in that direction society from the standpoint of the living, and not from the standpoint of party, state, church, of a certain culture. Cultures come and go, but the living in the child goes over millions of years.”

Toward the end of this meeting, Reich’s directives to his co-workers become more defined:

“What must happen is that every single one of you is capable of presenting a child, of describing it very practically, and to answer the question ‘*What now in its social environment promotes and what inhibits its development?*’

This way I shall have co-workers and not admirers. I don’t want to be admired. I had enough. I don’t need that. If we go into this project, I need workers who know how to handle a child, but know what obstacles they’ll meet.

You yourselves must be quite clear in every single child what made it the way it is, what’s Nature in it, what’s self-regulating law in it, what did society or armored human beings bring in to it, as against the natural functioning. You must be skilled to do that.”

And finally, I'd like to close my remarks with Reich's closing words to this January 20th meeting, words that I feel are most appropriate as we listen to today's speakers and as we all continue to move Reich's work forward:

“All of our social endeavors are split up in two branches. The one is the little doing here. The other is the big noise over here in politics. And since the little doing doesn't solve the problem, and the politics doesn't solve it either, the misery goes on and on and on.

Now after 30 years of psychiatric and mental hygiene work, I at least should have learned something from all that. So the first lesson is *this*:

Don't do this little thing here or become this great liberator there. Go very slowly, from the small little doing and ask the question: 'What can I do to help my life along and what can I do to understand the one who is against it?' Not fight him and say, 'DOWN, DOWN, DOWN!'—that's politics, that's exactly what we don't want.

Understand him first, why he does it so feverishly. Then you will find your ways.”

Thank you all for coming today and thank you for listening.

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