

WILHELM REICH

THE FUNCTION
OF THE ORGASM

SEX-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF
BIOLOGICAL ENERGY

Translated by Vincent R. Carfagno

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GENERAL SURVEY

This book comprises my medical and scientific work on the living organism over the course of the past twenty years. It was not initially intended for publication. Thus, I had no hesitation in expressing what I might otherwise have left out owing to material considerations, good reputation in the general sense of the word, and some still unresolved trains of thought.

To most people, it is a riddle that I can be active simultaneously in disciplines as different as depth psychology, sociology, physiology, and now even biology. Some psychoanalysts wish that I would return to psychoanalysis; the sociologists relegate me to natural science and the biologists to psychology.

The subject of "sexuality" virtually cuts through all scientific fields of research. In the central phenomenon, the sexual orgasm, we meet with questions deriving from the field of psychology as well as from that of physiology, from the field of biology no less than from that of sociology. Natural science offers hardly another field of research that is so well equipped to exhibit the fundamental unity of everything that lives and to guard against narrow, fragmentizing specialization. *Sex-economy* became an independent discipline, having its own methods of research and its own body of knowledge. It is a *natural-scientific, empirically founded theory of sex-*

uality. Now it has become essential to describe its development. In doing so, I am very happy to be able to take the opportunity to clear up what I can claim as my own contribution, how my work is related to other fields of research, and what is concealed behind the hollow rumors about my activity.

Sex-economy grew in the womb of Freud's psychoanalysis between 1919 and 1923. The material separation from this matrix took place around 1928, but it was not until 1934 that it was severed from the International Psychoanalytic Association.

The present volume is more a relation of facts and events than it is a textbook. A systematic presentation of the material could not have shown the reader how, in the course of these twenty years, problems and solutions followed one upon the other. Nothing could have been contrived; everything owes its existence to the remarkable course of scientific logic. It is not false modesty when I say that I feel myself to be merely the instrument of this logic.

The functional method of research acts like a compass in an unfamiliar region. I do not know of any finer proof of the validity of the sex-economic theory than the circumstance that the "orgastic potency" discovered in 1922, the most important element of sex-economy, led to and found its natural-scientific substantiation in the discovery of the *orgasm reflex* (1935) and *orgone radiation* (1939). This inherent logic in the development of sex-economy is its fulcrum in a welter of opinions. It is its citadel in the struggle against misunderstandings and in the overcoming of grave doubts at a time when confusion threatens to stifle clear thinking.

There are certain advantages in writing scientific biographies in one's younger years. Some of the illusions one still has during that period, namely that people will be prepared to accept revolutionary insights, enable one to stick to the

basic facts, to resist the manifold temptations to make compromises and not to shy away from incisive conclusions for the sake of intellectual complacency, peace of mind, or worldly acceptance. The temptation to deny the sexual etiology of so many illnesses is far greater in the case of sex-economy than it was in psychoanalysis. It was only with great effort that I succeeded in establishing the term "sex-economy." This concept is intended to cover a new scientific field: the investigation of biopsychic energy. According to the prevailing view of life, "sexuality" is an offensive term. It is very tempting to wipe out its importance for human life altogether. It will no doubt require the work of many generations before sexuality is taken seriously by official science and the laity, probably not until the social questions of life and death bear in upon us the absolute necessity of comprehending and mastering the sexual process, free of social constraints.

One such question is cancer; another is the psychic plague which gave rise to dictatorships.

Sex-economy is a natural-scientific discipline. It is not ashamed of the subject of sexuality, and it rejects as its representative everyone who has not overcome the inculcated social fear of sexual defamation. The term "vegetotherapy," used to describe the sex-economic therapeutic technique, is actually a concession to the squeamishness of the world in sexual matters. "Orgasmotherapy" would have been a much better, indeed more correct term, for this medical technique: that is precisely what vegetotherapy basically is. It had to be taken into consideration, however, that this term would have entailed too great a strain on the young sex-economists in their practice. Well, it can't be helped. Speak of the core of their natural longings and religious feelings and people will either laugh derisively or snicker sordidly.

There is reason to fear that in a decade or two, the school of sex-economists will split up into two mutually hostile

groups. One group will claim that the sexual function is subordinate to the general functions of life, and hence of no real account. The other group of sex-economists will raise a strong, radical protest and attempt to save the honor of research on sexuality. In this controversy, the fundamental identity between sexual process and life process could become totally obscured. I, too, could give in and deny what was an honest scientific conviction in my younger years of struggle. For there is no reason to suppose that the fascist world will cease to threaten our difficult work with annihilation through moralistic, hereditary-oriented psychiatrists and party bureaucrats, as it has done and continues to do. Those friends who are familiar with the Norwegian scandal created by the fascist press campaign against sex-economy know what I mean. Without delay, therefore, it is imperative to establish what is meant by sex-economy, before I myself begin to think otherwise under the pressure of obsolete social conditions and obstruct with my authority the search for truth of future young scientists.

The theory of sex-economy and its investigation of living phenomena can be stated in a few sentences.

Psychic health depends upon orgasmic potency, i.e., upon the degree to which one can surrender to and experience the climax of excitation in the natural sexual act. It is founded upon the healthy character attitude of the individual's capacity for love. Psychic illnesses are the result of a disturbance of the natural ability to love. In the case of orgasmic impotence, from which the overwhelming majority of people suffer, damming-up of biological energy occurs and becomes the source of irrational actions. The essential requirement to cure psychic disturbances is the re-establishment of the natural capacity for love. It is dependent upon social as well as psychic conditions.

Psychic illnesses are the consequences of the sexual chaos of society. For thousands of years, this chaos has had the

function of psychically subjecting man to the prevailing conditions of existence, of internalizing the external mechanization of life. It has served to bring about the psychic anchoring of a mechanized and authoritarian civilization by making man incapable of functioning independently.

The vital energies regulate themselves naturally, without compulsive duty or compulsive morality—both of which are sure signs of existing antisocial impulses. Antisocial actions are the expression of secondary drives. These drives are produced by the suppression of natural life, and they are at variance with natural sexuality.

People who are brought up with a negative attitude toward life and sex acquire a pleasure anxiety, which is physiologically anchored in chronic muscular spasms. This neurotic pleasure anxiety is the basis on which life-negating, dictator-producing views of life are reproduced by the people themselves. It is the core of the fear of an independent, freedom-oriented way of life. This fear becomes the most significant source of strength for every form of political reaction, and for the domination of the majority of working men and women by individual persons or groups. It is a biophysiological fear, and it constitutes the central problem of the psychosomatic field of investigation. It has been until now the greatest obstruction to the investigation of the involuntary functions of life, which the neurotic person can experience only in a mysterious and fear-ridden way.

The character structure of modern man, who reproduces a six-thousand-year-old patriarchal authoritarian culture, is typified by characterological armoring against his inner nature and against the social misery which surrounds him. This characterological armoring is the basis of isolation, indigence, craving for authority, fear of responsibility, mystic longing, sexual misery, and neurotically impotent rebelliousness, as well as pathological tolerance. Man has alienated himself from, and has grown hostile toward, life. This alien-

ation is not of a biological but of a socio-economic origin. It is not found in the stages of human history prior to the development of patriarchy.

Since the emergence of patriarchy, the natural pleasure of work and activity has been replaced by compulsive duty. The average structure of masses of people has been transformed into a distorted structure marked by impotence and fear of life. This distorted structure not only forms the psychological basis of authoritarian dictatorship, it enables these dictatorships to justify themselves by pointing to human attitudes such as irresponsibility and childishness. The international catastrophe through which we are living is the ultimate consequence of this alienation from life.

The structuring of masses of people to be blindly obedient to authority is brought about not by natural parental love, but by the authoritarian family. The suppression of the sexuality of small children and adolescents is the chief means of producing this obedience.

Nature and culture, instinct and morality, sexuality and achievement become incompatible as a result of the split in the human structure. The unity and congruity of culture and nature, work and love, morality and sexuality, longed for from time immemorial, will remain a dream as long as man continues to condemn the biological demand for natural (orgastic) sexual gratification. Genuine democracy and freedom founded on consciousness and responsibility are also doomed to remain an illusion until this demand is fulfilled. Helpless subjugation to chaotic social conditions will continue to typify human existence. The destruction of life by means of coercive education and war will prevail.

In the field of psychotherapy, I worked out the technique of character-analytic vegetotherapy. Its basic principle is the re-establishment of biopsychic motility through the dissolution of the character and muscular rigidifications ("armorings"). This technique of treating neuroses was experimen-

tally substantiated by the discovery of the bioelectric nature of sexuality and anxiety. Sexuality and anxiety are functions of the living organism operating in opposite directions: pleasurable expansion and anxious contraction.

The orgasm formula which directs sex-economic research is as follows: MECHANICAL TENSION → BIOELECTRIC CHARGE → BIOELECTRIC DISCHARGE → MECHANICAL RELAXATION. It proved to be the formula of living functioning as such. It led to the experimental investigation of the organization of living from non-living matter, to experimental bion research, and, more recently, to the discovery of orgone radiation. Research in the field of sexuality and bions opened a new approach to the problem of cancer and a number of other disturbances of vegetative life.

The immediate cause of many devastating diseases can be traced to the fact that man is the sole species which does not fulfill the natural law of sexuality. The death of millions of people in war is the result of the overt, social negation of life. This negation, in turn, is the expression and consequence of psychic and somatic disturbances of the life function.

The sexual process, i.e., the expansive process of biological pleasure, is the productive life process per se.

This is saying a lot all at once, and it sounds almost too simple. This "simplicity" constitutes the secret which some people sense in my work. I want to try to describe how the difficulties were solved which have blocked human insight into these problems until now. I very much hope to persuade the reader that there was no magic involved. On the contrary, my theory is general but unadmitted human knowledge about the functioning of life. It is to be ascribed to the universal alienation from life that the facts and relationships which I discovered have been overlooked or consistently concealed.

The history of sex-economy would be incomplete without mentioning the part played in it by its friends and co-

workers. They will understand why, in the scope of the present volume, I have to refrain from paying due respect to their accomplishments. I can assure everyone who fought and often suffered for sex-economy that, without their efforts, the entire development would not have been possible.

This presentation of sex-economy proceeds exclusively from the perspective of the European conditions which led to catastrophe. The victory of the dictatorships is ascribable to the psychic illness of the European masses who were not capable of mastering any of the various forms of democracy, economically, socially, or psychologically. I have not been in the United States long enough to judge to what extent my presentation does or does not apply to American conditions. The conditions which I have in mind are not solely external human relationships and social circumstances; what I have in mind is the deep psychic structure of American men and women and their society. It requires time to gain an understanding of this structure.

I can foresee that the English-language edition of this book will be objected to on various grounds. The many years of experience I had in Europe enabled me to use certain indications to assess the importance of an attack, a critique, or an expression of praise. Since there is no reason to assume that the reactions of certain circles in this country will be fundamentally different from those of certain circles in Europe, I should like to answer possible objections in advance.

Sex-economy has nothing to do with any one of the existing political organizations or ideologies. The political concepts which separate the various strata and classes of society are not applicable to sex-economy. The social distortion of *natural* sexuality and its suppression in children and adolescents are universal human conditions, transcending all state and group boundaries.

Sex-economy has been persecuted by the representatives of political parties of all persuasions. My publications have

been prohibited by the communists as well as the fascists; they have been attacked and denounced by police authorities as well as by the socialist and bourgeois liberals. On the other hand, they have met with recognition and respect in all strata and circles of the population. The elucidation of the function of the orgasm, particularly, was well received by professional-scientific and cultural-political groups of all kinds.

Sexual suppression, biological rigidity, moralism, and asceticism are not confined to certain classes or strata of the population. They are found everywhere. I know of clergymen who willingly accept the distinction between natural and unnatural sexuality, and who acknowledge the scientific view that there is a parallel between the concept of God and the law of nature; I know of other clergymen who look upon the elucidation and concrete realization of child and adolescent sexuality as a threat to the existence of the Church and hence take strong measures to combat it. Praise and hatred quoted the same ideology in their defense. Liberalism and democracy felt as threatened as the dictatorship of the proletariat, the honor of socialism as much as the honor of the German woman. In reality, only one attitude and only one kind of social and moral arrangement is threatened by the elucidation of the function of life, namely the authoritarian dictatorial regime of every kind which seeks through compulsive morality and compulsive work to destroy the spontaneous decency and natural self-regulation of the vital energies.

However—and let us put the matter straight this time—it is not solely in totalitarian states that we find authoritarian dictatorship. It is found in the Church as well as in academic organizations, among the communists as well as in parliamentary governments. It is a universal human tendency produced by the suppression of life; authoritarian upbringing constitutes the psychological basis in the masses of people of all nations for the acceptance and establishment of

dictatorship. Its basic elements are mystification of the life process, concrete helplessness of a material and social nature, fear of assuming the responsibility for determining one's own life, and, therefore, craving for illusory security and authority, whether actively or passively. The genuine, age-old striving for the democratization of social life is based on self-determination, on natural sociality and morality, on pleasurable work and on earthly happiness in love. It regards every illusion as a danger. Hence, it will not only not fear the natural-scientific comprehension of life, it will make use of it to master decisive problems of the development of human structure in a scientific and practical and not in an illusory way. Efforts are being made everywhere to transform formal democracy into a genuine democracy of all working men and women, into a work democracy, in keeping with the natural organization of the work process.

In the field of mental hygiene, the first and foremost task is to replace sexual chaos, prostitution, pornographic literature, and sexual trafficking, with natural happiness in love secured by society. This implies neither the intent "to destroy the family" nor "to undermine morality." Family and morality are already undermined by the compulsive family and compulsive morality. Professionally, we are faced with the task of mastering the infirmities, in the form of psychic illnesses, caused by sexual and familial chaos. To master the psychic plague, it is necessary to draw a clear-cut distinction between the natural love which exists between parents and children and every form of familial compulsion. The endemic illness, "familitis," destroys everything which honest human strivings are attempting to achieve.

Though I do not belong to any political or religious organization, I nonetheless have a very definite view of social life. It is, in contrast to every form of political, purely ideological, or mystical view of life, scientifically rational. On the basis of this view, it is my belief that our earth will never

find lasting peace and that it will seek in vain to fulfill the function of social organization as long as untutored and naïve politicians and dictators of whatever persuasion continue to contaminate and to lead sexually sick masses of people. The social organization of man has the natural function of protecting work and the natural fulfillment of love. From ancient times, these two biological activities of man have been dependent upon scientific research and thought. Knowledge, work, and natural love are the sources of our life. They should also govern it, and the full responsibility should be borne by working men and women everywhere.

Mental hygiene on a mass scale requires the power of knowledge against the power of ignorance; the power of vitally necessary work against every form of parasitism, whether of an economic, intellectual, or philosophic nature. Taking itself seriously, natural science can become a citadel against those forces which destroy life, no matter who perpetuates this destruction or where. Quite obviously, there is no one person who possesses the knowledge necessary to safeguard the natural function of life. The scientifically rational view of life excludes dictatorship and demands work democracy.

Social power, exercised by the people, through the people, and for the people, borne by the natural feeling for life and respect for the performance of work, would be invincible. However, this power presupposes that the working masses of people will become psychically independent and capable of bearing full responsibility for social existence and of rationally determining their own lives. What prevents this from happening is the psychic mass neurosis which is materialized in all forms of dictatorship and in all forms of political hullabaloo. To master the mass neurosis and the irrationalism in social life, i.e., to implement genuine mental hygiene, a social framework is required which must first of all eliminate material distress and safeguard the free development of the

vital energies in each and every individual. This social framework can only be genuine democracy.

However, genuine democracy is not a condition of "freedom" which can be given, granted, or guaranteed to a group of people by an elected or totalitarian government. Genuine democracy is a difficult, lengthy process in which the people, socially and legally protected, have (i.e., do not "receive") every possibility of schooling themselves in the administration of vital individual and social life and of advancing to ever better forms of living. In short, genuine democracy is not a finished development which, like some old man, now enjoys its glorious, militant past. It is, rather, a process of unceasing wrestling with the problems of the unbroken development of *new* ideas, *new* discoveries, and *new* forms of living. The development will be continuous and incapable of being disrupted only when the antiquated and senescent, which fulfilled its role at an earlier stage of democratic development, becomes sagacious enough to make room for the young and the new and does not stifle them by appealing to dignity or formal authority.

Tradition is important. It is democratic when it fulfills its natural function of providing the new generation with a knowledge of the good and bad experiences of the past, i.e., of enabling it to learn from old errors and not repeat them. Tradition becomes the bane of democracy when it denies the rising generation the possibility of choice, when it attempts to dictate what is to be regarded as "good" and what as "bad" under new conditions of life. Traditionalists easily and readily forget that they have lost the ability to decide what is *not* tradition. For instance, the improvement of the microscope was not brought about by destroying the first model: the improvement was achieved by preserving and developing the first model in keeping with a more advanced stage of human knowledge. A microscope of Pasteur's time does not enable the modern researcher to study

viruses. Now suppose the Pasteur microscope had the power and the impudence to prohibit the electron microscope.

The young would not feel any hostility toward tradition, would indeed have nothing but respect for it if, without jeopardizing themselves, they could say, "*This* we will take over from you because it is strong, honest, still relative to our times and capable of development. *That*, however, we cannot take over. It was useful and true for your time—it would be useless to us." These young people will have to be prepared to hear the same thing from their children.

The development of prewar democracy into complete and genuine work democracy means that the general public must acquire concrete determination of its existence in place of the formal, fragmentary, and defective sort of determination it has at present. It means that the irrational political molding of the will of the people has to be replaced by rational mastery of the social process. This requires the progressive self-education of the people toward responsible freedom, instead of the childish expectation that freedom can be received as a gift or can be guaranteed by someone else. If democracy wants to eradicate the tendency to dictatorship in the masses of the people, it will have to prove that it is capable of eliminating poverty and of bringing about the rational independence of people. This and only this can be called organic social development.

It is my opinion that the European democracies were defeated in the fight against dictatorship because the democratic systems were far too laden with formal elements and much too deficient in objective and practical democracy. Fear of vital living determined every educational measure. Democracy was looked upon as a condition of guaranteed "freedom" and not as the development of responsibility in the masses. Even in the democracies, the people were taught, and still are taught, to be blindly loyal. The catastrophic events of the times have taught us that people brought up to

be blindly loyal in any form whatever will deprive themselves of their own freedom; they will slay the giver of freedom and run off with the dictator.

I am not a politician and I am not versed in politics, but I am a socially conscious scientist. As such, I claim the right to say what I have recognized to be true. If my scientific observations have the capacity to be conducive to a better organization of human conditions, the purpose of my work shall have been fulfilled. When the dictatorships have come to naught, human society will have need of truths, and precisely unpopular truths. Those truths which have to do with the unadmitted reasons of the present social chaos will eventually prevail, whether people want this to happen or not. One such truth is that dictatorship is rooted in the irrational fear of life in the masses. He who expounds such truths is very much endangered—but he can wait. He does not feel compelled to fight for power for the purpose of enforcing truth. His power is his knowledge of facts which pertain to mankind as a whole. No matter how distasteful such facts may be, in times of extreme social exigency, the society's will to life will force it to acknowledge them, in spite of everything else.

The scientist is duty-bound to insist on the right of free speech under all conditions; this right must not be left to those whose intent is to suppress life. We hear so much about the duty of a soldier to be willing to sacrifice his life for his country; we hear too little about the duty of a scientist to expound a truth once it has been recognized, cost what it may.

The physician or the teacher has but one responsibility, namely to practice his profession unflinchingly, irrespective of the powers which suppress life, and to have in mind solely the welfare of those entrusted to him. He must not represent any ideologies which contradict medical science or pedagogy.

Those who call themselves democrats and want to con-

test this right on the part of the researcher, physician, educator, technician, or writer are hypocrites or at least victims of the plague of irrationalism. Without firmness and seriousness in vital questions, the fight against the plague of dictatorship is hopeless, for dictatorship thrives—and can only thrive—in the obscurity of unrecognized issues of life and death. Man is helpless when he lacks knowledge; helplessness due to ignorance is the fertilizer of dictatorship. A social system cannot be called democratic if it is afraid of posing decisive questions, finding unaccustomed answers, and engaging in a discussion about such questions and answers. In such a case, it is defeated by the slightest attack on its institutions by would-be dictators. This is what happened in Europe.

“Freedom of religion” is dictatorship when it does not go hand in hand with freedom of science; for, when this is not the case, there is no free competition in the interpretation of the life process. It must be decided once and for all whether “God” is a bearded, all-powerful, divine figure, or whether he represents the cosmic law of nature which governs us. Only if God and the law of nature are identical is an understanding possible between science and religion. It is but one step from the dictatorship of an earthly representative of God to the dictatorship of a divinely ordained savior of peoples.

“Morality” is dictatorial when it lumps natural feelings of life together with pornography. In doing so, it perpetuates sexual smut and blights natural happiness in love, whether this is what it intends or not. It is necessary to raise a strong protest when those who determine their social behavior on the basis of inner laws instead of external compulsive codes are labeled immoral. A man and a woman are husband and wife not because they have received the sacrament, but because they feel themselves to be husband and wife. The inner and not the external law is the yardstick of

genuine freedom. Moralistic bigotry cannot be fought with another form of compulsive morality, but only with knowledge of the natural law of the sexual process. Natural moral behavior presupposes that the natural life process can develop freely. On the other hand, compulsive morality and pathological sexuality go hand in hand.

The line of compulsion is the line of least resistance. It is easier to demand discipline and to enforce it authoritatively than it is to bring up children to take pleasure in doing independent work and to have a natural attitude toward sexuality. It is easier to declare oneself to be an omniscient Führer ordained by God, and to decree what millions of people are to think and do, than it is to expose oneself to the struggle between rationality and irrationality in the clash of opinions. It is easier to insist on legal fulfillment of respect and love than it is to win friendship through humane behavior. It is easier to sell one's independence for material security than it is to lead a responsible, independent existence and to be master of oneself. It is more convenient to dictate the behavior of subordinates than it is to guide this behavior, while preserving what is singular in it. This is also why dictatorship is always easier than genuine democracy. This is why the complacent democratic leader envies the dictator and incompetently seeks to imitate him. It is easy to stand up for what is commonplace. It is difficult to stand up for truth.

Hence, those who do not have or have lost faith in the life process are at the mercy of the subterranean influence of the fear of life which produces dictatorship. The life process is inherently "rational." It becomes distorted and grotesque when it is not allowed to develop freely. When the life process is distorted, it can only engender fear. Hence, only knowledge of the life process can dispel fear.

Our world has indeed become out of joint. But no matter how the bloody struggles of the present shape the centuries to come, the fact remains that the science of life is more

powerful than tyranny and all forms of life-negation. It was Galileo and not Nero who laid the foundation of technology; Pasteur and not Napoleon who combatted diseases; Freud and not Schicklgruber who plumbed the psychic depths. It was these scientists, in short, who ensured our existence. The others have merely misused the achievements of great men to destroy the life process. The roots of natural science go infinitely deeper than any transitory fascist tumult.

Wilhelm Reich

New York
November 1940

CHAPTER I

BIOLOGY AND SEXOLOGY BEFORE FREUD

The scientific position which I have just sketched has its roots in the Vienna seminar on sexology, 1919 to 1922. No system, no preconceived opinion has directed the development of my views. There are some who would like to contend that we are dealing here with a man who, having a peculiar personal history of complexes and excluded from "respectable" society, wants to impose his fantasies about life on other people. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that a youth filled with activity and experience enabled me to perceive and represent data, peculiarities of research, and results which remained closed to others.

Before I became a member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in October 1920, I had acquired as extensive a knowledge in the field of sexology and psychology as I had acquired in the field of natural science and natural philosophy. This sounds immodest. Be that as it may; misplaced modesty is no virtue. There was no witchcraft involved. Intellectually starved after four years of doing nothing in World War I and endowed with the ability to learn quickly, thoroughly, and systematically, I plunged into everything of interest which came my way. I did not idle away very much of my time in cafés and soirées, nor did I spend any time going on sprees or in clowning around with fellow students.

It was quite by chance that I came into contact with psy-

choanalysis. During a lecture on anatomy in January 1919, a handbill was passed around from desk to desk. It called upon interested students to set up a seminar on sexology. I went to the initial meeting. There were some eight young medical students present. It was said that a seminar on sexology was necessary for medical students because the University of Vienna was neglecting this important question. I regularly attended the seminar, but I did not take part in the discussion. The manner in which this subject was treated in the first sessions sounded strange to me; it lacked the tone of naturalness. There was something in me that rejected it. One of my notes of March 1919 runs as follows: "Perhaps it is the morality with which the subject is treated that disturbs me. From my own experience, from observations made on myself and others, I have reached the conclusion that sexuality is the center around which the life of society as a whole as well as the inner intellectual world of the individual . . . revolves."

Why did I object? It was not until some ten years later that I found out the reason. I had experienced sexuality differently from the way it was dealt with in that course. There was something bizarre and strange about the sexuality of those first lectures. A natural sexuality did not appear to exist at all; the unconscious was full of perverse instincts only. For instance, the psychoanalytic theory denied the existence of a primary vaginal eroticism in young girls and ascribed female sexuality to a complicated combination of other instincts.

The suggestion was made to invite an older psychoanalyst to deliver a series of lectures on sexuality. He spoke well and what he said was interesting, but I had an instinctive dislike for the manner in which he treated the subject. I heard a great deal that was new, and I was very much interested, but somehow the lecturer was not worthy of the subject. I would not have been able to say why this was so.

I procured a number of works on sexology: Bloch's *Sexualleben unserer Zeit*, Forel's *Die sexuelle Frage*, Back's *Sexuelle Verirrungen*, Taruffi's *Hermaphroditismus und Zeugungsunfähigkeit*. Then I read Jung's *Libido*, and finally I read Freud. I read voluminously, quickly, and thoroughly—some works I read two and three times. Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* and *Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis* decided my choice of profession. I immediately separated sexologic literature into two groups: one serious and the other "moralistic and lascivious." I was enthusiastic about Bloch, Forel, and Freud. Freud was a tremendous intellectual experience.

I did not immediately become a devoted disciple of Freud. I assimilated his discoveries gradually, at the same time studying the ideas and discoveries of other great men. Before I committed myself completely to psychoanalysis and threw myself into it totally, I acquired a general grounding in natural science and natural philosophy. It was the basic theme of sexuality which compelled me to undertake these studies. I studied Moll's *Handbuch der Sexualwissenschaft* very thoroughly. I wanted to know what others had to say about the instincts. This led me to Semon. His theory of "mnemonic sensations" gave me food for thought on the problems of memory and instinct. Semon contended that the involuntary acts of all living creatures consist in "engrams," i.e., in historical impressions of experiences. The eternally self-perpetuating protoplasm is continually absorbing impressions which, responding to corresponding stimuli, are "ecphorized." This biological theory fit in very well with Freud's concept of unconscious remembrances, the "memory traces." The question "What is life?" prompted each new acquisition of knowledge. Life was characterized by a remarkable rationality and purposefulness of instinctive, involuntary action.

Forel's investigations on the rational organization of ants

drew my attention to the problem of vitalism. Between 1919 and 1921, I became familiar with Driesch's *Philosophie des Organischen* and his *Ordnungslehre*. I understood the first book but not the second. It was clear that the mechanistic conception of life, which also dominated our medical studies, could not provide a satisfactory explanation. Driesch's contention seemed incontestable to me. He argued that, in the sphere of the life function, the whole could be developed from a part, whereas a machine could not be made from a screw. On the other hand, his use of the concept of "entelechy" to explain living functioning was unconvincing. I had the feeling that an enormous problem was evaded with a word. Thus, in a very primitive way, I learned to draw a clear distinction between facts and theories about facts. I gave considerable thought to Driesch's three proofs of the specific totally different characteristic of living matter as opposed to inorganic matter. They were well-grounded proofs. However, I couldn't quite accept the transcendentalism of the life principle. Seventeen years later I was able to resolve the contradiction on the basis of a formula pertaining to the function of energy. Driesch's theory was always present in my mind when I thought about vitalism. The vague feeling I had about the irrational nature of his assumption turned out to be justified in the end. He landed among the spiritualists.

I had more success with Bergson. I made an exceedingly careful study of his *Matter and Memory*, *Time and Freedom*, and *Creative Evolution*. Instinctively, I sensed the correctness of his efforts to refute mechanistic materialism as well as finalism. Bergson's elucidation of the perception of time duration in psychic experience and of the unity of the ego confirmed my own inner perceptions of the non-mechanistic nature of the organism. All of this was very obscure and vague—more feeling than knowledge. My present theory of the identity and unity of psychophysical functioning originated in Bergsonian thinking, and has become a new

theory of the functional relationship between body and mind. For a time I was looked upon as a "crazy Bergsonian." While I agreed with Bergson in principle, I was not able to point out the hiatus in his theory. His "élan vital" very much reminded me of Driesch's "entelechy." The principle of a creative force which governed life could not be gainsaid. Yet, it was not satisfactory as long as it could not be made tangible, described and dealt with concretely. Practical applicability was justifiably looked upon as the supreme goal of natural science. The vitalists always seemed to me to be closer to an understanding of the life principle than the mechanists, who cut life to pieces before endeavoring to comprehend it. On the other hand, the idea that the organism operated like a machine was intellectually more accessible. One could draw parallels to known material in the field of physics.

I was a mechanist in my medical work, and my thinking tended to be oversystematic. Of my preclinical subjects, I was most interested in systematic and topographic anatomy. I mastered the anatomy of the brain and all of the nervous system. I was fascinated by the complexity of the nerve tracts and by the ingenious arrangement of the ganglia. I learned far more than was required for the medical degree. At the same time, however, I was drawn to metaphysics. I liked Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus* because it clearly showed the indispensability of the idealistic philosophy of life. Some of my colleagues were annoyed by my "erraticism" and "inconsistency of thinking." It was not until seventeen years later, when I succeeded in experimentally resolving the contradiction between mechanism and vitalism, that I myself understood this seemingly confused attitude. It is easy to think correctly in known fields. It is difficult, when one is beginning to feel one's way into unknown areas, not to be intimidated by the welter of concepts. Fortunately, it did not take me long to recognize that I had a gift for grappling

with a profusion of seething thoughts and emerging with practical results. I owe the invention of the organoscope through which flashes of biological energy can be seen, to this unpopular characteristic.

The versatility of my intellectual interests made me realize that "everyone is right in some way"—it is merely a matter of knowing "how." I studied two or three books on the history of philosophy, which acquainted me with the immemorial controversy over whether the body or the mind is primary. These early stages of my scientific development were important, for they prepared me for the correct comprehension of Freud's theory. In the textbooks of biology, which I did not study until after I had taken the oral examination in biology—the value of which is very questionable—I found a rich world, no end of material suited for demonstrative science as well as for idealistic reverie. Later, my own problems forced me to make more clear-cut distinctions between fact and hypothesis. Hertwig's *Allgemeine Biologie* and *Das Werden der Organismen* provided well-grounded knowledge, but they failed to show the interrelation between the various branches of natural science. I could not have put it into these words at that time, but I was not satisfied. I was disturbed by the application of the "teleological principle" in the field of biology. According to this principle, the cell had a membrane in order to better protect itself against external stimuli. The male sperm cell was so agile in order to have greater facility in getting to the female egg. The male animals were bigger and stronger than the female animals and were often more colorful in order to be more attractive to the female, or they had horns in order to be more adept at dealing with their rivals. It was even contended that the female workers among the ants were sexless in order to be able to perform their work better. The swallows built their nests in order to warm their young, and nature arranged this or that in such and such a way in order to fulfill this or that

purpose. In short, a mixture of vitalistic finalism and causal materialism also reigned in the field of biology. I attended Kammerer's very interesting lectures on his theory of the heredity of acquired characteristics. Kammerer was very much influenced by Steinach, who gained prominence at that time with his great works on the hormonal interstitial tissues of the genital apparatus. The influencing of sexual and secondary sexual characteristics by means of the implantation experiment and Kammerer's modification of the mechanistic theory of heredity made a strong impression on me. Kammerer was a convinced champion of the natural organization of life from inorganic matter and of the existence of a specific biological energy. Naturally, I was not able to make any concrete judgments. It was merely that I was attracted by these scientific views. They brought life into the material which was dryly dished out to us at the university. Both Steinach and Kammerer were sharply opposed. I once made an appointment to see Steinach. When I saw him, I had the impression that he was tired and worn. Later I had a better understanding of how one is wantonly maltreated because of good scientific work. Kammerer later committed suicide. It is so easy to mount the high horse of criticism when one lacks objective arguments.

I again ran across the "in order to" of biology in various doctrines of salvation. I read Grimm's *Buddha* and was stunned by the inner logic of the theory of Nirvana, which also rejected joy because it inevitably entailed suffering. I found the theory of the transmutation of souls ridiculous, but I was at a loss to explain why millions of people adhered to such a belief. Fear of death could not be the full explanation. I never read Rudolf Steiner, but I knew many theosophists and anthroposophists. All of them had something peculiar about them; on the other hand, they were usually more fervent than the dry materialists. They too had to be right in some way.

In the summer semester of 1919, I read the final paper to the seminar on sexology, "The Concept of Libido from Forel to Jung." This paper was published two years later in the *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*. I had examined the various conceptions of sexuality as expounded by Forel, Moll, Bloch, Freud, and Jung. It was striking just how differently these scientists regarded sexuality. With the exception of Freud, they all believed that sexuality seized man at the age of puberty from out of a clear blue sky. It was said that "sexuality awakened." No one was able to say where it had been before this time. Sexuality and procreation were regarded as one and the same thing. Behind this one erroneous conception lay concealed a mountain of psychological and sociological errors. Moll spoke of a "tumescence" and a "detumescence," but no one was quite able to say what their origin was, nor what function they had. Sexual tension and relaxation were ascribed to various special instincts. In the sexology and psychiatric psychology of that time, there were as many, or almost as many, instincts as there were human actions. There was a hunger instinct, a propagation instinct, an exhibition instinct, an instinct for power, an instinct for self-assertion, a survival instinct, a maternal instinct, an evolutionary instinct, a cultural and a herd instinct, naturally also a social instinct, an egoistic and an altruistic instinct, a separate instinct for algolagnia (instinct to suffer pain) and one for masochism, a sadistic instinct, and a transvestism instinct. In short, it was very simple and yet terribly complicated. There was no making heads or tails of it. Worst of all was the "moral instinct." Today very few people know that morality was once regarded as a phylogenetically, indeed supernaturally, determined instinct. This was said in complete seriousness and with great dignity.

It was altogether a terribly ethical period. Sexual perversions were matters of pure diabolism, moral "degeneracy." The same was true of psychic illnesses. A person suffering

from mental depression or neurasthenia had a "hereditary taint," that is to say, he or she was "bad." Mental patients and criminals were looked upon as biologically tainted, severely deformed creatures, for whom there was no help and no excuse. The man of "genius" was looked upon as something akin to an abortive criminal, at best a caprice of nature—and not as a person who had shunned the cultural sterility of the world around him and had preserved a contact with nature. Listening to Beethoven's symphonies, the rich, i.e., the good and the just, would like to obliterate the ignominy of Beethoven's death in wretched isolation and poverty.

It is merely necessary to read Wulffen's book on criminality or the psychiatry of Pilcz, Kraepelin, or anyone else of that time. One does not quite know whether one is dealing with moral theology or science. Nothing was known about psychic and sexual illnesses; their existence merely aroused indignation, and the gaps in knowledge were filled in with an utterly contemptible morality. Everything was hereditary, i.e., biologically determined, and that was the end of it. The fact that such a hopeless and intellectually cowardly attitude was able to conquer the German empire fourteen years later, in spite of all the scientific efforts which were made in the interim, is to be ascribed in part to the social indifference of the pioneers of science. I intuitively rejected this metaphysics, moral philosophy, and "ethicizing." I looked in vain for facts in substantiation of these doctrines. In the biological works of a man such as Mendel, who had studied the laws of heredity, I found far greater confirmation of the variability of hereditary succession than I did of its proclaimed rigid uniformity. It did not dawn upon me that 99 percent of the theory of heredity is one stupendous subterfuge. On the other hand, I was very much taken by de Vries's mutation theory, Steinach's and Kammerer's experiments, Fliess's and Swoboda's theory of frequency. Darwin's theory of natural selection fulfilled the reasonable expectation that, while basic

natural laws govern life, circumstantial influences must be allowed the greatest possible latitude. There was nothing eternally immutable here; nothing was traced back to unseen hereditary factors. Everything was capable of development.

It never entered my mind to relate the sexual instinct to these biological theories. I had no inclination for speculations. The sexual instinct eked out a meager existence in the field of science.

One has to be familiar with this atmosphere in the fields of sexology and psychiatry before Freud to understand the enthusiasm and relief which I felt when I encountered him. Freud had paved a road to a clinical understanding of sexuality. He showed that adult sexuality proceeds from stages of sexual development in childhood. It was immediately clear: sexuality and procreation are not the same. The words "sexual" and "genital" could not be used interchangeably. The sexual experience comprises a far greater realm than the genital experience, otherwise perversions such as pleasure in coprophagy, in filth, or in sadism could not be called sexual. Freud exposed contradictions in thinking and brought in logic and order.

The pre-Freudian writers used the concept of "libido" to denote simply the conscious appetite for sexual activity. It was not known what "libido" was or should be. Freud said, We cannot concretely grasp what instinct is. What we experience are merely derivatives of instinct: sexual ideas and affects. Instinct itself lies deep in the biological core of the organism; it becomes manifest as an affective urge for gratification. We sense the urge for relaxation but not the instinct itself. This was a profound thought; it was understood neither by those sympathetic to nor those inimical toward psychoanalysis. It constituted a foundation of natural-scientific thinking upon which one could build with confidence. This is how I interpreted Freud: it is altogether logical that the instinct itself cannot be conscious, for it is what rules and gov-

erns us. We are its object. Take electricity, for example. We do not know what it is or how it originates. We recognize it only through its manifestations, such as in light and in electrical shock. True, an electrical wave can be measured, but it too is only a characteristic of what we call electricity. Just as electricity is capable of being measured through its manifestations of energy, the instincts are capable of being recognized only through the manifestation of their affects. Freud's "libido," I concluded, is not the same as the "libido" of pre-Freudians. The latter denotes the conscious sexual longings. *Freud's "libido" is and can be nothing other than the energy of the sexual instinct.* It is possible that someday we shall be capable of measuring it. It was entirely without conscious premeditation that I used the simile of electricity and its energy. I had no idea that sixteen years later I would have the good fortune of demonstrating the identity between bioelectric and sexual energy. Freud's consistent, natural-scientific thinking in terms of energy captivated me. It was objective and lucid.

The seminar on sexology enthusiastically accepted my elucidation. They had heard that Freud interpreted symbols and dreams and did other curious things. I had succeeded in establishing a connection between Freud and known theories of sex. In the fall of 1919, I was elected to the chairmanship of the seminar. In this position, I learned to bring order into scientific work. Groups were formed to study the various branches of sexology: endocrinology and the general theory of hormones, the biology of sex—above all, psychoanalysis. In the beginning, we studied the sociology of sex from the books of Müller-Lyer. One medical student delivered lectures on Tandler's ideas on social hygiene, another taught us embryology. Of the original thirty participants, only some eight remained, but they did serious work. We moved into the basement of the Hayek Clinic. Rather insinuatingly, Hayek asked me whether we also wanted to practice "practi-

cal sexology." I put his mind at ease. We were already well acquainted with the attitude of the university professors toward sexuality. It no longer bothered us. We looked upon the omission of sexology in our studies as a severe disadvantage, and we sought to inform ourselves as best we could. I learned a great deal in preparing a course on the anatomy and physiology of the sexual organs. I had gathered my material from various textbooks in which the sexual organs were represented solely as serving the purpose of reproduction. This did not even seem strange. Nothing was said about how the sexual organs were related to the autonomic nervous system; what was said about their relation to the sexual hormones was vague and unsatisfactory. We learned that "substances" were produced in the interstitial glands of the testicle and of the ovary and that these "substances" determined secondary sexual characteristics and brought about sexual maturity in puberty. They were also represented as the cause of sexual excitation. These researchers did not notice the contradiction that men castrated *before* puberty have a reduced sexuality, while men castrated *after* puberty do not lose their sexual excitability and are capable of the sexual act. The fact that eunuchs develop a singular sadism was not regarded as a problem. It was not until many years later, when I was afforded an insight into the mechanisms of sexual energy, that I understood these phenomena. After puberty, sexuality is fully developed, and castration cannot affect it. Sexual energy operates in the whole body and not solely in the interstitial tissues of the gonads. The sadism which eunuchs develop is nothing other than the sexual energy which, deprived of its normal genital function, seizes the musculature of the whole body. In the physiology of that time, the concept of sexuality did not extend beyond the comprehension of the individual points of attachment of the sexual mechanism, e.g., the interstitial tissues of the testicles and/or ovaries; it described nothing more than the second-

ary sexual characteristics. It was for this reason that Freud's explanation of the sexual function had a liberating effect. True, in *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, he still assumed the existence of "chemical substances," which were said to be the cause of sexual excitation. He investigated the phenomena of sexual excitation, spoke of an "organ libido," and ascribed to each cell that strange "something" which influences our life to such a large extent. I was later able to experimentally confirm these intimations on Freud's part.

Psychoanalysis gradually gained supremacy over all other disciplines. My first analysis was of a young man whose chief symptom was the compulsion to walk fast. He was not able to walk slowly. The symbolism which he offered in his dreams did not appear very unusual to me. Indeed, its logic very often surprised me. Most people found Freud's interpretation of symbols rather fantastic. I was familiar with symbolism not only from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, but also from my own dreams, which I had often unraveled. I have a series of my own dream analyses.

The work on my first patient went very well—too well, as is usually the case with beginners. The beginner has a way of being insensitive to the inscrutable depth of the unconscious and of overlooking the complexity of the problems. I was very proud when I succeeded in analyzing the meaning of the compulsive action. As a small boy, the patient had once stolen something from a store and had run off in fear of being pursued. He had repressed this incident. It reappeared in his "having to walk fast." In connection with this, it was easy to demonstrate his childhood fear of being caught in the act of clandestine masturbation. There was even an improvement in his condition. I also discovered a number of indications of the patient's deep sexual attachment to his mother.

On the point of technique, I proceeded exactly in accordance with the instructions set forth in Freud's works. This is

how the analysis took place: the patient lay flat on the couch, the analyst sitting behind him. If possible, the patient was to avoid turning around. Looking back at the analyst was regarded as "resistance." The patient was urged to "free associate." He was not supposed to suppress anything that came to mind. He was supposed to say everything—but do nothing. The main task was to lead him "from acting to remembering." Dreams were analyzed fragment by fragment, one after the other in succession. The patient was supposed to produce associations to every fragment. There was a logical conception behind this procedure. The neurotic symptom is the manifestation of a repressed instinctual impulse which has broken through the repression in a disguised form. It followed from this that, if the analyst proceeded in a technically correct way, the unconscious sexual desire and the moralistic defense against it would have to be discovered in the symptom. For instance, a hysterical girl's anxiety about being attacked by men armed with knives is a disguised representation of the desire for sexual intercourse inhibited by morality and thrust into the unconscious through repression. The symptom results from the unconsciousness of the prohibited instinctual impulse, e.g., to masturbate or to engage in sexual intercourse. In the above case, the pursuer represents the girl's own qualms of conscience which preclude direct expression of the instinctual desire. Barred from direct manifestation, the impulse seeks disguised possibilities of expression, e.g., stealing or fear of being attacked. The cure, according to Freud, is brought about by making the repressed drive conscious and thus accessible to the condemnation of the mature ego. Since the unconsciousness of a desire is the condition of the symptom, making it conscious must produce a cure. Some years later, Freud himself questioned this formulation. Initially, however, cure was said to be dependent upon the making conscious of the repressed instinctual impulse and on its condemnation or sublimation.

I want to lay particular stress upon this point. When I began to develop my genital theory of therapy, people ascribed it to Freud or rejected it totally. To comprehend my later disagreement with Freud, it is important to note its roots in these early stages of my work. In the first years of my psychoanalytic work, I partially cured and even completely eliminated many symptoms. I did this by adhering to the principle of making unconscious impulses conscious. In 1920, there was no hint of "character" and "character neurosis." Quite the contrary: the individual neurotic symptom was explicitly regarded as an alien element in an otherwise healthy psychic organism. This is a decisive point. It was said that a part of the personality had failed to go along with the total development toward adulthood, thus remaining behind at an earlier stage of sexual development. This resulted in a "fixation." What happened then was that this isolated part came into conflict with the remainder of the ego, by which it was held in repression. My later theory of character, on the other hand, maintained that *there cannot be a neurotic symptom without a disturbance of the character as a whole*. Symptoms are merely peaks on the mountain ridge which the neurotic character represents. I developed this conception wholly in accord with the psychoanalytic theory of neurosis. It made definite demands upon technique and led finally to formulations which were at variance with psychoanalysis.

As chairman of the student seminar on sexology, it was my job to procure literature. I paid visits to Kammerer, Steinach, Stekel, Bucura (a professor of biology), Alfred Adler, and Freud. Freud's personality made the greatest, strongest, and most lasting impression. Kammerer was discerning and kind, but was not especially interested. Steinach complained about his own difficulties. Stekel sought to be impressive. Adler was disappointing. He railed against Freud. He, not Freud, was the one who had the real insight.

According to Adler, the Oedipus complex was nonsense; the castration complex was a wild fantasy; and, furthermore, his theory of masculine protest contained a much better version of it. The fruit of his ultimate "science" was a petty bourgeois community of reformers. At some other time, I shall have to describe the areas in which he was right, the injustices he suffered, and the reasons why his theory did not hold up.

Freud was different. Whereas the others all played some kind of role, whether that of the professor, the great discerner of human character, or the distinguished scientist, Freud did not put on any airs. He spoke with me like a completely ordinary person. He had bright, intelligent eyes, which did not seek to penetrate another person's eyes in some sort of mantic pose, but simply looked at the world in an honest and truthful way. He inquired about our work in the seminar and found it very sensible. We were right, he said. It was regrettable that people demonstrated no interest or only a sham interest in sexuality. He would be only too happy to provide us with literature. He knelt down in front of his bookcase and eagerly picked out a number of books and pamphlets. They were special editions of *The Vicissitudes of Instincts*, *The Unconscious*, a copy of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a copy of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, etc. Freud spoke rapidly, objectively, and animatedly. The movements of his hands were natural. There was a hint of irony in everything he said. I had been apprehensive in going to him—I went away cheerful and happy. From that day on, I spent fourteen years of intensive work in and for psychoanalysis. In the end, I was severely disappointed in Freud. Fortunately, this disappointment did not lead to hatred and rejection. Quite the contrary; today I can appreciate Freud's achievement in a far better and deeper way than I could in those days of youthful enthusiasm. I am happy to have been his student for such a long

time, without having criticized him prematurely, and with complete devotion to his cause.

Unreserved devotion to a cause is the loftiest precondition of intellectual independence. During the years of hard struggle for Freud's theory, I saw any number of individuals appear on the stage and disappear again. Like comets, some of them rose to the top—promising much, accomplishing nothing. Others were like moles, laboriously working themselves through difficult problems of the unconscious without ever once savoring the comprehensive view which Freud offered. Then there were others who sought to compete with Freud, without having grasped the fact that Freud was set apart from conventional academic science by his adherence to the subject of "sexuality." And finally there were those who quickly seized a fragment of the theory and translated it into a profession. Objectively seen, however, it was not a matter of competing with Freud or of establishing a profession, but of advancing an enormous discovery. At issue was more than the elaboration of known material; essentially, it was a matter of discovering the biological basis of the libido theory through experimentation. It was necessary to bear responsibility for a piece of momentous knowledge, which presented a direct challenge to a world of superficiality and formalism. It was necessary to be able to stand alone—which did not exactly foster popularity. It is clear today to many people working in this new, psychobiological branch of medicine that the character-analytic theory of structure is the legitimate continuation of the theory of unconscious psychic life. The opening of a new approach to biogenesis was the most important result of the consistent application of the libido concept.

The history of science is a long unbroken chain of elaboration, deviation, and rectification, re-creation, followed by reassessment, renewed deviation and rectification, and renewed creation. It has been a long, arduous course, and we

have hardly begun. It adds up to a mere two thousand years, interspersed with long arid stretches. The living world is hundreds of thousands of years old and will probably go on existing for many centuries to come. Life is constantly moving forward, never backward. Life is growing ever more complex, and its tempo is accelerating. Honest pioneer work in the field of science has always been, and will continue to be, life's pilot. On all sides, life is surrounded by hostility. This puts us under an obligation.