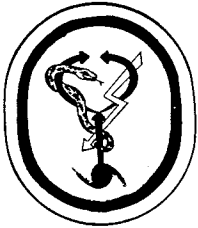


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Major articles

- Character and Society**
Wilhelm Reich, M.D.
- The Golden Section**
C. Fredrick Rosenblum, B.S., O.S.J.
- The Biopathic Diathesis (Part VIII: Headache)**.....
Robert A. Dew, M.D.
- Further Investigation of the Passive-feminine
Schizophrenic**
Charles Konia, M.D.
- A Case of Mysticism**
Arthur Nelson, M.D.
- The Medical DOR-buster in the Treatment
of Cancer in Mice**
Richard A. Blasband, M.D., O.S.J.
- The Fifteenth Street School**
Patricia Greene

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From the History of Orgonomy

Character and Society*

By WILHELM REICH, M.D.

*Editor's note:*** This article was written in Europe and before the present war. Many statements in it pertain specifically to pre-war Germany. However, to the discriminating reader, this article will be of interest because many observations pertain not to Germany alone, but to all countries alike. The publication of this article at this time will enable the reader to recognize those facts which are as true of America in 1942 as they were of Europe in 1936, and to distinguish them from those other facts which have been forced on us in defense against the threat of Fascism. "Militarism" is a characteristic of Germany, but not of America. Though not an American characteristic, it has been forced on us by the threat of Hitler. But the fact has to be kept in mind that militarism, even if enforced upon a nation from the outside, has an inherent tendency to perpetuate itself. This is apt to happen unless we are careful not to lose sight of the distinction between killing *for pleasure* and killing *in self-defense*.

In order to make my main subject clear, I have to start out with a brief historical review of the position of psychology in science. It originated from highly complicated developments in science, against the background of a medieval atmosphere of mysticism. The beginning of the machine age led to the development of mechanistic materialism, which influenced human thinking decisively. On the one hand, the physical sciences led to enormous discoveries; on the other hand, their applica-

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**This note is by Theodore P. Wolfe, M.D., editor of the *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone Research*.

tion to the problem of psychology and philosophy led to a complete denial of the existence of the psyche. As a reaction to mechanistic materialism, there arose a metaphysical ideology that considered the body dependent on the mind, and the latter as something supernatural. To this day, there are various psychological schools that treat the problems of psychic life without any connection with their material basis.

The first basis of a scientific psychology was laid by Freud. He introduced genetic and causal thinking into psychology. At that time, the questions, "Why is this so or so in psychic life?," or "How did it develop?," were unusual; today, they are a matter of course in psychological thinking. To try to understand human activity from the individual development meant also the application—even though unconscious—of the functional method in psychology. The introduction of the *concept* of "psychic energy" was revolutionary; however, Freud did not succeed in making this concept more than a simile.

All psychological schools stop at two lines. One line is that against *biology*. It is not very sharply drawn; the question as to how psychic functioning develops out of biological functioning was ever present in psychoanalytic work. In contrast, Freud drew a very sharp line against *sociology*. More than that, one feels that stepping over that line is actually dreaded and prevented by all means.

A few decades before the beginnings of a scientific psychology, Marx laid the foundation for a scientific sociology. He realized the dependence of human activity and social ideology on social and economic processes. To this dependence, Freud added another: the dependence on unconscious drives. During the past twenty years, the seeming incompatibility of these two views has been shown again and again. On the one hand, human existence seemed to be determined by economic and sociological factors, and, on the other hand, by biological drives. The problem was made even more difficult by a certain development in psychoanalytic psychology: the increasing tendency to "psychologize" sociology, as well as biology; that is, to attempt to comprehend sociology and biology with the aid of concepts which can be valid only in the sphere of psychic functioning. True, Freud's point of departure had been the conflict between ego and outer world; it was not difficult later to recognize authoritarian society as the concrete factor in the outer world. But it soon became clear that the correct recognition was covered up and nullified by a biologicistic concept of the absolute and eternal nature of the family and of the unconscious. On the other hand, the lack of psychological thinking in Marxism led to economism, an ideology characterized by a complete lack of understanding of psychological facts and processes; it

was one of the main factors in the victory of the political reaction in Germany. Freudian psychology, on its part, showed an equal lack of consistent sociological thinking; it remained unaware of the dependence of all psychic processes on the social process. This lack of psychological thinking on the one side, and of sociological thinking on the other, was a serious obstacle in the development of Marxist sociology, as well as of psychoanalysis.

The repudiation of the erroneous theoretical development in psychoanalysis and in economism resulted in sex-economy and political psychology. Their chief characteristic is that they have abandoned the respect for the two above-mentioned demarcation lines. In this psychology, the drives and the unconscious are no longer something either supernatural or somehow the root of all things, but they are something that can be comprehended from two sides, the biological and the sociological. Only if we fully recognize this double dependency is it possible to comprehend the laws of psychic functioning, those that have already been uncovered, as well as those that still are to be discovered. This raises two fundamental questions: First: *What is the relationship between the psychic and the somatic?* Without an answer, in terms of natural science, to this essentially unsolved question, the dynamics of psychic life, particularly of emotional life, cannot be understood sufficiently to develop a basis for practical endeavor. This question I shall not enter upon today. Second: *What is the connection between psychic structure and social structure?* I shall try to sketch a few of these connections.

Freud's genetic causality made it possible to understand for what reasons of individual development a person had become as he was and not any different; however, this purely genetic and individual knowledge does not suffice to change an actual situation. For example, I can find out exactly what historical conditions led to the development of Fascism; but, no matter how many of these historical conditions I collect, they still do not indicate how Fascism might be overcome.

The same is true in psychic life. If an individual gives the impression of being beaten and I find that genetically this derives from severe oppression and beating in early childhood, I will be able to understand every single trait of this beaten attitude; but that does not suggest how the individual could possibly overcome this attitude. If it is found that people react in an infantile manner because they have remained fixed in certain developmental stages, we must ask a further question: *What makes them maintain this infantile attitude today, under changed circumstances?*

The Freudian concept of fixation in the infantile does not answer the question, for fixation itself is nothing but a description of the fact that these people remain infantile. Nor is the answer that it is repression which maintains the fixation satisfactory, for: what gives to the repression its strength and tenacity? The answer is simple. The same factors which, in infancy, produced repression and the fixation on the infantile level, continue to act throughout life, exactly in the sense of the early developmental inhibition. It is not a matter of a psychic state which was created at one time and continued to exist by itself, without any external influence; it is a matter of an inhibitory influence exerted by society all along. The fixation on an infantile level of sexual gratification can persist only for the one reason that society continues to prevent the attainment of actual sexual gratification. With that, we arrive immediately at the problem of social structure. The question arises: *What interest has society in keeping people on an infantile level by denying them the possibilities of developing a full love life?* This question had never been answered; more than that, it had not been raised.

In this connection, I would like to try again to clarify a common and stupid misunderstanding. In discussions about the role of psychology in sociology, one hears again and again a typical objection: "But, what about economic factors?" Erroneous concepts have an incredible longevity. There is no more erroneous question than this. The economic existence of man cannot be contradistinguished from his psychic existence. There are no factors in human existence which do not exert their influence through psychic life.

The effect of machines does not lie in the fact that they run, but in the fact that *people* work with them and that by doing so they change structurally. Human existence in general and social existence in particular have an effect only on the basis of the changes they bring about in human structure and the activities which they force on people.

Now, as to character formation. By character, sex-economy means the typical way of reacting which has become structure. If groups of people, such as laborers, businessmen, etc., have a certain typical behavior in common, this behavior represents the influence of a typical common social situation upon their structure. Character formation is the result of an impact between vegetative, biological, instinctual energies, on the one hand, and social existence, on the other. But it is not a matter of the abstract and theoretical finding that character structure results from the conflict between biological and sociological factors. What matters is that *the resulting character traits are functionally identical with certain factors of our social structure and ideology.*

Biological functioning is governed by the laws of development, by the processes of storing and discharging energy, by a rhythmic alternation of activity and rest. The alternation of storing and discharging energy is experienced as a pulsation and a current in the body. There are people who appear completely rigid, un-alive, and devoid of emotion, who have never known or admitted impulses of anger, love, or anxiety. Today, character-analytic technique enables us to make these people again experience these vegetative currents and their biological pulsation. Previously, the patients complained that they did not feel alive, that they felt dead, etc. This means that by dissolving the rigid character attitudes, which are experienced as an armoring, we can liberate biological energies that were previously bound up. It was found experimentally that these energies are identical with bio-electrical energy [orgonotic energy, as we would say now—Ed.].

This is of fundamental importance for character formation. Let us illustrate the conflict between vegetative impulse and social pressure with the sphincter training of infants as it is practised in our society. We know that, up to the age of three or four, children can be very much alive, and that, at the age of about five, they begin to go cold; they become "well-behaved." They lose the essential part of their motility. As things are today, this loss is essentially due to the prevailing method of sphincter training. If the child gives in to its impulse to soil, it is severely rebuked; the same is true of many other motor impulses. A conflict arises between "I want to" and "I may not." At first, the child is torn between giving in to the desire, on the one hand, and fear of punishment, on the other. It cannot stand this situation for long. It has to fight its own impulses, but also the prohibition. The child, previously active and lively, begins to watch itself; its muscular attitudes lose their naturalness and become rigid; the child becomes cold and rigid, in short, a "well-behaved" child who has adjusted itself to education, *i.e.*, to society. While previously it showed a rhythmical biological alternation of tension and relaxation, it now begins to show a mechanism which is of decisive importance for the development of that contradictory character structure which is typical of authoritarian society. True, the newly acquired coldness and rigidity immobilize a part of the vegetative energy, but the body continues to produce new amounts of energy. But now, an inhibitory mechanism being present, the energy cannot be discharged as freely as before. Due to this inhibition of energy discharge, the pressure from within keeps growing; this necessitates an ever-increasing inhibition of the impulses. This chronic mechanism of inhibition I termed the *armor*. It expresses itself in character attitudes,

as well as in muscular attitudes. Everybody can feel the wall between himself and the world. It shows itself in the fact that one cannot establish an immediate natural contact with people, in unnatural attempts to establish contact, in compulsive sociability, the fact that one can be lonely even though in company, etc.

After the armoring has taken place, there is a conflict between instinct and inhibition (morals or anxiety) which previously did not exist because the child was born without morals and its activities were regulated by the biological principle of tension and relaxation. The difference between *natural biological self-regulation* and *moral regulation* of instinctual life is like that between a natural river and one that is dammed up. Under natural conditions, the river runs according to the natural contours of the land and according to its amount of water; when dammed up, it inundates the land and forms all kinds of secondary streams which may cause serious destruction. Exactly the same happens in instinctual life. The natural drives of the child, to eat, to suck, to exercise its musculature, to derive pleasure from its intestinal function and its genital, remain socially harmless and only further the child's development as long as they are not inhibited. In the course of natural development, one interest after the other is replaced by a new one. However, society inhibits each successive phase of development by educational measures; this inhibition again and again creates artificial, unnatural cravings. The child acquires a sharp discrepancy between its own natural being and that which culture implants in it. This discrepancy merely reflects the absolute contradiction of culture and nature, of instinct and morality, which is the characteristic of modern society. The natural reaction of the child is replaced by the compulsive antithesis of "this is bad" and "this is good." A child with a strong impulse to motor activity, having to wear a clean party dress and having to be careful not to get "dirty" because the mother likes it to look like a cute little doll, is one of the sorriest spectacles. Our experiences leave no doubt that such suppression of infantile motor activity is one of the most harmful influences a child may experience. The control which the child has to exercise over itself, quite unnecessarily and only for the sake of a dubious "refinement," results in a disturbed household of its vegetative energy. This process of replacing natural behavior by artificial attitudes can be observed in every aspect of the child's life.

A second illustration of the armoring as a result of the conflict between instinct and outer world is the pleasure anxiety which takes its definite form in puberty. Adolescents of 11, 12, or 13 are still quite lively or have again become so; at the age of 16 or 17, they change

again and grow cold as they did as children. With adolescents of about 14 or 15, one usually can talk rather freely about their sexuality; afterwards, it is more difficult, because they become inaccessible. This change from aliveness to coldness is a repetition of the same process which took place in childhood.

The most general result for character formation is the mutual lack of contact and the replacement of natural human relationships by artificial, formalistic relationships. In spite of our collective living, there are only rare individuals who are not fundamentally lonely, empty, and superficial. This psychic situation creates the longing for "release," or even for "dissolution" (vegetative, orgasmic longing). People have lost the capacity for freely swimming in the current of life. If, deep inside, they feel their will to live, but, due to their armoring, cannot express it, they must needs develop a longing for the "great experience." This longing is sentimental, or dreamy, and in most cases very vague and confused; it is a longing for something which will release them from their armor, from their isolation. In addition, people who cannot express their living motor activity must of necessity become afraid of life, helpless in the face of tasks and happenings which, under normal circumstances and with their knowledge and technique, they could master without any difficulty. On the one hand, they are too well adjusted to the destructive demands of so-called culture; on the other hand, they have lost the ability to overcome real difficulties with which the times, circumstances, and social processes confront them. One has only to listen to the usual conversations on the street, in the family, the restaurant, etc. What people say to each other is incredibly superficial; it does not touch upon the real problems of life; it shows complete lack of critique in the face of the most stupid ideologies. More than that, there is no doubt that the average human of today does not like being brought in contact with serious questions. Behind this dislike, one easily discerns a deep fear. The facial expression of people on the streets and their whole bodily attitude are cowed, unalive; they reflect the misery of life.

However, it would be erroneous to conclude from this superficiality, as the "God-sent" Führers of millions do, that people are so stupid that you can pour into them whatever you want to. These same people who appear so superficial, empty, and stupid, develop, under treatment, abilities, attitudes, and a thinking which not infrequently can compare with that of great thinkers. This is no exaggeration. It only means that the general inhibition of life is reflected in the inhibition of the individual's capacity to be really himself. People are different on the outside and the inside, they are one way in a good friendship and another

way in official life; different in their professional life and their private life. Life as we see it around us is a *substitute life*.

Let us try to get a general idea of the connection between the ideological structure of our society and the psychic structure of its individuals. Mechanized economy, this characteristic of our civilization, is reflected in the mechanized human, in the empty life led by the factory or office worker of today from his 16th to his 60th year.

The problems we are dealing with here are found in a realm which official science is loath to approach. I have been observing for months the following picture in my neighborhood: Across the street lives a young official with his wife and a small child. Every morning on the dot of nine, he leaves the house. On the stoop, he takes leave of his wife and child with a perfunctory kiss on the forehead and then he waves to them. Then he takes five or six steps, turns to the left, and again waves bye-bye. We have no reason to doubt that he will repeat the same thing for another thirty years. One must ask oneself what mechanisms make it possible for a living being to carry out such automatic behavior, how he can stand it, and how he can fail to take cognizance of it. Sex-economic clinical experience answers this question only in part. It explains the dynamics and the mechanisms of such unnatural behavior. But it does not explain the social function of such a phenomenon.

The fact that people of our civilization are cold, that they are walking corpses, that they are armored, is a highly important and interesting clinical phenomenon. But what function does it serve in society? We know that there is a profit economy and how it functions. But we have to ask the further question: How is it possible that people can bear it, that they are unable to change it, that they seem to endure in silence the suffering it imposes on them? The majority of people are being suppressed and exploited. The police does not have the function of satisfying people's "need for punishment," as some psychoanalysts contend; it has the function of keeping people from voicing their protests in an effective manner. The decisive factor lies in the average human character structure, in its false modesty and lack of critical faculties. From infancy on, people are trained to be falsely modest, self-effacing, and mechanically obedient, trained to suppress their natural instinctual energies. Social ideology is governed by asceticism and duty in the service of a senseless "altruism." These basic elements of any reactionary ideology are represented in the human character structure by the *pleasure anxiety* which was acquired in childhood and the inability to experience work as pleasure instead of as loathsome duty. Character-analytic thera-

peutic experience shows clearly that individuals who have come to know pleasure in activity and work become unable to engage in the usual kind of pleasureless work as duty without developing a strong inner aversion to it. But this aversion, the inner protest, on the part of the majority of people, would be the first prerequisite for a change of work itself.

In the ideology of our society, the antithesis of *morality and sexuality* plays a decisive role. Owing to this fact, hardly any human in this society can engage in a pleasurable activity without reacting, consciously or unconsciously, with guilt feelings. The antithesis of sexuality and morality in social ideology is also found in the human structure. It is anchored there physiologically in chronic muscular spasms which prevent the occurrence of biological sexual excitation.

Another example that strikes every thinking person is the fact that vast masses of people fulfil the ideology of "dying for one's country" with such punctiliousness, even abandonment. How is it possible, we must ask ourselves, that such a life-negative demand is accepted without any protest? That the demand is made is not the problem. The problem is the question as to why millions of people actually follow the demand and die for a country whose brutality and life-negating program is obvious. The usual answer is that the people are forced by machine guns to do so. But if one looks at the behavior of the masses, previous to the world war and now, one must conclude that this is not the answer. There is something at work in the people themselves that save those interested in making war the necessity of using machine guns. Let us examine this in terms of an illustration.

Imagine the youth of 18 to 25 in any small place. The young people are lonely, unsatisfied in their material and cultural needs, unsatisfied in their natural biological needs, bored with their work, and tremendously suppressed at home. They hang out on street corners, killing time telling silly stories and displaying thoroughly unnatural sexual interests. Bored and dissatisfied as they are, the longing for the "great experience" inevitably becomes a central part of their structure. We have to remember that this longing has a very material basis in the above-described longing for the release from instinctual pressure. We are going through times now in which the magnitude of these phenomena becomes unequivocally clear. War is imminent; everybody has the feeling that nothing can be done about it, they are convinced that it will come like a fate and that it cannot be escaped. Of course, the fear of dying, of being crippled, etc., is there in all its biological strength; but it is completely drowned out by the emptiness of life, the sexual loneliness, and the

resulting longing for the "great experience." Italy demonstrated what war enthusiasm can spring from this longing. It is completely senseless to try to meet such facts with anti-war proclamations or propaganda. The broad masses have a more or less nationalistic attitude and are not impressed by any dry anti-war propaganda. It is not a matter of proclaiming pacifist sentiments, but of liberating, in actual life, those forces which alone can overcome the destructive power of the unfulfilled vegetative longings.

Just a few words about another example from human pathology, the enormous role of alcohol in the life of the suppressed masses. Its function in the present social life becomes clear when one considers the motives of alcoholism. An essential aspect of the character armoring is the dulling of self-perception, the paralysis of sensations in the body periphery, which makes the body surface feel like an armor. Alcohol dilates the peripheral vessels and thus temporarily relieves the internal tension, provides a feeling of relaxation, and makes one forget one's troubles. We do not deny the role played by oral eroticism and homosexuality, but we realize how much more important than these academic findings is the fact that the average human feels empty and cold. This fact is nowhere mentioned in any scientific treatise on alcoholism.

Another example is the effect exerted by the movies. Ninety-eight percent of all modern films are love stories. They are all made according to one and the same formula: In the beginning, they provoke in the audience all the desires that in actual life remain unfulfilled and then provide an illusionary satisfaction on the screen. Sexual experiences *outside* marriage, happiness in love between unmarried people, ridicule of the Babbits, etc., are dominant subjects in the early part of most films. But, just as every screen love story begins with the affirmation of sexuality, so it ends with a glorification of a sex-negative morality. The films show quite clearly that business interests comprehend the general human longing for pleasure and happiness and know how to exploit it. But the gratification is not allowed to be real. The end of the story is the negation of life and pleasure, the arousal of guilt feelings, the portrayal of "well-deserved" punishment for plucking the forbidden fruit of pleasure. The problem which the film seemed to present at the beginning is not solved; on the contrary, it is again buried. The people will come back and keep the box-office busy.

We can say: Human structure and its contradictions fit into the structure of social ideology like two cogs of a machine.

Society as an institution reproduces itself not primarily by its laws, its bureaucracy, or its police, but essentially by creating a basis for itself

in the character structure of the masses. It creates in the average person a political helplessness and a lack of independence, the desire and the need to be led; it does this by means of authoritarian education and sexual suppression. The average human, brought up in this manner, understands nothing of the large social issues; all he knows is the small sphere of his own personal life, and very little about that. He needs to lean on somebody, he needs illusory gratification, mystical hope, ideals which are never realized and are impossible of realization. The society of today corresponds to this psychic structure. Social ideological structure and psychic structure are functionally identical.

That the so-called human consciousness is merely a reflection of social processes and conditions is not so. Rather, society, by suppressing the natural instincts and thus changing them into antisocial drives, which in turn must be inhibited by morals, creates a character structure that corresponds to this society and in which the ideology of this society can anchor itself. In other words, society is not the result of a certain psychic structure, but the reverse is true: character structure is the result of a certain society.

What is anchored in the human structure is not natural conditions, but essentially mechanized civilization. I have had the fortune—or, if you will, misfortune—to study the character of many people in many different countries. I found that their natural differences are completely irrelevant compared with what they had in common in their structure. What is the biological difference between a white baby and colored one? Do they not develop fundamentally in the same way? What they have in common in infantile motor activity, infantile thinking, infantile ways of looking at things, infantile sexuality, etc., is incomparably more important than the differences which are determined by their race. Only a peculiar kind of "scientist" can manage not only to overlook such facts, but to participate in building up a completely irrational ideology of race with its life-destroying tendency.

The average human who has gone through an authoritarian upbringing finds himself in an eternal and usually insoluble conflict between his psychic structure and his social existence. When therapy dissolves the pathological inhibitions of the natural drives and people thus re-establish a natural contact with their own drives, with their own selves, and their environment, moral regulation becomes unnecessary. This fact is usually misunderstood, simple as it is. To use again an old example: If a man is hungry and unable to obtain food, he automatically develops the impulse to steal; if he steals, he is threatened with jail; so he inhibits the impulse to steal. After a good meal, the impulse to steal disappears

automatically; if the impulse is not there, no inhibition is needed. This simple mechanism applies to the more complicated situation of sexuality. If the natural demands of sexuality are reestablished and are satisfied, there is no reason for the development of anti-social impulses and consequently no need for moral inhibition.

People who lack sexual gratification—be it for internal or external reasons—are constantly obsessed by phantasies of rape or perverse impulses of one kind or another; if they become capable of natural gratification, these perverse impulses disappear, and with them any need for their moral inhibition. In this way, the antithesis of morals and instincts can be *eliminated*—even though only in the individual case. Moral regulation then is replaced by an entirely different mode of regulation, sex-economic *self-regulation*.

Once one has comprehended these facts, they become a matter of course. However, there is one difficulty which the majority of scientists try hard *not* to see, in order not to come into conflict with it: the barriers which society places in the way of instinctual gratification. Even in individual therapy, we are bound to come up against them sooner or later. When, for example, a girl of 17 or 18, who has fallen sick as the result of suppressing her adolescent sexuality, becomes aware of her sexual needs, she comes immediately into conflict with everything that represents "good moral behavior." Hardly anybody has any idea of the social obstacles which today stand in the path of a consistent character therapy. The alteration of psychic structure from the principle of moral regulation to that of sex-economic self-regulation presents an enormous perspective. However, one should not have any illusions as to its practicability. Such an alteration of psychic structure on a mass scale, based on a sexual hygiene according to the consistent affirmation of pleasure, is at present impossible. The reason is obvious: every prerequisite for such a change is lacking in our society.

I have tried to show the significance of the prevailing character structure for the present-day social structure. As soon as one tries to change human structure, society objects most strenuously. Everyone working in this field is soon made to realize that a general solution of the pathological conflict in the human presupposes a solution of the existing social conflicts. That is, an alteration of the social structure is a prerequisite for an alteration of psychic structure on a mass scale.

The interrelation of social structure and character structure goes still further. The social processes are contradictory. In the field of economy, conservative, inhibiting forces are contradicted by forward-driving forces; for example, national tariff boundaries on the one hand, world-

economy on the other. Collectivism of work is undoubtedly a great step ahead, but it is contradicted in every aspect by the neurotic fixation to the family. These examples could be multiplied indefinitely. In the character structure, we also find forward-driving and opposing conservative features. The desire for collective living, for a life that is really alive, for happiness, for genuine human contact, for joyful productive work, all these tendencies are opposed not only by the social structure, but also by such inner factors as fear of chaos, feelings of impotence, psychic rigidity, dependence on authority, etc. Conservatism in society thrives essentially on the psychic inhibition in the people; it thrives, in such movements as the Oxford movement and everything mystical and reactionary, on the vegetative energy in people that wants to express itself and cannot express itself; because it cannot, it becomes diverted into unnatural and *life-inimical* channels and thus can be utilized for *life-negating* purposes. The opposite is the principle of an economic order based on a full affirmation of life for the masses of people. Such a program includes the immediate natural contact between people, the prevention of life-negating processes, and the fostering of the natural development of vegetative energy. The social process is only a continuation of the general process of nature.

The masses of people are not simply "passive," not simply "stupid and dependent." Rather, they are torn between fear of life, superficiality, lack of critique, and seeming stupidity on the one hand, and genuine, deep understanding of vital needs on the other hand. Every human of today carries in himself this dual nature, and the social development of the future has no more important task than that of making people conscious of the positive aspects of this conflict and of developing them.

In this connection, I would like to say a few concluding words about the task of the scientists. We owe to Marx a very simple explanation of the concept "radical." To be a radical means nothing but "going to the root" of things. That is the task of the scientist. Every science, if it takes itself seriously and fulfills its task, is *of necessity* radical. Strictly speaking, there cannot be such a thing as a reactionary science. All the things that call themselves science and are at the same time in the service of reactionary ideologies can easily be shown to be not science, but mysticism and superstition. Science and the scientist should not be expected at all to adhere to this or that political credo; but they should profess to being radical, that is, they should go to the root of things. Real scientific work today is being hampered to an incredible degree. Our times are characterized by mysticism and blind obedience to authority in the masses of people. Science is in great danger; hundreds of scientists have

had to leave Germany just because they were scientists. Hardly any of them had any political affiliation; they were just scientists. When scientists have to flee and the general irrational thinking and acting is not counteracted by knowledge and rational action, still others will have to flee. To be cautious does no good. Those who did not dare to draw the conclusions from their findings had to flee also. If that is so, it is better to be consistent. The scientist has only one correct social task; *to continue his search for the truth in spite of everything*, not to give heed to any restrictions that the bearers of life-negating ideologies may try to impose on him.

The war which is at our door will bring about changes of a magnitude as yet inconceivable. For the time being, the scientist can do no better than prepare for the time when the great change shall come. So many are busy trying to find ever better and more effective death-rays; let us hope that coming events will move the scientists to search, at last, for the *life-rays*.¹

We have to be prepared and ready for a time when a rational order, when all those who will work and will themselves determine their existence, shall need us.

¹*Translator's note:* When I read this, in 1936, I understood what the author meant, it was the vision of a scientist who, in years of honest scientific effort, had come to know not only the irrationalism in scientific work, but had learned to understand its motivations. It was the vision of a therapist who had seen patients, made sick by the irrationalism in society, turn into rational beings capable of natural self-regulation, and who could envisage the same process in the future of society. I could see what he meant but felt that he was looking into a future which was infinitely far away.

When I read this passage again recently, not having seen the article for several years, I was stunned. The scientists are still looking for more powerful death-rays. Only recently, a newspaper carried a large headline: "GIANT X-RAY TREATS CANCER. 2-to-3-Million Volt Tube is the Most Powerful in World." But in the meantime, in 1939, Reich *had* discovered the orgone radiation, that is, the *life-rays*. He made this discovery neither in the search for a new radiation, nor in the quest for a new therapy of cancer, but simply in the course of his consistent study of living functioning. Most probably, it could have been made only outside of the framework of official science. Making the discovery, the discoverer was not a tool of present-day society, but of the living function itself which this society continues to negate. It is only to be hoped that the witnessing of the present triumph of the life-negating forces will make people realize their vital needs and will make them take up the fight for their natural needs and rights, and that science will take its part in this fight.—T. P. W.