

*and (literally) conversation.
If our old enemy have been
endlessly, hard working, I have also
lost, we may have found*

*for me
at all
I must*

WHERE'S THE TRUTH?

Letters and Journals, 1948-1957

*Head & Neck
NATURAL*

WILHELM REICH

*THAN
or orphan*

*Form in HV
(Year) (City and
1897. HV.*

Introduction by James E. Strick, Ph.D.

Edited by Mary Boyd Higgins

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Wilhelm Reich

Wilhelm Reich

WHERE'S THE TRUTH?

Letters and Journals, 1948-1957

Edited by Mary Boyd Higgins

Introduction by James E. Strick, PhD

An account of the last years of
Wilhelm Reich's life and scientific career

Where's the Truth? is the fourth and final volume of Wilhelm Reich's autobiographical writings, drawn from his diaries, letters, and laboratory notebooks. These writings reveal the details of the outrider scientist's life—his joys and sorrows, his hopes and insecurities—and chronicle his experiments with what he called "orgone energy."

A student of Freud's and a prominent research physician in the early psychoanalytic movement, Reich immigrated to America in 1939 in flight from Nazism, and pursued research about orgone energy functions in the living organism and the atmosphere. *Where's the Truth?* begins in January 1948, shortly after Reich became a target of the Federal Food and Drug Administration. He had already faced persecution by the U.S. government, having been mistaken by the State Department and the FBI for both a Communist and a Nazi. Starting in 1947, Reich was hounded by the FDA, which, in 1954, obtained an injunction by default against him that enabled it to burn six tons of his published books and research journals, and to ban the use of one of his most important experimental research tools—the orgone energy accumulator. Challenging the right of a court to judge basic scientific research, Reich was imprisoned in March 1957 and died in the U.S. Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, eight months later.

The text gathered here shows Reich's steadfast determination to protect his work. "Where's the truth?" he asked a lawyer, and that question animates this volume and rounds out our understanding of a unique, irrepressible modern figure.

Wilhelm Reich's many works include *Character Analysis*, *The Function of the Orgasm*, *The Cancer Biopathy*, *Cosmic Superimposition*, and earlier autobiographical writings: *Passion of Youth*, *American Odyssey*, and *Beyond Psychology*—all published by PSC. An early disciple of Freud's, he came to America in 1939, published *The Function of the Orgasm* in 1942, and died in 1957.

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WHERE'S THE TRUTH?

LETTERS AND JOURNALS

1948–1957

WILHELM REICH

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

—*Wilhelm Reich*

INTRODUCTION

This book is the story of one of the most heinous acts of censorship in the history of the United States. In 1956 and again in 1960, an agency of the U.S. government burned the books and journals, including the scientific books, of Wilhelm Reich, M.D. Through that same agency, the Food and Drug Administration, the government ordered the destruction of scientific technology invented by Reich to accumulate and concentrate the physical energy he had discovered and called "orgone." These orgone energy accumulators were being used by Reich and other physicians for research and experimental medical treatment.

Previously, Reich had fled the Nazis, who also had burned his books, moving in 1939 to the United States, where he hoped to find respite from such dictatorial abuse of government power. But after fighting a protracted legal battle with the FDA, Reich was imprisoned for contempt of court in March 1957. He died in prison eight months later.

Where's the Truth? is the final volume in a four-part autobiographical series composed of excerpts from Reich's diaries, letters, and laboratory notebooks. The preceding books, *Passion of Youth*, *Beyond Psychology*, and *American Odyssey*, relate Reich's story from its beginnings on a large farm in the easternmost part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire through his experiences in World War I and the Medical School of the University of Vienna. They continue with his life as a student of Freud and a prominent research physician in the early psychoanalytic movement, his clinical findings about energy functions in the living organism, the development of new therapeutic techniques, the laboratory experiments that provide insight into the origin of the cancer cell and lead ultimately to the discovery of orgone energy and to its ongoing investigation and the invention of tools for its practical application.

Where's the Truth? continues Reich's story from January 1948, shortly after the FDA started harassing him, until his death in 1957. It not only illuminates Reich's determined struggle to protect his work, but also

reveals the pattern of his focus on the investigation of varying manifestations of orgone energy and shares his personal life, his loves and needs, joys and sorrows, the hopes and anguish of a proud, passionate man.

Not surprisingly, throughout this period Reich feels increasingly persecuted, interfered with in his revolutionary scientific work, and gradually abandoned by most of his students, who could not follow developments in his work. His sense of deepening loneliness is the poignant backdrop to the entire period covered in this book, which gives a remarkable human portrait of a pioneering scientist suffering isolation, like so many great minds before him.

Reich's loneliness, however, sprang as much from the rapidly developing discoveries in his research as it did from the government persecution. His studies of orgone energy in the atmosphere, including research on hurricanes and the aurora borealis and on lumination in high vacuum tubes charged in an accumulator (VACOR tubes, as Reich called them), suggested that orgone energy functions on the scale of the galaxy and the cosmos, not only in Earth's atmosphere. Reich's ideas were revolutionary (in Thomas Kuhn's sense), clashing with successively larger existing paradigms as his work progressed. Most of his students, as physicians, felt overwhelmed at having to follow him into the cosmos. After a 1951 experiment to find whether orgone energy can serve as an antidote to radiation sickness unexpectedly produced illness in many workers, very few wanted to continue. But more than that, they resented Reich for moving into this new, frightening territory. Trained in biology or medicine and stretched in their efforts to utilize Reich's work therapeutically, they did not feel comfortable learning physics and astronomy as Reich did.

On top of the frustration over his students' inability to follow his developing work, Reich suffered treachery and violation of professional ethics by the lawyer of the Wilhelm Reich Foundation, Peter Mills. Mills had been a friend who had participated in meetings where FDA activities had been discussed, and he had documented discoveries by Reich, including the discovery of a motor force in orgone energy during experiments using a Geiger-Müller counter. Once the federal case against Reich developed into a legal action, Mills, having risen to the position of state attorney, rather than recuse himself from the case for an obvious conflict of interest, represented the government claim that "orgone energy does not exist" and participated actively in the attack on Reich.

During the case, it was also revealed that the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, one of his own employees and even one of his own students, Allan Cott, M.D., were colluding with the FDA to destroy Reich. While the entire premise of the FDA injunction was the claim that the accumulator was a fraud and thus a danger to the public, the government's actions belied its concern for the public. When fifteen of Reich's physician students undertook a legal action to set aside the injunction, arguing that it interfered with their ability to practice medicine as they saw fit, a federal judge denied their appeal, ruling that the injunction applied only to Reich. The decision said, in essence, "you fellows use the accumulator all you like; it's *him* we're after."

From the outset, Reich saw through the FDA. He insisted that the agency was not acting with bona fide intent but as an agent of the atomic and pharmaceutical industries. Since a 1947 magazine article by freelance journalist Mildred Edie Brady (who was, along with her husband, well connected in communist circles) instigated the FDA attack on Reich, he was also convinced that the Communist Party was a primary moving force behind the scene, still out to bring him down because of his powerful critique of Stalinism and party functionaries in the 1930s.

Amid the difficulties in his personal life wrought by such immense stress (a severe heart attack, a divorce, etc.), perhaps the most extraordinary part of this story is how Reich still manages to keep going as a scientist, breaking through into amazing new areas of research—from radiation effects, to cloud formation and, reciprocally, desertification, to the study of UFOs. One can only be struck by what an astute observer of nature Reich is. He notices what others don't; he realizes its larger implications; he is driven by the sheer logic of observations and experiments. His laboratory notebooks offer glimpses into those small initial observations that set in motion major new lines of research and reveal their relevance for today's world.

In a time when the science of global climate change has broken through to public consciousness, it is remarkable how Reich's work made him aware almost sixty years ago of the frightening scale of desertification and the increasing frequency and severity of storms and hurricanes. He tries again and again to alert government agencies to take climate change seriously. Even if Reich's theory of orgone energy turns out to be wrong, it's telling that it directed his attention to problems still relevant today,

far ahead of when mainstream researchers began to see the scale of those problems.

Reich also keeps going as a human being, as a father, as one seeking expression through painting and sculpture. He picks himself up, again and again—from increasing isolation, from personal tragedies, and from overwhelming new scientific insights—and he keeps going. And in the end, when his enemies and the legal system finally drag him down to prison and death, he still manages to protect his work by his refusal to go to court in response to the initial FDA complaint, thus denying his opponents the ability to use the legal system to pronounce upon scientific questions.

By the time of his death, a final measure of his aloneness was evident when none of those around him, neither his students nor his own daughter, were willing to be his trustee and protect his scientific legacy. That responsibility was assumed by a total stranger, Mary Boyd Higgins, who is the editor of the autobiographical series.

Many might look upon this story as a lamentable tale of government excess from the past, the incredibly sweeping FDA injunction a witch hunt and incursion upon civil rights that would be laughed out of court in our more enlightened day. But Reich's knowledge of history and human character, and his understanding of the motives and actions he had identified and subsumed under the term *emotional plague* would have made him the first to caution against such ideas. *Where's the Truth?* makes clear that anyone, including a renowned physician-scientist, may be subject to such abuse of power at any time, and in any place.

A word about the title of this book: During a discussion with a lawyer on court procedures involved in defending his work against the attack by the FDA, Reich was told that the success of a case often depends on the skill of the litigating attorney. "Where's the truth?" Reich asked. His central guiding principle in the struggles with the courts and the FDA from 1947 to 1957 was to keep the truth front and center—he insisted that a court of law was not the venue to judge the validity of scientific research.

—James E. Strick, Ph.D.
Department of Earth and Environment
Franklin and Marshall College

1948

7 January 1948

In the beginning of one's task one is enthusiastic about helping mankind. At the end of the same task one is worn out and has lost most or all of the enthusiasm. Humanity, for whose benefit one believed to fight, has put too many dangerous obstacles in one's path. One had to risk breaking one's neck in overcoming these obstacles. Disillusionment has overcome the searcher and helper. Humanity itself through its pestilent sergeants has obstructed its own benefits. Therefore the inventor or searcher acquires that definite expression of suffering and sorrow in his face (Beethoven, Galileo, Freud), which indicates that the enthusiasm to help has been replaced by ardent adherence to truth beyond any immediate practical interests.

17 January 1948

Cancer book printed—published. It is an honest book.*
Investigation by Food and Drug still going on.

24 January 1948

No legal action against FDA possible. Advice from Hays office†

TO PHYSICIAN STUDENTS

26 January 1948

Dear Dr.

I have been informed that the investigators of the Food and Drug Administration are trying now to question patients whom you treat

* *The Cancer Biopathy, Volume 2, The Discovery of the Orgone*, New York: Orgone Institute Press, 1948.

† The office of New York attorney Arthur Garfield Hays, founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union, member of the defense team in the Scopes trial, and author of *Trial by Prejudice*.

psychiatrically. It is my duty to inform you that the patients must be protected from *irresponsible inquiries into their private lives*. Would you be kind enough to instruct all your patients that they should restrict the investigators to matters pertaining to the accumulator and definitely refuse to answer any questions such as: "How much they pay the doctor," or "Why they went to the doctor," or "With whom they associate," "Where they were born and brought up," etc., etc. *Such questions* by the inspectors of the F.D.A. *are illegal*; they have nothing to do with the object of the investigation. Protect medical secrecy.

27 January 1948

Stop of all investigation through FDA by refusing to answer any questions at all. With the FDA the mechanistic world view tried to kill the functional attitude.

The development of materialistic philosophy proceeded from fundamental questions not of a mechanical nature but, strangely enough, of a psychological nature. *What is sensation? How can matter experience itself? To what is sensation bound?* It was on these questions, and not on purely material questions, that scientific minds parted company with metaphysical and mystical minds, and that every dispute flared up about the correct view of the world and the events occurring in it. Because it was clear right from the start that it is only our *sensation* of events and things that holds the key to the deep mysteries of understanding nature. Sensation is the sieve through which the self is in contact with the world within and outside itself. All our perceptions and our judgments about the world and ourselves depend on the nature of this sieve. The sieve is the outermost limit that delineates the living orgonotic system in the orgone ocean; through the holes in the sieve, the experiencing organism communicates with the cosmic orgone ocean.*

* Reich's term for the primordial energy substratum that fills all space. Reich has written that "It moves in an undulating fashion and in a certain direction; in our planetary system generally from west to east, faster than the planetary globe."

TO DR. WERNER KEMPER

30 January 1948

Dear Dr. Kemper,

I have received your letter of 29 December and was very pleased to hear that the parcels have finally reached you. We sent you a fourth food parcel last week and likewise a parcel of books was sent to you via Willi Brandt* in Berlin. These books also include one called "The Cancer Biopathy" which covers the work done over the last 14 years on organic biopathies. I hope that you will embrace the discovery of orgone.† It sounds incredible, but it is quite obvious that what psychoanalysts once called the libidinous cell energy has now actually been shown to exist in a physical and demonstrable form.

Are you in contact with Aenne Morseth (Heimburgstrasse 4, Hamburg Klein—Flottbeck)? Please keep in touch now and again, and I would be glad to be of help to you in any way that I can. We are also in contact with other people in Europe.

16 February 1948

Eva‡ in distress. The following happened: She was in class with several students and a professor of heart physiology. They spoke of literature to be read. He said, "*Don't read literature like that of the paranoid who believes there is a pulsation in the body and in the atmosphere.*"—clearly WR. She did not say anything. But felt terrible.

She did not dare to look at the *Cancer Biopathy* I had sent to her. She did not go to work with Cott§ as arranged. She "gave herself another two years."

* Socialist politician and chancellor of West Germany 1969–74; he participated in Reich's bio-electrical experiments while in exile in Oslo, Norway, 1935–36.

† The energy was named "orgone" in reference to the history of its discovery through the study of the orgasm and to its biological effect of charging substances of organic origin.

‡ Eva Reich, Reich's elder daughter from his early marriage to Annie Pink, from whom he was divorced in 1934, was in medical school at this time.

§ Reich's student Allan Cott, M.D.

23 February 1948

Refutation of the ionization theory*. Facts and experiment:

1. G M [Geiger Müller] tubes give G.M reaction without voltage to organotic excitation.
2. Electrons from secondary coil produce no ionization. The leaves in the charged electroscope do not come together.
3. The energy field between two plates, fed by the Ind coil, does *not* influence the electroscope.
4. Single-pole electroscope can be charged.
5. Lumination in complete vacuum 2-pole and single -pole.

I photograph the ether!!! No doubt. The more literature I read on the ether, the clearer the following become:

1. The requirements of the ether are important, but the description of the ether is not important.
2. The understanding of ether became nonsense in order to take account of certain mechanical processes, which are in themselves questionable: for example, quantum 6.5×10^{-27} erg sec.
3. The orgone is the true ether.
4. The high-ranking physicists and mathematicians have puffed themselves up unduly, They provide proof of arbitrary assumptions in a stringent way.

6 March 1948

Today, between 8 and 9 p.m. the entire world came crashing down, and a new one came into being.

* Reich refers here to the standard physics explanation of the functioning of Geiger-Müller tubes. The tubes are filled with gases whose atoms are electrically neutral. Radioactivity causes ionization, i.e. the atoms in the gas, (which were formally electrically neutral) become electrically charged—they become ions. When the gas is ionized, it becomes more electrically conductive—the ions will conduct an electrical current that is manifest in the “click” of the Geiger-Müller counter. For further experiments on this problem see Reich’s report *The Oranur Experiment, First Report (1947–1951)*, The Wilhelm Reich Foundation, Rangeley, Maine, 1951.

Experiment: A vacuum tube produced 10,000 pulses per minute (32 scaler), with a *blue glow*, up to 1,000 volts *without* gas, without ions.

12 March 1948

The ether requires a restructuring of physics and astronomy in their entirety. This requires courage, method, loneliness, and very little publicity. And this load cannot be easily carried.

13 March 1948

The rolling snowball:

Karl Menninger, incoming president of the American Psych. Society, has approvingly published Brady's* insulting article. Orgonomy† has pulled the rug out from under his psychoanalysis.

22 March 1948

I must not allow myself to be captured by current things and forms. My work is part of the distant future.

I need helpers, but the helpers belong to the present. This is a tragedy. And only he who carries his own load can make my burden lighter.

TO ARMIN BEREGI

2 April 1948

Dear Mr. Beregi:

I have received your letter of 12 March, via Dr. Hoppe.‡ Many of the questions that you raise, such as those relating to heart action currents, etc., cannot be answered at present because we still know too little about

* Mildred Edie Brady, freelance journalist whose article "The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich," published in *New Republic* May 26, 1947, smeared Reich and his work, attacking in particular the orgone energy accumulator.

† The science of orgone energy.

‡ Walter Hoppe, M.D., a student of Reich's in Israel.

the relationship of orgone to electromagnetism. As regards your methods of approaching orgone phenomena, I must in principle repeat what I have already indicated to you: Over the course of about 16 years, packed full with experimentation and theorizing, it has become quite clear that we *cannot* understand orgone energy in the context of the methods and theories of classical physics, because these methods are simply not suitable and do not take us any further forward. It has already been discovered, through experiment, that we must separate the electromagnetic excitation of light from the radiation of light itself; i.e. the phenomenon of light consists of two different functions. This has been confirmed.

Similarly, it is likely that the orgone theory will make it possible to explain Planck's quanta, which so far have not been understood, rather than—vice versa—Planck's quanta providing an explanation of the functions of orgone energy. This follows clearly from the fact that orgone is primordial and is obviously the source of all known energy phenomena. If you ever succeed in establishing relationships between the action currents and orgone energy phenomena, you will have made a contribution to science the value of which cannot be overestimated. You are also certainly correct in stating that all manner of so-called miracle cures are based on body-orgone effects. Naturally, in the final analysis, such questions can be answered only by the outcome of experiments.

My Planck number is slightly higher than the one that is generally known because I was forced to extend the minute by 4 seconds.

My organometric numbers on astrophysics were deliberately formulated in such a way that nobody can understand them. They will be published in a way that everyone can follow, once the work has been completed.

2 April 1948

I succeeded in:

1. Reducing the ion theory of the GM tube to 0; orgone works in a vacuum.

2. Reducing the energizing voltage to 250V at 3000 [pulses] per minute.
3. [Obtaining] 7–8000 pulses per minute at 350V.

An orgone-motor is becoming a reality.

6 April 1948

I have once more ended in a heavenly waste land. This time because of the discovery of the orgone phenomena in a vacuum.

Like other people, I could enjoy children. but I need rest in order to think, and children do not allow that.

I could exert a fascination more easily than other people in gatherings.* But I had to recognize that this enthusiasm achieves nothing. They continue to defame as before.

I have discovered the ether.

This will cause me a terrible amount of trouble. Einstein stands squarely in the way with his empty space, supported by human fear of the truth. But I must put Einstein out of action as far as the ether question is concerned. By presenting the *facts*.

10 April 1948

Ilse† called Dr. Wolfe of the Med. Dept. of the Atomic Energy Commission NY.

She wanted to talk to him about the GM reaction as a social problem. He promised to call back but did not do so on the same day.

We are still afraid of the great responsibility that has been visited upon us. That is why we are running to “authorities” for help. We are running to the enemy or to the corpse of passing time.

* Reich was known as a charismatic speaker.

† Reich's second wife, Ilse Ollendorff.

30 April 1948

Meeting of Ilse Ollendorff and Dr. James Willie* with the US Atomic Energy Commission in New York (Columbus Circle). They will give a letter to the effect that they realize their responsibility in case an "enemy" nation gets hold of destructive possibilities of the orgone energy. They also acknowledged the basic scientific character of the orgone work. They think a commission could come down if the pulses were already driving a motor. This attitude does not seem honest or good willed. The rate of 25,000 per minute from energy out of air is quite an event in itself, worthy of a great monetary effort. What they apparently want is the MOTOR ready made for them, in order to save money.

7 May 1948

We are back at Orgonon.† Dead tired.

8 May 1948

Start of installation in the laboratory at Orgonon.

9 May 1948

Light is dawning in my life. Things become less important when they are small. The cardinal points still stand out clearly and sharply as before. It is as if only high mountain peaks protrude from the wall of small mountains, above the morning mist. The view into the distance—and peacefulness—remain.

* James Willie, M.D., a student of Reich's.

† The name that Reich gave to the property in Rangeley, Maine, he had purchased in 1942 as a home for his work.

14 May 1948

10–12h

New discovery—

The old experience that body energy generates rotation leads to rotation through energy from *vacuum tubes* (*Vacor tubes*)* *without any voltage* on the CMB—3A GM apparatus:

1. at the listening apparatus
2. at the listening apparatus embedded in the pulse counter?
3. at the pulse measuring apparatus (1600 per minute)
4. at the voltmeter (approx. 30 volts)

Parallel connection of several tubes increases the rotation.

This means:

1. New proof that biological and atmospheric orgone are identical.
2. The existence of a motor force.
3. The possibility of a motor.

23 May 1948

After 18 years, Eva completed all her studies—no more schools. On 4 June 1948 she will graduate as an MD.

She has still not got over her malicious mother.† She will have to do so in the future.

People should be *very* careful when choosing the future fathers and mothers of their children. For that reason alone, it is extremely mean to demand a marriage certificate for life, just for one night of embracement.

* Vacor tubes are vacuum tubes that have been charged with orgone energy.

† After Annie and Wilhelm Reich were divorced, she did everything possible to separate their two daughters from him.

26 May 1948

Construction of the observatory on the hill at Orgonon is gradually getting under way. Collins* is doing the building.

1 June 1948

Eva left us yesterday after eight wonderful days of pleasant togetherness. She said that her mother had told her that the project I am working on could not be correct because I had not received any money for research.

6 June 1948

Breaking away from the Little Man in myself is terrible. If I cannot, or should not, or may not tell Tom Ross† about orgone, I am *unhappy*. I suffer at the thought of spending the last 30–40 years of my life as a scientific hermit.

In short, I shudder at my "greatness." When people look at me with shy respect, they appear comical to me.

Is this narrow-mindedness or generosity?

Could I go mad? Perhaps, in absolute loneliness.

Or have I not overcome the suffering of being on the move when I was 14 years old?

I have lived in the century of major wars and mass migrations. But I was a traveler of the ether already in 1908.

How that sounds, 1908 (and how it once sounded, 1908!) compared with the 1948, 40 years, how long, how not.

7 June 1948

To stay sane in an insane world as a creative man or woman he or she must:

* Vernon Collins, a Rangeley contractor.

† Thomas E. Ross, the caretaker at Orgonon and a loyal friend to Reich.

1. Keep one's life financially independent.
2. Continue unabated to exercise one's power of creativity in concrete, strenuous tasks, always seeking perfection as near as possible.
3. Carefully cherish LOVE of a partner with full gratification, of the total emotional being if possible, of the body in a clean way if necessary.
4. Keep out of the trap of confusion by the average man and woman, helping others to keep out of the trap too as best they can.
5. Keep one's structure clean like brook water through knowing and correcting every mistake, making the corrected mistake the guiding lines to new truth.
6. Never yield to the expedencies of life except where it is basically harmless or where the main line of development is not impeded for the duration of one's life.

24 June 1948

1:40 pm

The org motor works.

Witnesses: Tom Ross
Ilse Ollendorff

Finally

After 1 year of hard work since 9 August 1947 the wheel is turning, driven by the cosmic orgone energy discovered by me!!!!

TO ARTHUR GARFIELD HAYS*

25 June 1948

My dear Mr. Hays:

This letter is dealing with an extremely serious and urgent matter. I would, therefore, appreciate it very much if you would handle this affair personally.

* Mr. Hays responded on 1 July 1948, saying, "Your discoveries are thrilling." He recommended a New York patent attorney.