

My Experiences with Wilhelm Reich's Orgone Box

I built my first orgone accumulator on a farm near Pharr, Texas in the spring of 1949. I was living in the Rio Grande valley with my friend Kells Elvins, reading Wilhelm Reich, and we decided to build an accumulator out in Kells' orange grove. In a few days we had put up a wooden box about eight feet high and lined it with galvanized iron. Inside was an old icebox which you could get inside and pull on top so that another box of sheet steel descended over you. In this way the effect was presumably heightened by an accumulator inside an accumulator. Kells' wetbacks watched dubiously from a distance, muttering something in Spanish about "*Brujerías*"—witchcraft.

Kerouac described my orgone box in *On the Road*—a pretty good trick, as he never set foot on the South Texas farm. He had me taking a shot of morphine and going out to "moon over his navel." The fact is that I was not using junk at that time, and even if I had been I certainly would not have done so in an orgone accumulator. Kerouac even went so far as to write that "Old Bull thought his orgone accumulator would be improved if the wood he used was as organic as possible, so he tied bushy bayou leaves and twigs to his mystical outhouse." Like so much of Jack's writing, this makes a good story but is actually pure fiction. When he visited me I was living in Algiers, across the river from

New Orleans, in a little house laid out like a railroad flat and raised up on the marshy lot by concrete blocks. In Algiers I had practically no front yard at all, and was far too busy with a habit to build an accumulator.

Neal Cassady did visit me at the South Texas farm, but never used the orgone box. Since Kerouac presumably got the story of my first accumulator from Cassady, whose tendency to exaggerate rivalled Jack's, it's a wonder they didn't have me throwing orgies in the accumulator for the amusement of the wetbacks. But the orgone box does have a definite sexual effect; I also made a little one from an army-style gas-can covered with burlap and cotton wool and wrapped around with gunny sack, and it was a potent sexual tool. The orgones would stream out of the nozzle of the gas can. One day I got into the big accumulator and held the little one over my joint and came right off. That used to be one of Cocteau's party tricks—take off all his clothes, lie down, and come off, no hands.

Wilhelm Reich was, so far as I know, the first investigator to apply the scientific method to sexual phenomena and actually measure the electrical charge of an orgasm and correlate these measurements with the subjective experience of pleasure or displeasure. There is the pleasurable orgasm, like a rising sales graph, and there is the unpleasurable orgasm, slumping ominously like the Dow Jones in 1929. For these experiments he was expelled from Norway, the traditional Scandinavian tolerance seemingly unable to assimilate such experiments. Perhaps any basic experiments into the human condition are dangerous to the tissue of false pride and misconception with which the human animal compulsively covers his nakedness.

Reich advocated the use of orgone therapy both as a preventive and as the best treatment for active cancer. He considered that cancer occurs when the electrical charge at the surface of the cells falls to a suffocation point. To offset this condition and tone up the cells, he developed orgone therapy. This therapy was rejected out of hand without trial by the medical establishment. Reich's books were burned, his machines destroyed, and he died in prison.

Reich's therapy is harmless and need not conflict with any other form of therapy. It could in fact be administered during the time it takes to get biopsies and arrange for an operation. It could also be used in hopeless cases and, most importantly, in precancerous conditions. By removing even the possibility of this form of treatment, the Federal authorities have taken a heavy responsibility on themselves,

especially in view of the fact that independent researchers like Mr. C.D. Cone are now corroborating some of Reich's findings.

Who is the FDA to deprive cancer patients of any treatment that could be efficacious? I am sure that most cancer patients would be glad to try any form of treatment that did not interfere with orthodox methods. The decision should rest, certainly, with the individual cancer patient and not with the FDA or the DAR. It has occurred to this investigator that orgone energy might be concentrated and directed in an effort to disperse the miasma of idiotic prurience and anxiety that blocks any scientific investigation of sexual phenomena.

When I took a loft in lower SoHo some years ago, my friend David Prentice was building some furniture for me. We decided to make an orgone accumulator and assemble it in the loft. He built a plywood box big enough to put a chair inside, with a layer of cork and a galvanized steel lining. On the outside he draped half a dozen ratty old rabbit-fur coats, to beef up the orgone charge. The rabbit coats give the box a surrealist look, very organic, like a fur-lined bathtub. I spent fifteen to twenty minutes a day in the box meditating, with the comfortable feeling that I was at least cutting down the odds of contracting cancer. It had occurred to me that the effect could be greatly enhanced by using *magnetized* iron and building the accumulator in a pyramid shape. If pyramids can prevent meat from decaying, they might do as much for you.