

# The actuality of Wilhelm Reich's Mass Psychology of Fascism

Por Jorge Veraza Urtuzuástegui

## 1. The Title Chosen by Reich

The title of this epoch-making book announces a **theoretical revolution**, a revolution in science; that have never before had the psychology of the masses been approached like this. Gustavo Le Bon's *Psychology of the Masses* (1895), a classic of the subject taken up and discussed by Freud in his *Psychology of the Masses and Analysis of the Self* (1921) and admired and used by Hitler in the pages of *My Struggle* (1927), it considers the human individual as a rational entity but not the masses. They act irrationally, like animals. So, Le Bon's approach is **ethological** and not that of a properly human psychology. Wilhem Wundt, father of experimental psychology, with his *Völkerpsychologie* (1911) or psychology of the peoples, observes properly human politically and culturally organized masses in long-term temporal spaces, but does not go beyond the Lebonian premise regarding the action of the revolutionary masses, excited or terrified, etc. Only Freud manages to humanize them, **to properly make a (human) psychology of the masses and no longer an ethology**. For it shows that the individual also acts irrationally like crowds; in fact, both of them display conscious acts and unconscious acts; and this duality is proper to **the naturally constituted human consciousness**.

Despite the great scientific advance consciously pointed out by Freud in the introduction to his book, from his limited **naturalistic perspective** it would not make sense to speak of a psychology of the masses **specific to fascism**: for him all psychology of the masses is human and natural at the same time. Only for Wilhelm Reich **the human character of the psychology of the masses forces to consider it according to precise historical configurations**, as historical materialism would. And not merely as an implicit duration that only strengthens certain features, as in Wundt; but according to the rule of historical specification of realities and concepts, as Karl Korsch called it in 1936 in his *Karl Marx*.

Thus, not all the masses in history act as they were seen in 1933 in Germany. The revolutionary masses of 1830 and 1848 that Le Bon adjectives as irrational act violently against injustice and oppression rationally, since there is no other rational means to get rid of them; it is the Lebonian perspective that is not scientifically but politically reactionary (and irrational) when judging them irrational. But certainly, the German masses have acted irrationally, even when they did not do so with violence but rather by behaving meekly in the Reich elections in which they voted overwhelmingly in favor of Hitler, the candidate of big capital and the landlord *junker* reaction.

Note that to introduce history into social psychology, Reich had to differentiate what Le Bon confused: violence as equal to irrationality. On the contrary, Reich shows in the first chapter the paradox of a peaceful action such as voting, as apparently rational, but actually contrary to reason if you vote for your political enemy peacefully. The masses have consciously acted politically by going to vote, but their precise choice in favor of the enemy's candidate is irrational, it shows that **an unconscious social psychology has prevailed over the conscious political act**. A social psychology that the Nazi party has been working on in the masses and has been successful. Social psychology is historically determined and depends on human acts, their training and their combat, etc. It is not destiny.

As is evident, Reich has taken up Freud and Marx in this fine innovative comparative analysis. But how has the aforementioned revolution in science really achieved?

## 2. Reich's scientific and epistemological feat

The background of the feat of Wilhelm Reich: Marx's theory of social classes and the class consciousness that corresponds to them according to their economic interests, a theory that focuses on **politics** as an instance of actions, projects and rational ends is indicated by WR as **insufficient** to understand fascism, since the German working class in 1933 voted overwhelmingly for Hitler and the Nazi party; that is, **they voted against their interests** when choosing the enemy's candidate: **the behavior of the working class was irrational**. And it can only be explained not as political action but as the submission of politics to **social psychology**, in particular the mass psychology established by Nazism. Something that only from Freud's theory of the unconscious could be explained.

The **theoretical object** of social sciences such as sociology, political science and economics are situated in the sphere of rational actions and consciousness; while that of mass psychology, in the field of **subjugation of rational consciousness to the unconscious**, the result of which is irrational political (economic or social) actions. Hence the need to return to Freud to account for the mass psychology of fascism and not only for Marx. WR's intervention is not to revoke KM or Freud but to deepen them through an original contribution.

WR requires both scientific contributions to account for the **unprecedented historical phenomenon**: fascism. De Marx complements an **insufficiency**; while Freud, in addition to retaking his theory of the unconscious, must reverse an **incoherence**: the theory of the **principle of death** to understand the human psyche and, especially, the mass psychology of fascism. Freud would use it for this purpose and thereby derail his explanatory effort. While Reich does not use it, precisely, to scientifically explain the phenomenon. For from the beginning of death it must be assumed that Nazi sadistic murderous acts would be nothing other than expressions of human nature; so impossible to be criticized and, even more, it would seem idle to deepen their explanation. They should just be taken for granted, if you will miserable.

As we see, Wilhelm Reich speaks of fascism but not only from a political perspective or not only as a political phenomenon. Rather, it finds and analyzes **the specifically psychosexual psychosocial roots** of political fascism. Theoretical stroke that makes time. Well, in a single stroke it articulates and distinguishes politics and psychology. It situates the theoretical object of the social sciences that study the rational actions of the subjects and, on the contrary, establishes the **theoretical object proper to the psychology of the masses**; science that lacked this methodological foundation. Reich introduces social psychology to the heart of politics and political science while succeeding in establishing the specific theoretical object of social psychology, especially that of the masses.

This scientific feat has been indelibly captured in the first chapter of Reich's book: "Ideology as Material Power." While chapter two, from its title, answers the question about what are the material conditions of possibility for the mass psychology of fascism to exist and for it to be successful. The chapter is titled: "The Ideology of the Authoritarian Family in the Mass Psychology of Fascism." And it is that following Freud, WR establishes that **the sexual repression exercised within the authoritarian family** transforms the minds of individuals in the way in which fascist behaviors are offered to us.

Indeed, the father's **authoritative** role in the contemporary family in general is **redoubled** in the patriarchal family of the German petty bourgeoisie - a model of the modern authoritarian family -

with the entrepreneur's leadership role in the small family business. Your dad is also your boss and governs your sexuality and your emotions, all your behavior. This despotic economic and functional family knot constitutes the authoritarian family and presses repressively in a potentiated way on sexuality, it is the root of the mass psychology of fascism. And if sexual repression within the family Oedipal triangle generates the neuroses analyzed and treated by Freud, the authoritarian family generates a particular extreme form of neurosis that Reich later called the **plague or emotional plague**. The emotion and the psyche of the fascist masses.

In subsequent chapters Reich clarifies important questions of the relationship between the masses and the leader, as well as Nazi propaganda and ideology, etc. But we must recognize that it is the basic solution of the problem that constitutes the **historical phenomenon of fascism** - a solution for which it was necessary to resolve the **epistemological issue** of the specific theoretical object of mass psychology, precisely, through the **contrast between Marx and Freud**, that is, the contrast between the scientific study of the rational class behavior of the masses and the scientific study of their neurotic irrational behavior, this solution played out in the first and second chapters of Reich's formidable book - which enabled him to recognize and analyze how a peculiar, **historically determined** mass psychology, the fascist, as well as allowing him to recognize its **variants** and the **historical tendency** to spread throughout the planet. And it is this warning that Reich gives humanity, at the same time as the necessary instruments to analyze the phenomenon, understand it and combat it successfully.

### 3. General form of fascism, its variants and globalization

The first edition of Psychology of the Masses of Fascism of 1933, contains 5 chapters in which Reich characterizes **the general form of fascism**, the Nazi form that we can call **black fascism** (1), in contrast to the one named by him, **red fascism** (3); which is the form of fascism that Reich found in the Stalinist USSR of 1934, and for which chapters 9 and 10 of the work give the reason, after chapters 6 to 8 reflect on the psychosocial psychosexual nucleus involved in fascism: mysticism and in particular mysticism organized internationally by the church as an antisexual organization (my last sentence glossing the title of chapter 6). In fact, already chapter 6 characterizes another form of fascism, the **yellow fascism** (2) of Japanese imperialism allied to Hitler and Mussolini (p.188ff) first version (1939) of the foundation of a **new fascist world order** (4) with a **world government** (p.170), which was followed in 1941 by the better known Nazi; While Nelson Rockefeller's version dates from 1942, inspired by the Japanese and surely opposed to it, without forgetting the legendary libel of the late nineteenth century The Protocols of Zion, alluding to the Jewish world conspiracy, which served as a pretext for Russian pogroms and then Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda to which Rockefeller is also responding. Reich quotes Professor Fujisawa - the main ideologue of the Japanese Empire - not only with regard to NWO etc., but also in his criticism of the behavior of the US masses: "capitalist individualism" of "unbridled aggressiveness and selfishness" (p. 169) **a kind of fascism of colors** (5), we could call it, expression of a choice or voluntarism of the diversified consumer and of democratic appearance. A theme that only later (1946) Reich focused on his Listening Little Man.

Only **black fascism** places us within a developed bourgeois society and, at the same time, shows us the rational political choice - not the commercial consumerist one - subjected to the fascist mass psychology articulated with the redoubled authoritarian family that leads to the working class and the popular masses in general to vote irrationally for the enemy. Only here reason and unreason are flagrantly confronted, only here sociology or political science, etc., are insufficient to explain the phenomenon, making it necessary to forge a scientific social psychology. Only here the subject of

the action are the masses themselves who revoke their freedom in a free act, not because they are lied to or imposed by force. Only here twisted emotionality - not secular submission (Yellow Fascism) or cajoling (Mussolini, Stalin etc.) - looms as the deciding factor. That is why not the fascism of the Nazi party, nor the ideology of Hitler but the **psychology of the masses of said fascism**, allows us to find the keys to all the various forms of fascism, not only that of the performance of Hitler and his party. The power of the idea that governs the development of the PsMF book becomes evident to us. Now let's go back to the source from which Mass Psychology of Fascism was born; that is to say, the controversy that WR and Sigmund Freud (SF) held for several days in 1927 as it clarifies the causes of the great analytical power with respect to fascism.

The controversy revolved around issues related not to strict individual psychoanalytic theory and therapy, but to the **necessarily social prophylaxis or preventive medicine of neuroses**, without being able to reach an agreement. The personal balance of their positions was published by SF in 1930 with the now famous title of *The malaise in Culture*, although without mentioning Reich and the origin of this work.

For its part, WR offered a very articulate and comprehensive answer, of which PsMF constitutes, let's say, the center. An answer that goes from his articles on the Sex Pol (1926/1930) and that closes in 1952 with *El Asesinato de Cristo* (AC) (The murder of Jesus Christ). Let's say the following about said "center": PsMF.

*The function of orgasm* is the originating investigation of all his work and the one that unifies it, leading to the discovery of the cosmic orgone and the technologies for its application. The PsMF is not only an important work scientifically and politically speaking of the youthful stage of WR; as Constantin Sinelnikov and others have considered it, in demerit of the later bioenergetics and ergonomics in general. In reality, it is not only a work that WR never put aside. The PsMF is, with regard to the psychosocial dimensions of the vast civilizing human organization - and not only of the capitalist one - nothing less than the center of the great Reichian scientific feat. Not only do we find a chapter that the review in the latest edition of the Function of the orgasm, in fact, multiple books revolve around it as if all together were a single work, both before and after PsMF, since only she has the power to give them a unitary meaning.

#### **IV. The actuality of Psychology of the masses of fascism**

The general relevance of this work by WR and of those that conspicuously or revolve around it, lies in achieving a scientific account of the emotional and specifically psychosocial psychosexual roots of **a form of politics that represses human freedoms**, the fascist, that since 1933 and throughout the 20th century and so on in the 21st, etc., it has found variants that have allowed it to spread. In this way, WR enables us to be able **to guard against and defend ourselves** from such a policy and, even, to **combat** it both by political, psychosocial and therapeutic means:

All variants of fascism are based on the **repression or manipulation of sexuality**, operated to **degrade** their figure of full genitality towards straightened **pre-genital figures as opposed to genitality**.

The particular actuality of PsMF is that the globalization of capitalism that occurred from 1933 to date, marked by the Keynesian economic policy first (1929/1981) and then by the neoliberal one (1982 to date) has not done, indeed, but to extend and to deepen the

economic, technological and social conditions for the emergence and development of the forms of psychosexual fascist politics rooted in the corresponding psychology of the masses.

The singular application of the Reichian teachings on the psychology of the fascist masses –the singular actuality of the same- goes through recognizing and specifying the **criteria** with which Reich constructs his theory. In the first place, WR recognizes in the first five chapters of his work the exercise of **authoritarian social control** (economic, labor, political and military). Recognizing that in order for such control not to be simply authoritarian but **specifically fascist, the psychosocial and psychosexual control of the masses must concur** with the aforementioned forms of social control, since only in this way do we obtain the peculiar **fascist effect**: the irrational behavior of the subjects that shows them not only bent and bent to the domain, but as advocates of it. What differentiates it from mere despotism or the most honest authoritarianism.

Second, WR recognizes –in the subsequent chapters of PsMF- the second general dimension of fascism: **the dictation of lives and death of the living**. That is, not only the forced labor disposition and militarization of the masses, as well as the disposition of their sexuality in state brothels etc. (dictation on lives), but sending them to **kill and die in war**, carry out **genocides** and confine them in concentration camps not only imposing forced labor but also their **extermination** (death dictation).

In short, WR recognizes that fascism is authoritarian social control and the dictation of death and **psychosexual / psychosocial lives established** with the acquiescence of the masses.

On the subject of **authoritarian social control**, he assumes Machiavelli and Hobbes (Leviathan and Behemoth) as a theoretical framework, Le Bon and Howard Stewart Chamberlein, in addition to the reactionary Nazi and Christian theorists that he glossed and criticized in the pages of his book. While on the subject of the **dictation of death and on lives** he has as a reference not only Malthus and his policy of population reduction but also Joseph Arthur de Gobineau and his Essay on the inequality of the races (1853/1855), the so called "father of racial demography" not specifically anti-Semitic; so Chamberlein and others complement Gobineau on this point.

If, together with the above criteria, we specify the aforementioned **fascist psychosexual dual general device**, we can successfully apply Reich's teachings. It is a dual device, because it establishes simple sexual repression or complex sexual repression with sexual manipulation whose unitary function consists, in both cases, of:

- 1) block the development of genitality to, thus:
- 2) fix pre-genitality and
- 3) oppose it to genitality.

Therefore, the liberating objective for WR is to establish the **self-regulation** of the sexual economy in each human being so that instead of a neurotic character in any of its variants or schizophrenic, a **genital character** (PsMF p. 402). Said synthetically self-regulation and genital character, in order to overcome the authoritarian patriarchal family and the compulsive marriage that corresponds to it (The irruption of sexual morality) and establish the **natural form of the family**, says WR (The Sexual Revolution p. 16) and the "**long lasting sexual relationships**" (RSD) corresponding alternatives to compulsive marriage.

Through these three **defining criteria of fascism** in any of its forms and the **liberating objective** that fights them and makes them impossible, we can characterize the current situation in which, in view of achieving the opposition between pre-genital sexuality (oral, anal and clitoral phallic ) simple sexual repression does not **predominate**, even if it is redoubled - as in Nazi Germany - but rather **complex sexual repression with sexual manipulation**. Something that with different modalities has been happening since the sixties of the twentieth century.

### **The actual situation**

First, we note that the contemporary feminist struggle advocates ending the patriarchal family. But instead, it does not seek to establish the **natural form of the family**, beginning because it lacks a notion of self-regulating natural sexuality. Nor would its objective be to ensure the conformation of the **genital character**, within a heterosexual father / mother polarity; every time, according to its notion of culturally formed gender, it advocates the flowering of pregenitality in all its forms. That is, without questioning in depth the repression of prevailing sexuality, contemporary feminism validates and develops the reactive cultural and sexual forms that derive from it; Before which it is already allowed to be widely permissive. WR would understand that it is a variant of social movement consistent with the general sexual repression complicated with sexual manipulation prevalent in the contemporary world after World War II. It would be a movement that apparently questions authoritarianism and the germs of fascism, but which can only support it more and more. The contemporary situation in the procreative sexual base of society shows a flagrant antagonism between a pole of authoritarian families who defend their sexual morality with all the more vigor, as they are attacked more sharply by a pole of militant pre-genital sexual permissiveness, which it tries to impose. a moral choice of gender above any natural sexual determination, since none is recognized. WR would diagnose that we have before us a breeding ground for the development of two forms of fascism: **that of colors** - which conceals its design - and some update of **black fascism**, as with which Trump has wanted to be singled out since his 2015 election campaign / 2016 to date.

Second, we have the paradox that those who have most emphatically identified Trump as fascist, crazy, racist, etc., are precisely the members of the media mainstream, which had already shown its manipulative and authoritarian face repeatedly since decades. back, but that was unleashed on the occasion of instituting a consistent attack on freedom of expression every time it was Trump or the Trumpistas; reaching the climax, with the action

of digital social networks - validated by the mainstream media - literally shutting Trump's mouth, still in office as president of the United States, closing his accounts and those of many of his followers. What raised a worldwide protest that could not be silenced, notably that of various leaders, among which AMLO and Putin stood out, not being the only ones.

All of which configures a process of **media fascism and through planetary artificial intelligence (AI)**; inclusive of permanent social control through Big Data in possession of banks, Facebook, the CIA and various international police and military intelligence agencies. So that technological innovations - beyond the newspapers, radio and TV that WR knew - make possible fascist technological media interventions barely dreamed of by Göbbels and his entire Third Reich Ministry of Culture. Here is a population control apparatus whose radius of action is worldwide. And that is articulated with planetary banking institutions and world government institutions attached to the UN, such as the WHO, capable of imposing the forced closure of all the economies of the planet based on the threat of a pandemic. Before the planetary domination by current artificial intelligence, the AIDS pandemic and its corresponding global campaign of open planetary sexual repression under the pretext of protecting life were established from 1984 onwards. In between, the avian flu, swine flu and influenza pandemics, in 2020 the quarantine -which I can only recognize as- COVID 19 neo-Nazi was established in the entire planet to date. a **fear of the other living** being as a living being, since a living being is paranoidly identified as a transmitter of lethal disease. **The emotional plague** makes its august for the good of humanity on a planetary level on the **dual repressive manipulative basis of sexuality** alluded to in the first place.

Third, as can be seen, the mass leader relationship typical of the various fascisms survives with different styles in the various countries, including parties with a democratic or reactionary appearance such as the Democratic or Republican Party of the United States, or with a yellow and red fascist appearance. like the CCP or North Korea, etc., but these **national managers of diverse fascisms** that were the culminating device of the black, red, yellow, colonialist and colored fascism of the 20th century - as WR rightly analyzed them - are now They find themselves **subjected under a technologically accorded planetary fascism managerial device that responds to both world public and secret institutions.**

Fourth, there is a **capitalist mercantile common sense (SCMC)** like the one that prevailed in Nazi Germany, determined like that by merchandise and money, wages and profit, **but enhanced in its atomizing and polarizing capacities that disrupt solidarity. social and, therefore, generators of sado masochistic conformism**, like the one portrayed by WR in Listen Little Man, yes, enhanced in its alienating capacity, **not only by TV but by all AI devices, cell phones in the first place.** This with regard to the direct impact on communicationally managed social emotionality. But social emotionality can also be determined **indirectly**, first influencing the alteration of physiology. So that the contemporary SCMC is enhanced in its **gene-fascist capacity**, thanks to the fact that the use values of consumption - of all kind of consumption - **are harmful use values that depress and distort vitality**, in such a way that they add to the mercantile fetishism, that it encourages us to take relationships between things for relationships between people and

vice versa, **it does complement the reification of people with the personification of things**, to this mercantile fetishism, I mean, today **cosic (object) fetishism** is added. Which **famelizes sexual relations between subjects while eroticizing their relations with things**; giving as a unitary result the growing **thanatization of the coexistence and the behaviors of the Little Man**.

**The growing predominance of cosic (object) fetishism** over commodity fetishism in the conformation of the world SCMC is the triggering factor that all the various fascisms that swarm at the planetary level are biased by **fascism of colors** or that it is this that prevail. An outstanding case is that of the yellow and red fascism of the masses under the domination of the CCP, but which since 2000 has been mixed with a Western fascism of colors so to speak: **a consumerist fascism**. But analogous bias happens all over the world.

Finally, beyond the SCMC we have contemporary class ideologies with national roots that continue to be polarized between right and left, landlords, bourgeois, petty bourgeois and proletarians, and so on. Of course, with much more diffuse contours between them than those that prevailed not only in the first half of the twentieth century but also in its second half. But, **over these national class ideologies today prevail the world ideologies of massive social groups** that advocate, for example, for women's liberation, that of blacks in the United States or that of ethnic groups originating in various nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America, etc. All of them are presented to a greater or lesser extent as criticisms of capitalism, while all point to the establishment of a new world order and a world government in the absence of National States or with their presence but with depressed sovereignties. So, on the one hand, these ideologies appear to combat statist nationalist fascism, while promoting a kind of despotic world government of production and consumption that hardly hides the **fascism of colors** that characterizes it. Even more so when we note that each of these ideologies of declassified multitudes cannot raise their particular demands except under the condition of openly proposing tanatic neo-Malthusian policies of massive depopulation as in the case of the ideology of combating climate change, since it was exposed by the Club of Rome in the early seventies of the twentieth century. Or the ideologies of measurement of poverty, well-being and human flourishing advocating universal basic income, coupled with the ideology and practice of the privatized health system and in which the elderly or young people appear as target populations of the Tanatic politics of the case. But also the neo-Malthusian thanatos makes his way implicitly and unconsciously in these ideologies, as well as in the newest transhumanist ideologies and in those of the end of work, both with intensive AI in between.