



The Developmental History of Orgonomic Functionalism

Ελληνικά English

search for...



| |
|---|
| Research programs |
| Microscopic research |
| Experiments in progress |
| Blood Disintegration |
| Bions |
| Experiment XX |
| Amoebae |
| Biophysical research |
| Experiments in progress |
| Orgone Energy Field Meter |
| Orgonomic functionalism |
| Wilhelm Reich and physics |
| Experiments regarding the existence of orgone |
| Accumulating devices |
| Weather control |
| Cosmology |
| Wilhelm Reich and medicine |
| What health is |
| The importance of the ANS for Reich's work |
| Bioelectrical experiments |
| Biopathies |
| Somatic |
| Psychic |
| Reich Blood Test |
| The ORAC in medical practice |
| Wilhelm Reich and biogenesis |
| Biogenesis: Introductory note |
| Bions |
| Experiment XX |
| Psychiatric orgonotherapy |
| Historical development of orgone therapy |
| What psychiatric orgone therapy is |
| Stratification of psychic structures (Freud-Reich comparison) |
| Libidinal stages – Fixations |
| What character is and factors affecting character formation |
| Segments of armoring |
| Characterology |
| The goal of orgone therapy: Genitality – Orgasm reflex |
| Method and tools in orgonotherapy |
| Patients' testimonials |
| Armor prevention |
| Child upbringing |
| Social Orgonomy |
| Social psychopathology |
| Emotional plague |

Wilhelm Reich, M.D.

Since the best way to introduce someone to a new realm of knowledge is to describe the process by which it has evolved, I shall attempt to introduce the reader to orgonomic functionalism by presenting the uniformity of the results which have been obtained over a period of three decades.

Thus far, I have provided essentially thematic and historical descriptions. What I now want to do is to rearrange the familiar material, the many observations, clinical and experimental facts, and theoretical conclusions, and I want to do this in such a way that the rationality of consistent natural research presents itself to us in a logical sequence of observation, hypothesis, experimental confirmation, and new findings. This arrangement of the orgonomic facts will ultimately lead us to formulate functional equations which will link up with the thought operations of classical mathematics and provide satisfactory insight into the modus operandi of a thinking being who seeks to comprehend the natural world around him. Observer and natural function, subjective sensation and objective stimulus, perception and object will appear to us in the new light of a functional unity of all nature. Ultimately we will have to acknowledge that the biological structure of the observer cannot be excluded from his study of nature or from any assessment of the results of his research. Scientific thinking embodies a certain logic and rationality, and these reflect nothing less than the harmony of natural events which, until now, have been extolled only in great poetry. We will also be able to assign the irrational to its proper place and trace its history for a short distance.

THE REALM OF THE PSYCHE IS NOT OF SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN

The development of the system of functional thought proceeded from one unproven conviction: Human emotional life is not of supernatural origin. It is located within the bounds of nature and is investigable. Like the rest of nature, it obeys the functional laws of matter and energy.

This conviction had to wrestle with two gigantic facts with which it was at variance:

The laws of natural events as uncovered by chemistry, physics, and mathematics cannot be brought into accord with the functions which characterize emotional life. Seen from a fundamental standpoint, the mechanistic material view of nature covers only unessential realms of the living. For the vast majority of human beings, the broad realm of emotions, sensations, philosophies of life, and practical lifestyles is anchored in mystical, supernatural forces which are universally based, in one form or another, on the idea of a Godlike entity existing beyond the range of all sensory perceptions. This idea contradicted the view that human emotional life was located within the sphere of comprehensible natural processes.

Thus, even before it could begin to operate effectively, the technique of functional thinking came up against the rigid walls of the two systems of thought employed by humankind, namely mechanism (materialism, atomism, chemism, etc.) and mysticism (idealism, metaphysics, spiritualism, etc.) which can look back on several thousand years of development and are supported by powerful social organizations.

There was no question of providing a purely philosophical basis for the this-sidedness of the emotional sphere of life. This would not have solved anything and, sooner or later, it would have silently disappeared. There was only one route to take, and that was to engage in the direct observation of natural events and to explain these

Positions and opinions of others

[Hadjidakis on fascism](#)

[Karapostolis: The passage from freedom to contemporary brutality](#)

[Popper about science](#)

[more...](#)

Sharing our points of view

New Postings

12/2/2014 New posting at "Sharing our points of view" / On qualification and recognition

12/2/2014 New posting at "Sharing our points of view" / The bigotry of Orgonomy's "small apostles"

2/12/2013 New post at "Sociology / Social pathology / Psychopathology and antisocial activism" / Prison of permissiveness

11/25/2013 New post on "Positions and opinions of others" / The passage from freedom to contemporary brutality

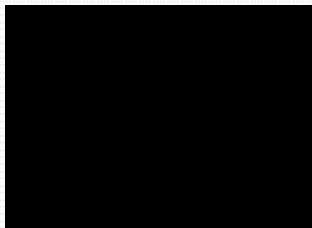
25/1/2014 New posting at "Orgonomic functionalism" / The Developmental History of Orgonomic Functionalism

[All postings](#)

Recent Announcements

Publishing project: "Wilhelm Reich: Complete works"

6/6/2013 Invitation for research collaboration to biologists or microbiologists and physicists



Red blood cell disintegration into bions (210 minutes after blood take – Dark field). For more please visit page “Research programs / Microscopic research”.

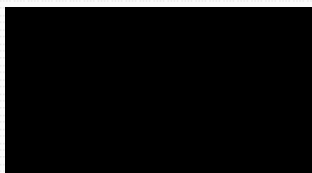
Seminar

Introductory seminar on psychiatric orgonotherapy and character analysis

Hellenic Society of Psychiatric Orgone Therapy and Character Analysis

Evaluation of your blood's bioenergetic charge (Reich Blood Test) available in Thessaloniki

Psychiatric orgonotherapy services



A wonderful artistic representation of orgone's movement, through a digitally processed Van Gogh's painting titled “Starry night”.

Pages in this site will be completed at a slow pace. Information of new additions will appear at the “New postings” section.

observations by logical analysis. The words “function” and “functional” were in use at the time but they said nothing about the basic problem. On the contrary, they often led people astray, as for example in the case of psychiatry, where “functional” illnesses were regarded as “imaginary” complaints. And there was a deep, unbridgeable gap between the medical and the physical concept of what is “functional.”

NATURAL FUNCTIONING IS BASICALLY AN ENERGY PROCESS

To the ancient Greek observers of nature, the inanimate world seemed filled with substance in motion. There was a prevailing view that everything moves, everything is “in flux.” This basic viewpoint persists in present-day natural research. “Movement” and “energy process” are inseparable because movement, or the overcoming of space, presupposes a force which impels the substance. Today I can no longer explain why in my natural scientific conception I gave preference to the “energy” process over “matter” or “substance.” This attitude on my part was more likely to create problems because the principal direction of thought in physics and chemistry was atomistic, i.e. materialistic; in other words, all nature was conceived of as having evolved from atoms in motion. This view had imposed itself on the electron theory, which was at the time (approximately 1919) gaining considerable ground. Even the smallest units of electricity possessed mass, i.e. they were particles, although of a special kind. The contradiction contained in the emerging theory of functionalism was thus as follows:

If natural functioning is basically an energy process, it follows logically that there must also be a primary or primordial energy. However, since electrons already possess mass, then “matter” or particles must also have a primary existence. In purely logical terms it is unlikely that two such different entities as energy and mass could simultaneously be primary phenomena. And classical physics, including the modern energy-mass relationship, concluded that mass and energy are primordial natural phenomena. Einstein had already eliminated the absolute distinction between mass and energy. Energy (E) was now mass moving at the speed of light (mc^2), but it was still “mass” and not in purely primary terms, mass-free. True, it had been known since Becquerel and Curie that matter converts or breaks down into energy, and it was understood how this happens. But nobody, with the exception of a few ether philosophers, suggested that mass could form from energy. Matter with its mass (m) was and remained a primordial, not further derivable natural phenomenon. I did not suspect at the time that this limitation is due to the nature of mechanistic thinking. It would not have helped much to know this because immediately a new problem would have presented itself, namely, if mass is not primordial then how can it be formed from energy?

Embryonic functionalism gave precedence to energy in natural development, without being able to prove it. And there was nothing at the time which would have explained where a young natural scientist might have acquired this prejudice. It was not a mystical inclination, because evolving functionalism sharply rejected any metaphysical conception of nature, such as entelechy, vis. spiritualism. From my present standpoint, it seems as if this preference was based simply in the sensations of motion in my own organism. It was nothing more than a prejudice which later proved to be well-founded.

From the first supposition that emotional processes are within the realm of comprehensible natural phenomena, and from the second supposition that all natural phenomena are primarily energetic, it follows logically that emotional and psychic phenomena must be ascribed basically to energy processes.

THERE IS A “PSYCHIC ENERGY”

Somewhere around 1919 my initial functional assumptions linked up with the theories formulated by the science of psychoanalysis, which at the time had not yet abandoned its energy-related orientation, as it has done today. Freud was, I believe, the first researcher in the field of psychology to assume the existence of a “psychic energy.” According to this view, psychic ideas and perceptions were associated with varying amounts of “affect”. These affects, which were later simply called “emotions,” were expressions of biological drives. For example, a process of repression might only act on an idea, as in the case of hysteria, while leaving the associated affect unrepressed; or it might act merely on the affect, while leaving the idea untouched, as in the case of obsessional neurosis. Also, both the idea and the affect may be repressed, as

[Subscribe](#)

Your email:

[Subscribe](#)

Visits

| | | |
|--|----------------|------|
| | Greece | 6700 |
| | United States | 237 |
| | Germany | 106 |
| | United Kingdom | 79 |
| | Cyprus | 75 |
| | Ghana | 66 |
| | Slovakia | 38 |
| | Spain | 36 |
| | India | 36 |
| | Brazil | 34 |
| | Canada | 34 |
| | Italy | 31 |
| | Finland | 28 |
| | France | 26 |

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Total Visits: | 7800 |
| Total Pageviews: | 24263 |

happens in certain cases of total amnesia. In this view there was no connection between ideas and affects, either functionally or genetically. "Idea" and "affect" were completely different and separate psychological entities.

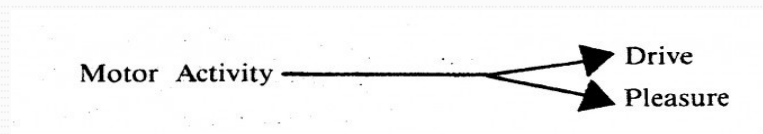
At that time, psychoanalytic theory was based on the same principle as classical physics. Just as in nonliving nature "matter" or "mass," which were primary, were moved and displaced by "forces," so in the psychological sphere "amounts of energy" became affixed to static ideas, moving and displacing them. The ideas corresponded to the "matter," and the "drives" corresponded to the "forces" or "impulses" of classical physics.[2]

It was at this point that the first major effort to utilize the functional technique of thinking commenced.

The theory of sexual economy, which in those days was still in the embryonic stage, was used to make a thorough study of the function of the orgasm. It found among other things that a sexual idea, such as that of the sexual act, could not be produced if the corresponding emotions were lacking or if the organism had just lost its state of high tension through gratification, i.e. through "discharge of energy." Thus there was somehow a closer link between an idea and an energy process than was assumed by psychoanalytic theory.

Detailed phenomenological studies on the pleasure sensation left no doubt that it cannot be separated from the drive function. It was not a case of a drive here striving toward a pleasure there, but instead the drive was nothing more than the motor function of pleasure itself.

Now, since the sensation of pleasure is a psychic function while a drive is a physical function, two previously separate functions in the organism were, with one stroke, combined into a "functional unit." *Drive and pleasure were one and the same as far as motor activity is concerned.*



Motor activity was no longer a function of "drive"; instead, the drive urge was the function of a still undefined biological motor activity. The same was true for the sensation of pleasure.

Bodily excitation, the drive, was identical with a psychic sensation with respect to a certain biological process, sexual motor activity. At that time it was not clear what was moving in the body. And it was equally unclear what was meant by the term "sexual function." Freudian sexual psychology was fully aware of these uncertainties. Freud assumed that the drives "are rooted in biological processes" and that these processes are in some way chemical in nature. Later, psychoanalysis completely lost its orientation regarding such fundamental questions of science. It became bogged down in an embarrassing mixture of psychiatric business and loose talk about human beings.

However, the thought technique of organonomic functionalism had gained its first important position: Ideas may come and go. Their existence depends on the state of motion of the body's energy.

Sensation and excitation are identical in one still undetermined common functioning principle. Sensation is a function of excitation, and excitation in turn is a function of sensation. They are inseparable and form a functional unit; and at the same time they are not one and the same, but different from each other, indeed even opposed to each other. This gave rise to the first formulation of the "simultaneity of identity and antithesis."

This development occurred between 1919 and 1923. It was not clearly understood at the time that this was an innovation in thinking, but the result was presented in my paper entitled "Über Triebenergetik"[3] (1923) and in my psychoanalytic studies on genitality from then on.

These initial observations were the starting point for the formulation which was so important in shaping my later comprehension of the processes of consciousness, namely that ideas are “concentrations of energy quanta,” i.e., that psychic ideas can be traced back to energy processes.

This innovation in thinking was totally without precedent in the field of natural science. The fundamentally new element here was the assumption that two functions could be simultaneously identical and antithetical. Natural philosophy could only offer the monistic view of the unity of body and soul, the dualistic conception of psychophysical parallelism, the mechanistic-materialistic, one-sided dependence of the soul on the body, and the spiritualistic (idealistic-metaphysical) dependence of matter on a supernatural world spirit. Freud’s method of thinking was essentially materialistic, but dualistic. It operated with two types of drive which had no connection in the depths. At first, there were the “sexual instincts” and the “ego instincts”; later, there were “sexual instincts” and the “death instinct.” It was not until many years later, around 1927, that I found out about the system of thought known as “dialectic materialism” postulated by Friedrich Engels (“Anti-Duhring”).

This initial, still groping attempt to relate a psychic idea to an energetic state of movement decided the course of my work up to the discovery of the cosmic orgone and the organometric functional equations of 1947. It is not easy to clarify this here in simple terms, but the following diagram may serve to indicate why the psychoanalytic formulation and my initial functional formulation on the emotional process inevitably led in two opposite directions.



Diagram of the Relationship between Idea and Drive Energy

Psychology very soon ignored the amount of affect “which attaches to the idea” and concentrated more and more on the contents, the experiences, conflicts, human relationships, etc. Although psychology is aware that experiences, conflicts, etc. are charged with affect to varying degrees, it is not interested in the origin of the affects. Indeed, psychology often commits the gross error of assuming that this wealth of affect itself derives from a mother fixation. In so doing, it overlooks the fact that the strong mother fixation is itself already the result of a special energy state of the infant organism.

Functionalism, which later led to the discovery of the cosmic orgone energy, instead concentrated its attention on the dependency of psychic contents—ideas, conflicts, experiences, etc.—on the energy state of the organism. Excessive mother fixation in a child, for example, now appeared as an expression of “pent-up drive” or “energy stasis,” i.e. it corresponded to a disturbance in the release of energy by the organism. This theory was confirmed clinically inasmuch as the conflict was resolved when the capacity for the orderly discharge of energy was restored. A genitally pent-up child clings orally to the mother. A genitally gratified child does not cling to the mother but has playmates of its own age.

Psychology analyzes and breaks down experiences and conflicts and relates them back to earlier, historically important experiences. Current ideas and instinctual goals understandably emerge from earlier or repressed ideas and instinctual goals.

Functional orgone therapy does not break down experiences; it does not operate with associations of ideas, but primarily with instinctual energies which it releases from characterological and muscular blocks, thereby allowing the energies to flow freely again; it eliminates energy stasis. It is of no consequence to orgone therapy what experiences have led to the energy becoming dammed-up. The therapeutic goal of psychology is to recall forgotten experiences. The goal of orgone therapy is to mobilize the biological energy, the orgone, in the organism.

There is another difference between psychology and orgone biophysics which is of decisive importance, even for mathematical, organometric studies. The exclusive concentration on experiences and ideas has led to increasingly complex relationships and processes. In contrast, concentrating on the energy functions progressively

simplifies our understanding of the biological processes and therewith the wealth of human experiences and ideas, because all experiences can be related back to simple biological energy processes. In order to clarify this contrast between simplicity at the deep biological level and complexity at the superficial psychic level, one need only think of the infinite abundance and variations of psychotic and neurotic experiences. However, this profusion of experiences is based on one energy-related fact, namely, the stasis of sexual-biological energy. The pathological fantasies in all their confusion and endless complexity collapse like a house of cards when the biological energy starts again to function naturally, i.e., economically.

In addition, seen from the standpoint of natural research which attempts to bring human beings back into harmony with nature, psychology does not lead beyond the psychic processes, while functional energetics leads from the idea to biological energy, and from biological energy to its origin in general, natural energy functions. After all, energetic functionalism led logically to the discovery of the bions[4] and then to that of the orgone.

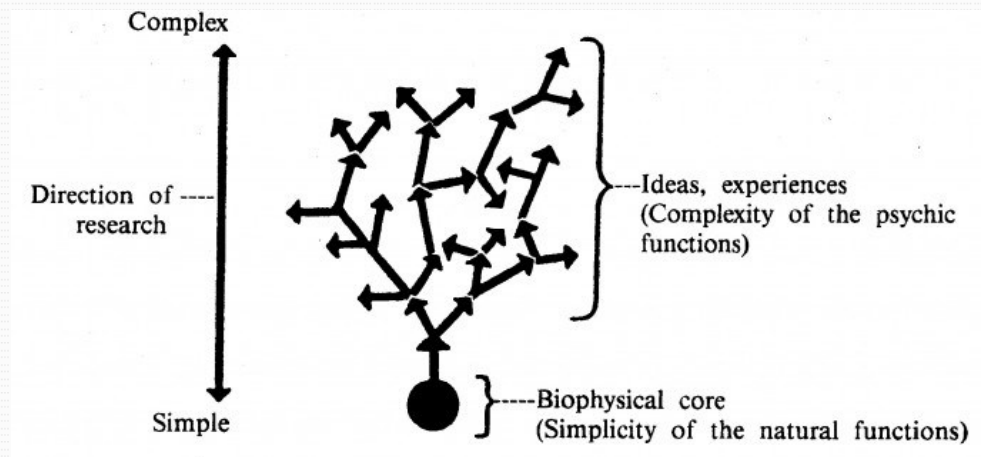


Diagram showing the relationship between complexity in the psychic sphere and simplicity in the biological sphere

“PSYCHIC ENERGY” — A FUNCTION OF BIOLOGICAL CELL EXCITATION

I have said already that sexual excitation was regarded as an effect caused by “chemical substances” which later became known as “sexual hormones.” It was not stated how chemical, hormonal processes generate sexual excitation. The functional method of thinking had to overcome this chemical prejudice.

Sexual excitation is obviously an energy process. In contrast, chemical processes are materially based, because they are characterized essentially by the formation or dissolution of bonds between atoms. The production or consumption of heat which takes place when this happens has nothing to do with the very manifest phenomenon of “excitation.” The materially and chemically based interpretation of sexual emotion tried in vain to link a living function directly with a function of inanimate matter. This was a short circuit in mechanistic thinking. It bordered on the uncritical to assume that a living function originated from a nonliving function, without making the slightest attempt to explain the details of how this transition occurred. This faulty thinking is quite generally characteristic of the biochemical viewpoint in biology.

Functionalism proceeded in a different way. It grouped together the observable phenomena in the organism which are connected with sexual excitation, and in the process it took another decisive step forward in the development of this thought technique, at the same time casting light on an important phenomenon: Observations revealed directly and irrefutably that the sensation of pleasure and the sexual urge go together with excitation of the autonomic nervous system. This was a continuation of the link between somatic drive and psychic pleasure sensation which has been described previously. Instinctual drive and pleasure sensation are functionally identical as far as the motor functions of the living organism are concerned. This now showed that the somatic drive is functionally identical with an excitation, i.e. a function or movement (not an immobile “substance”) of the living nervous apparatus.

Thus, functionalism did not commit the error of deliberately and unjustifiably linking psychic function with a somatic function. Instead, through careful observation of the

phenomena, it discovered a simultaneous interdependence and thus functional identity of psychic pleasure sensation, bodily sexual urge, and an observable excitation of the autonomic nervous system.

Nowadays, these facts are banal clichés even outside the field of organomy. But at that time, in the twenties, they were not self-evident. Even Muller, who was far ahead of his time, spoke in his collective work *Die Lebensnerven* (1931) in dualistic and finalistic terms of the “goal” of pleasure which is “served” by the excitation of the parasympathetic apparatus. In the functional view there was no apparatus here and goal there. Thus the former was not in the “service” of the latter. Instead, pleasure sensation, instinctual drive, and parasympathetic excitation were merely different aspects of one and the same function, the total excitation of the living organism. These different aspects of one function were inseparable, because there is no pleasure sensation without instinctual drive, no instinctual drive without pleasure sensation, and neither exist without biological excitation, and vice-versa. The various “aspects,” “purposes,” “services,” “goals,” etc. do not exist at all. They were merely inventions of human fantasy, i.e. incorrect assumptions of mechanistic-mystical thought. When it is carefully considered, the statement “drive is in the service of pleasure or reproduction” is entirely meaningless. Where does the drive come from? And where is the pleasure sensation located? These are the logical questions which we must then ask.

The formulation of the unity of pleasure, drive, and biological excitation also resulted in the solution of the problem posed by Freud, namely, how can sexual excitation change into anxiety. Freud had correctly observed that when sexual excitation is repressed, it is replaced in many cases by anxiety. However, Freud was unable to explain this fact. At a later date, he completely abandoned the idea of a correlation between sexuality and anxiety, to the detriment of the research being carried out on drive processes. More than that, he totally separated both functions, erroneously ascribing anxiety to the “ego” and sexuality to the “id.” He nevertheless admitted that the problem remained unsolved.

In contrast, functionalism was on the right track. If pleasure sensation, sexual drive, and parasympathetic excitation form one functional unit, if in addition—and this has been confirmed clinically—anxiety appears when sexual excitation and the pleasure sensation disappear, then anxiety belongs in a specific, although still incomprehensible way, to the functional unit of biological excitation, bodily urge, and psychic sensation. Once this precondition was understood, it was no longer difficult to solve the riddle.

Biological excitation takes place in the nervous system of the living organism, i.e. in the autonomic nervous system. However, this nervous system consists of two groups of nerves which function antithetically, the parasympathetic and the sympathetic. All the phenomena of the pleasure function are associated with excitations of the parasympathetic. When the pleasure function cannot operate, anxiety appears. It follows logically that if the parasympathetic function cannot operate, the sympathetic is stimulated. The phenomena of anxiety go together with functions of the sympathetic system, provided that expansive impulses are developed against the resistance of a contraction. If the sympathetic system is functionally antithetical to the parasympathetic system, then, logically, anxiety must be the antithesis of pleasure. Thus, pleasure does not change into anxiety, but in anxiety biological excitation functions in an opposite direction to that of pleasure.

This represented a very important step forward in the formulation of the life function. It was also supported by clinically verifiable phenomena. Anxiety is experienced essentially in the cardio-diaphragmatic region and, unless one is severely disturbed, pleasure is experienced essentially in the genital. Thus the heart and genital are two antithetical realms in which the unitary biological excitation may become concentrated. Cardiac anxiety disappears when genital excitation occurs. If the biological excitation is concentrated essentially in the genital apparatus, then the genital urge and the corresponding pleasure sensation are experienced. If the biological excitation is concentrated essentially in the cardio-diaphragmatic region, one experiences anxiety and is incapable of pleasure.

With these formulations, organomic functionalism had discovered, at first unconsciously, the “basic antithesis of the living”: the antithesis of pleasure and anxiety, of parasympathetic and sympathetic, of expansion and contraction of the vital

apparatus, of periphery and center of the organism. The detailed clinical and experimental elaboration of this functioning realm of biological energy took about twelve years to complete (from 1925 to 1937). It spontaneously opened up the area of bion and orgone research.

I have already stressed that organomic functionalism is not just a different or new kind of natural philosophy, but a different and new kind of tool of natural research. An initially very unsophisticated tool, e.g. a stone axe, made possible the discovery of iron, and the discovery of iron made it possible to refine the tool from a stone axe into an axe made of iron, and so on. Thus, the method or the tool of natural research undergoes a development which is often far more important than the facts which are discovered.

With the theoretical formulation of the pleasure-anxiety antithesis, which is rooted in biological excitation and differentiated in various directions of one and the same excitation, energetic functionalism had won a more controllable, usable position. Whatever the natural facts involved, it was now able to apply the following methodological principles over and over again to ascertain to what extent these principles were valid; whether they can comprehend only certain parts of nature or whether they are generally valid; in other words, whether all nature follows the functional law which revealed itself in the functioning of the life apparatus and its emotions.

It should be stressed that by approaching natural research via the psychic emotions, the sphere of emotions has always remained within the realm of what can be investigated. Furthermore, the results which were ultimately obtained and used to develop an overall view of nature veered sharply away from the direction of mechanism and mysticism, without ending up in spiritualism.

FIRST RULES OF FUNCTIONAL THINKING

Unlike natural philosophy or the electron theory, organomic functionalism does not attempt to arrive at a total image of nature directly from certain individual facts. Thus, it does not immediately draw conclusions about the functional lawfulness of all nature from the special quality of the life apparatus. It is inherent in functionalism that it must repeatedly test, apply, and confirm the general principle of its method in each individual case. In each new step forward, the general principle of functional thinking constantly reconstructs its tools to match the unique qualities of the new functions, in the same way that the general principle of erecting a scaffold is specifically modified for each new building. Thus, in addition to a generally valid basic law, which is simple and can be formulated in a few sentences, organomic functionalism encompasses a broad range of specific tools and forms. We will find later, in the organometric realms, that this simultaneity of the basic form of thinking and its variation is reflected in the natural laws by a simultaneity of certainty and uncertainty, finiteness and infinity.

I would now like to list briefly the fundamental principles of the thought technique which have been applied with increasing clarity from about 1925:

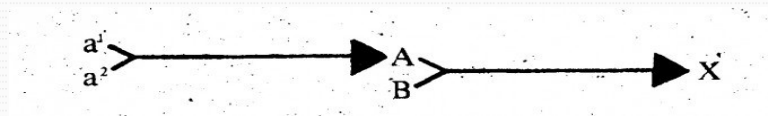
Each newly discovered fact was burdened with the question: Where is the second fact which is functionally antithetical to the known fact? (In this way, anxiety was discovered as the antithesis of pleasure.)

Once the two antithetically functioning facts were found, the next logical question was: If these two facts function in opposite directions, i.e. if they cancel each other out, like pleasure and anxiety, or determine each other, like drive and pleasure, or parasympathetic system and sexuality, then in what third function are they identical? Or, expressed differently: With respect to what properties are they functionally identical?

Once the trio of two antithetical functions and their common functioning principle had been discovered and brought together, then the next logical question was: Is the newly discovered common functioning principle, for example, the functional identity of pleasure and anxiety in the biological excitation of the organism, an ultimate indissoluble state, or is this common functioning principle itself the result of a splitting up or dissociation? That is to say, does it contain within its own functioning realm an opposite function, and what is the nature of this opposite function?

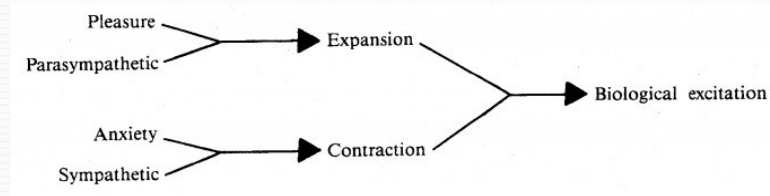
If it proved possible to find the common functioning principle of a^1 and a^2 in A, then B was sought as the antithesis of A, and let us say that X was found as the common functioning principle in which the antitheses of A and B were functionally identical.

We can depict this method of thinking in diagrammatic form as follows:



a^1 and a^2 are functionally antithetical, and simultaneously they are functionally identical with regard to A as their common functioning principle; A and B are antithetical functions which are functionally identical with regard to the common functioning principle X, and so on.

Let us now replace the letters in the diagram by actual functions:



If this formulation of the common functioning principle of two antithetical functions is correct, i.e., if it corresponds to an objective process, then it necessarily leads to new discoveries or to theoretical simplifications. If the research does not develop, if there is no new connection or correlation with the common principles, then the formulation was incorrect. The antithetical functions and their common functioning principles cannot be arbitrarily arranged. Actual (objective) antitheses must be determined which are rooted in an actual (objective) common principle. The pleasure sensation, for example, can be antithetical to both the emotion of anxiety and that of rage. But in the antithesis between pleasure and anxiety the common functioning principle is different from that in pleasure and rage. In the first instance, the common functioning principle is the general biological excitation. The capacity of this excitation to function or flow in two opposite directions, i.e., toward the periphery and toward the center, determines the antithesis of pleasure and anxiety. This can be seen clearly in the physiological phenomena of expansion in pleasure and contraction in anxiety.

On the other hand, the general biological excitation occurring in the antithesis, of pleasure and rage can no longer be taken as the direct common functioning principle when expansion and contraction of the living organism are seen as primary functions, 'because both pleasure and rage go together with an expansion of the living organism. Contraction is excluded. The plasmatic expansion which together with its opposite, contraction, is based on the common principle of excitation at a deeper level of functioning, itself becomes the common functioning principle of two antitheses, pleasure and rage, but at a higher level. Expansion is narrower than general excitation. It is therefore a principle of higher and thus lesser order.

This gives rise to an important principle for assessing the ranking of functions. They may be close to or far from the general natural principle. The closer they lie, the more all-encompassing they are; the further away they are located, the narrower they are, and the smaller their range of function. Thus we detect the "depth" of the function, not in the fact that it is split up, because all functions divide, but in the breadth of the functioning realm, in the number of common functioning principles which it embraces.

The common functioning principle of pleasure and rage is thus the expansion of the living system. The antithesis of pleasure and rage derives from the fact that in pleasure the biological excitation affects the surface of the body, whereas in rage the deeper lying musculature is mobilized and the excitation does not reach the skin. In pleasure the energy charge of the skin increases, while it decreases in rage. These phenomena are demonstrable at the oscillograph.^[5] Now, since the surface of the skin functions essentially as a sensory apparatus while in contrast the musculature functions as a motor and destruction apparatus, this physiological difference also explains the difference between the goals of pleasure and rage. The goal of the former is the tactile sensation of pleasure at the surface of the organism, while the goal of the latter is motor action and destruction.

Functionalism thus derives instinctual goals from instinctual functions, and not, the other way around, instinctual functions from instinctual goals, as is done by

metaphysics. The motor action of the musculature is older than the goal of destruction, and the pleasure function existed before the goal of pleasure.

Functionalism does not derive motor activity as the "consequence" from muscular action as the "cause," as is done by mechanistic materialism, but instead muscular movement and destructive motor activity are seen to be functionally identical in the action of hating. The one is inconceivable without the other. Functionalism replaces "causes" by "common functioning principles" of an ever deeper and more broadly encompassing order/This method of thinking will later prove to be correct in organometric investigations.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DRIVES

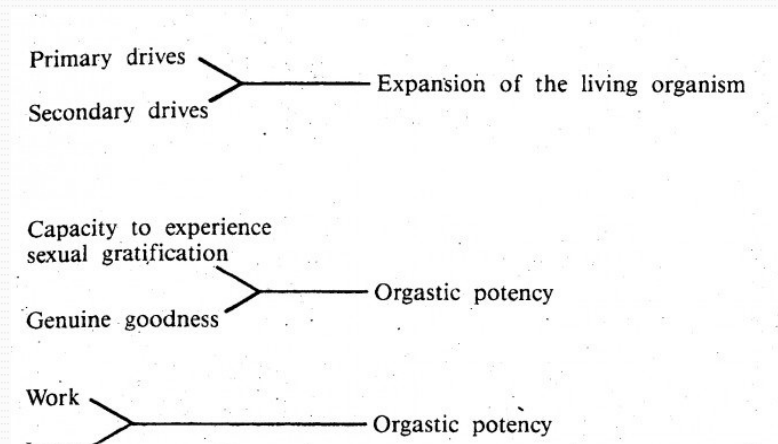
The splitting of a common functioning principle into two opposite component functions is a natural process which generally follows an "external" stimulus. For example, the action of water on yeast cells provides the stimulus for budding to occur through swelling. The action of the male sperm cell on the female egg is the stimulus for progressive division of the egg. Water or the sperm cell are not the "causes" of the budding or of the division. In general, functions split up under the influence of their paired function.

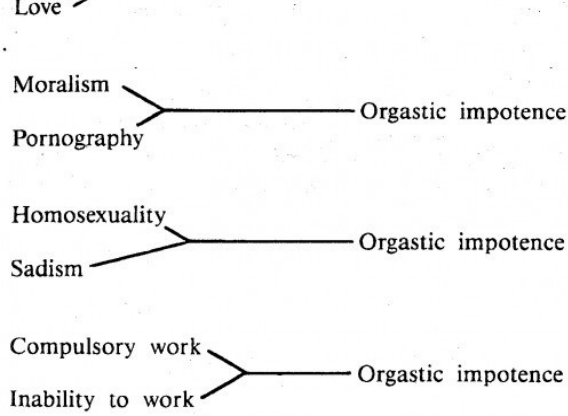
If the pleasure function, for example, cannot function undisturbed under certain external conditions, then the expansion function of the life apparatus splits into the desire for pleasure and into rage. In the human animal, the contradiction between organism and authoritarian social organization has caused secondary drives, foreign to the rest of nature, to emerge from the primary natural drives, which are expansion functions. The antithesis of primary and secondary drives is easy to determine from the presence or absence respectively of the capacity for natural orgasmic convulsion. The primary drives bring about "gratification," i.e. an objective reduction in the energy level. The secondary drives do not produce any gratification in the core of the organism. The characteristic which opposes the secondary drives to the primary drives, namely orgasmic impotence, becomes the common functioning principle of all secondary drives.

The function "orgasmic potency" brings together one broad group of vital phenomena into a functional unit. "Orgasmic impotence," as a common functioning principle, groups together a specifically different type of human behavioral characteristics into a fundamental unit. In my book *Character Analysis* [6] I have described these two groups as "genital" and "neurotic" in character, and I therefore do not have to deal with them any further here. We will return to this only when studying organ sensation as a tool of natural research.[7]

The group which has orgasmic impotence as its common functioning principle splits into two comprehensive subgroups which are opposed to each other, but which are functionally identical as far as the inability to achieve gratification is concerned: pornographic sexuality and moralism. This contradiction, which has been the scourge of human life for thousands of years, is alien to the other group whose common functioning principle is natural orgasmic potency. In that group there is no such antithetical division and disunity. Sexuality and morality, nature and culture form a unit. The common functioning principle of orgasmic potency also functions in the two mutually interacting directions of work and love.

The following are examples of paired functions and their common functioning principle:





Let us now return to the main thread of our topic.

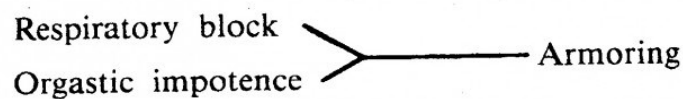
THE RIGIDIFICATION OF THE HUMAN ORGANISM

Human organisms in which behavior can be grouped together under the common functioning principle of orgastic impotence, i.e. the incapacity for orgastic convulsion, formed a new and broad area of research for functionalism from which organomic biopathology emerged.

Establishing the common functioning principle of orgastic impotence immediately raised the next question: What is the basic function to which the many different forms of orgastic impotence can be reduced? The answer is: *rigidification or armoring of the organism, i.e., chronic contraction of large muscle areas.*

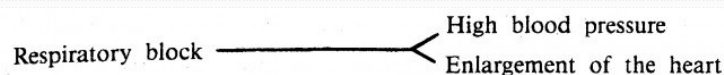
If muscular armoring is the common functioning principle to which all phenomena of orgastic impotence can be traced, if orgastic impotence itself is a common functioning principle of higher order than muscular armoring, which itself splits, then the logical question to ask is: Where is the antithesis of orgastic impotence with its many divisions? Clinical examination of patients answered this major question in an extremely fruitful manner.

The functional antithesis is the *respiratory block*. Anxiety about orgastic pleasure is an important part of orgastic impotence. This anxiety causes the sufferer to hold his or her breath at the moment when orgastic excitation increases. This prevents the orgastic discharge. The respiratory block causes the orgastic impotence, and the orgastic impotence determines the respiratory block. Both are rooted in muscular armoring:



Muscular armoring splits up into several paired antithetical functions: The respiratory block and the incapacity for orgastic convulsion, as described above, the need for pleasure and the incapacity for pleasure (pleasure anxiety), or in the need for love and the inability to love. We find it also in sadism and remorse, as in the case of obsessional illness; in perversion and moralism; in compulsive work and the inability to work; or in sharp differentiations between good and evil, etc., etc.

The respiratory block, itself a variant of muscular armoring, becomes the common, higher functioning principle of a series of pathological functions, such as a rigid chest, high blood pressure, enlargement of the heart, excess of carbon dioxide in the blood, etc.



If we now stop tracing muscular armoring as a common functioning principle of the respiratory block and orgastic impotence, and instead follow it into the depths as a part-function of a deeper, common functioning principle, the next question follows logically:

What is the antithesis of muscular armoring, and what is the common functioning principle of armoring and its still unknown antithesis?

The only reliable way to answer such functional questions is to carefully examine the phenomena and expressions of the known function from which we are continuing our search. Clinical studies of muscular armoring show that it is not a static, rigid formation, but instead it corresponds to a standstill of the life functions as a result of the dynamic equilibrium of opposing forces. The armoring does not function like a wall made of cement, but instead like two automobiles whose engines are running, but which cannot move because they are acting against each other with equal force. This immobility resulting from the blocking of vitality is merely an external appearance. If we push one of the cars even just a little to the side, then both automobiles start to move. Exactly the same thing happens when we "mobilize" armorings, technically speaking.

What now follows is still an unproved assumption. It attempts to pave the way for grasping a cardinal problem of human existence, the solution of which would presumably eliminate a whole series of current social conflicts.

Outside the sphere of human existence, in living and nonliving nature, we encounter a functionalism which is characterized by great simplicity. This simplicity and the transparency of natural phenomena have from time immemorial led the major poets and philosophers to speak of the nobility and simplicity of nature. Natural law is characterized by:

the common functioning principle which dominates and permeates broad areas (attraction, pulsation, vascular system).

the variants of the functioning principle, each of which in turn can become a higher order common principle.

the bringing together of large or small groups of variants into a functional unit which has a common functioning principle (organisms, species of animals, and plants, etc.).

The division of a seed into root and stem, then of the stem into branches, the branches into twigs, and the twigs into leaf stalks; the splitting up of the nervous systems and of the vascular systems of animals; the division of the animal egg into cells, which are then grouped together into various organs, and the grouping of the organs into the functional unity of the organism are all simple, uncomplicated functions. This does not mean that the splitting processes are not numerous or variegated or that many functions of living organisms are not difficult to comprehend. Of course they are. But they are not complicated in the sense of entangled, opaque, and insoluble. For instance, with the exception of the human animal and his institutions, there is nothing in the realm of living and nonliving nature which one could refer to as *suppression* in the biosocial sense of the word with which civilized man has been so very familiar for several millennia. Nobody can assert that "suppression" or "power conflicts" are primary topics anywhere in nature outside the sphere of human existence.

In investigating this subject, organomic functionalism did not set out with the intention of solving the "riddle of human misery." However, as it developed, a certain peculiarity, which has no equal anywhere else in nature, was discovered in the area of human character formation. It was logical to ask whether this specifically human kind of functioning forms the basis of all philosophies which accord human beings a "special," "chosen" position, strictly separated from animals, in the overall scheme of nature.

Numerous misconceptions of sex-economic sociology derive from ignorance of the order of rank which should be assigned to the various functioning realms, and from the fact that the common, underlying principle of two mutually interacting derivatives is overlooked. One particularly good example of this is *the interaction of typical individual character structure and social institutions*. Until a few decades ago, character formation was thought of as something which was inherited in an undefined manner. Then, around 1928, character analysis recognized the overwhelming importance of social environment for character formation. Character analysis discovered that the social origin of a person is fixed in frozen form in his character. By modifying the instinctual drives, social institutions produced the typical character structure, and the character structure of the human beings of a particular epoch reproduced the social institutions and corresponding ideologies. This was the answer to the question left open by Marxist sociology as to *how*, and with the help of which functions, the "material basis" is converted into the "ideological superstructure."

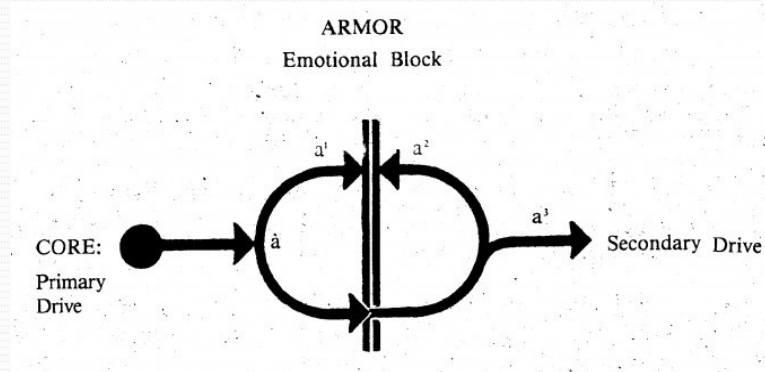
Society and character structure thus form a clear, simple relationship of antithesis and interaction. But functionalism did not stop there. Human character structure itself divides up with regard to the functioning principle of drive economy into two sharply defined, again antithetical variations, i.e. into the genital character, distinguished by a self-regulating sexual economy, and the neurotic character, which is revealed in a disordered sexual economy. The functioning principle of drive economy is a *biological* principle. It operates in a much wider realm than its particular derivative functions, society and character structure. If we only relate society to character and character to society, then although this is correct it is incomplete and sometimes leads to incorrect conclusions. For example, the existing typical character structure of human beings is regarded as "normal" because it conforms to, reflects, and anchors the existing social structure. But this conclusion is only correct as long as we remain *within* the boundaries of current processes between society and human beings. We immediately discover, however, that we are moving in a circle when we try to eliminate deplorable conditions and catastrophes in existing circumstances. It is not enough to think merely in terms of the antithetical relationship between man and society because this excludes development in the sense of improvement in the conditions, or the elimination of harmful processes. The concept "normal" then becomes completely devoid of meaning; it becomes static and rigid, i.e. unusable. In order to eliminate undesirable conditions, i.e. in order to break out of the vicious circle of the production of pathological character structures by society, and the reproduction of life-endangering social circumstances by those same character structures, we must place ourselves *outside* this functioning realm; we must discover in concrete terms what constitutes the common functioning principle of harmful social institutions and morbid character structures. It is then no longer the principle of character formation as such which acts as the antithesis to society as such, but instead a special kind of character formation functions in interaction with a special social structure. We find then, for example, that the typical character structure in present-day society is *armored*, and that this armoring produces corresponding social institutions and processes, and vice-versa. The new question arising from our thought technique is no longer: In what way do man and society determine each other? Instead, in the light of progress made by functional research, it is: What type of individual produces this special type of society with its catastrophic events? "Normal" then no longer means "adaptation" to existing social conditions, but instead it means adaptation to certain biological functions. From the standpoint of the broader and deeper functioning realm of biology, what appeared previously as normal in terms of social adaptation, now appears "abnormal," or "sick" in the sense of being "life-inimical." I do not believe that anybody who is on the side of developmental processes in nature and society can fail to see the necessity of drawing these conclusions. When researchers who genuinely wish to achieve progress actually support the status quo, this is due not to any lack of progressive will or humanity, but to their static, functionally incomplete way of thinking.

The *biological* criterion of genital character as the normal character structure is broader, deeper, and dynamic in the developmental sense. On the other hand, the *social* criterion of adaptation and the definition of the biologically neurotic character as the norm is a product of erroneous thinking, because it is restricted to the circle of society – man – society, and it is incapable of progressing to the functional identity of man and society in the common functioning principle of living nature. In this way, "society" *and* "man" end up in an absolute, unresolvable antithesis to the functional laws of the living. Nobody can deny that social and individual suffering can be ascribed essentially to the absolute, mechanically rigid antithesis of society and nature, man and nature, and ramifications thereof. Functionalism resolves this contradiction by uncovering what man and society have in common, namely, the natural laws of life. They are the *sole* usable criterion of "normality." This criterion does not embody the common functioning principle of neurotic man and his warmongering society, for the principle of character armoring does not occur in it.

Let me simply draw attention to this interesting and extremely important problem, without attempting to solve it. It came up in the following manner: When I took the decisive step from analyzing neurotic systems through thought association to removing the armoring of the organism in character analysis I found myself confronted with the task of "disrupting the neurotic equilibrium of the patient." The character-neurotic armoring is a structure which is interwoven and incorporated into the entire personality. It is an essential feature of the neurotic character that corresponding disturbances of vitality are not experienced as morbid but (in contrast to the symptom)

as belonging to the ego. Now, even the symptom neurosis cannot be eliminated without first getting rid of the "character-neurotic reaction basis." The therapeutic attack on his armor is felt by the patient to be a severe invasion of his innermost personality, his "true ego." An affect block, therefore, which so adversely affects vitality and the zest for life, is actually a splendidly useful protective mechanism *in our present civilization*. If this neurotic equilibrium is disturbed, if the armoring is broken down, then strong affects, usually anxiety and sadistic rage, manifest themselves. The functional interpretation of these facts is that the armoring of the human animal represents frozen motion. This "motion" or "emotion" is released from the characterological rigidity.

Careful study of the structure of this armor, i.e. of the arrangement of the forces which are locked up in it, yielded the following universally valid, functional schema:



Let me now explain this diagram:

The original biological excitation continues to be produced in the core of the organism, but it does not come directly to the surface and into action. At *a* it divides up like any other natural function. But this process of division does not continue in further, simple pairs of branchings, as for example in a vascular system or a tree trunk; instead, a remarkable *blocking arrangement*, which constitutes the actual mechanism of the rigid armoring and of human contactlessness, intervenes. *One arm of the divided process of excitation turns back to oppose the other arm (a² against a¹) in such a way that a standstill of movement or motility results. One variation suppresses the other completely and permanently maintains this state of suppression.*

It is apparent from our schema that the energy of suppression comes from the same source from which the suppressed movement stems. For example, the energy for the moralistic suppression of infantile genital onanism comes from the same drive to play with the genitals as does the onanism itself. This principle can be applied to all moralistic, i.e. compulsively moral, functions. Compulsive religion, which turns against the natural expressions of life and suppresses them, itself stems from the same source as the natural expressions of life. Compulsive sympathy, which as a character trait suppresses the subterranean sadism, is constantly fed by sadistic energy. This easily betrays itself in the form of cruelty and the lack of consideration displayed by the moralistic attitude.

In the further course of character development this process of division continues to function. However, it is no longer the natural, original energy which directly feeds the divisions, but instead a perverted, internally blocked energy. We call these character formations "reactive." The best example of this is the person who is simultaneously moralistic and brutal.

A wealth of individual and social phenomena derive from the inner block of biological activity which I have just described, and they can be reduced to the two basic characteristics of the armored individual: evasive behavior and destructivity.

At this point we should concentrate on the essential facts: An internal blocking of energetic activity would be difficult to find anywhere else in living nature. If such a state is ever discovered, it would be necessary to investigate the reason for this abnormality. We can see already that what we regard in the rest of nature as a deviation from the natural law, i.e. as an abnormality, is considered "normal" by the average person who is armored, in other words, who is biologically rigid or frozen. As long as we remain within the framework of thought which stems from the intellectual world of armored human beings, we will experience and represent the abnormality as normal. But in or-

der to assess and comprehend such a strange phenomenon as the armoring of an animal species, we cannot remain within the framework of its ideational world. We must place ourselves *outside* this framework and we must observe the armored human animal with all his ideas, ideals, and institutions from a wider standpoint if we wish to make correct assessments. An observer in a railway train who wishes to say something about the nature of the train and does not think beyond the bounds of his carriage is forced to conclude that the train is standing still and the countryside is moving. It is only when he descends from the train and stands alongside it that he perceives that the train is moving. He will now inevitably assert that the earth is standing still if he does not place himself outside the earth in cosmic space. Only then will he make the correct assessment, namely, that the earth is also moving.

We know that all the progress made in human thought and judgment has come about because the innovators have placed themselves outside whatever they had to judge in order to discover new facts.

Functionalism very soon found itself outside the frame of thought of the mechanistic-mystical civilization of the last two to four thousand years, when it started to investigate natural functions from a fundamentally new standpoint. What was this new standpoint, the new framework, from which the world of mechanism and mysticism was observed? Although I did not realize it at first, it lay in a much broader functioning realm of nature, namely, in that of the living. Quite simply, I no longer studied human beings merely as humans, as members of a church, as subjects of a state, as bearers of civilization, etc., but as living organisms. The function of a "living organism" is understandably much broader than the function of a "human." In contrast, the results of mechanistic natural science, and certainly those of metaphysics, are conclusions by humans as humans about nature, that is to say, they are *the statement of a narrower functioning principle about a much broader one*. This would not in itself be confusing if man took what he has in common with nature and made that the standpoint of his observations and judgments. However, over the centuries and indeed millennia, the armored human being has taken his own peculiarities and deviations, and the unnatural, biologically abnormal variants thereof, as his standpoint for judging the world. For this sin he has paid the terrible price of unnecessary and cruel suffering on an infinitely large scale, but he is far from finished with his payments. From his position of abnormality, he has conceived of his own godlike origin, and from this he has created God according to his own image. To this God he has assigned his own pettiness and vengefulness, his own moral brutality, and he has made sacrifices to him: He has slaughtered children, burned his widowed spouses, or tortured and executed people of different faiths—in the Middle Ages for religious reasons and in the modern age for state-political reasons. Whoever insists on regarding this as "normality" whoever is unable to break out of this frame of thinking has in fact sold his soul to his own devil. And in his devil the human animal will sooner or later recognize a God who was perverted into a devil by the characterological armoring. For "God" and "Devil" are not absolute opposites and certainly not metaphysical opposites, because they have their common root in the human animal's natural feelings for life.

if further research on functionalism in nature should confirm my assumption that the human animal is the only product of nature whose functioning is disrupted and modified by an intervening block, the armor, then psychology would have gained a new, not to be underestimated position vis a vis metaphysics. The block caused by armoring in the human animal becomes the common functioning principle of a whole range of complicated ideological formations in which mankind is trapped.

[1] Translated from the German by Derek and Inge Jordan.

[2] This initial attempt to devise a natural scientific formulation of psychology in the early years of the twentieth century has in the meantime been completely stifled by run-of-the-mill theories about human nature.

[3] "Concerning the Energy of Drives." Included in *Early Writings*, Volume One, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1975. [Eds.]

[4] Cf. Reich, *The Bion Experiments*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1979. [Eds.]

[5] Cf. Reich, *The Bioelectrical Investigation of Sexuality and Anxiety*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1982. [Eds.]

[6] Cf. Reich, *Character Analysis*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1972. [Eds.]

[7] Cf. Reich, *Ether, God and Devil*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1973. [Eds.]

Wilhelm Reich

Love, work and knowledge are the wellsprings of our life.
They should also govern it.

Email:

contact@www.wilhelmreich.gr

Copyright © 2014. www.wilhelmreich.gr - All rights reserved

Web Design & Web Development