

The Castration of Wilhelm Reich: A Critique of Myron Sharaf's Fury on Earth

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The castration (reduction of force) of the life and work of Wilhelm Reich is being accomplished (or attempted) with the pen. Myron Sharaf's *Fury on Earth*, billed as the "definitive" biography of Reich, is the latest and most notable example.

Sharaf tries to appear "liberal," "even-handed," or "objective" regarding Reich's work and his critics, but in the process lends credence to the opinions of his critics that, objectively or scientifically speaking, they do not deserve. On pp. 4-5¹, for example, Sharaf says that a "friendly critic" would say that the concept of orgone energy and the Orgone Energy Accumulator (ORAC) are prima facie absurd, although what "prima facie" means in this context is hard to fathom. One cannot make any judgment at all regarding the existence and nature of orgone energy or the utility of the ORAC without being thoroughly familiar with Reich's writings and experiments and without some personal experience with orgone energy functions and the ORAC. Given such a background one might criticize Reich, but one could never conclude the discoveries were "absurd" or "prima facie" absurd. By "friendly critic" Sharaf may have in mind a "liberal" who has read a bit here and there and who then "gently," or without conscious malice offers an "opinion." This is no critic, however, and such a person's "opinion" carries no weight at all. As Reich pointed out, to even consider that one in such a position is entitled to an opinion exemplifies a lack of contact with the essential, with scientific method, and when offered, such "opinions" are expressive of the secondary layer via the 'face' of polite secondary destructiveness².

On p. 5 Sharaf states that the psychoanalysts regarded Reich as a psychopath because he advocated adolescent sexuality and broke "all kinds of laws" to insure adolescents would have access to information kept from them by the adult world. In this context, Sharaf does not explain that "all kinds of laws" meant that Reich illegally disseminated information on contraception and helped adolescents obtain illegal abortions, and this in the context of the sex-repressive societies of Germany and Austria. Sharaf merely mouths the views of the analysts without providing justification when he easily could have interposed a comment or

¹ Sharaf, Myron. *Fury on Earth*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1983. All textual page references are to this volume.

² Reich, W. *The Function of the Orgasm*. New York: Noonday Press, p. 130ff.

two indicating that their views may very well have been grounded in their fear and envy, in their armor but he doesn't. By omission, then, Sharaf tacitly lends credence to their views.

If this were the only time Sharaf did this there would be no problem, but this is not the case. On p. 31 Sharaf says that the analysts "believed" Reich was insane but offers no evidence for this belief and gives no rebuttal, leaving only one view. What status does this belief have? Were the analysts in a position to know the inner Reich? Or was their belief grounded more in their own armor than in Reich's character? Sharaf does not speculate on this matter although throughout the book he has no compunction speculating on Reich's motives. On p. 78 Sharaf gives Sterba's analysis that Reich focused on latent negative transference because of Reich's suspicious character and belligerence. Sharaf voices disagreement but then, in the next paragraph, subtly agrees. On p. 98 Sharaf provides Helen Deutch's analysis of Reich as a "fanatic" without commenting on the possibility that Reich's theory of genitality appeared fanatical to her because of her own armoring. I do not mean to imply that this necessarily was the case, only that it is a possibility Sharaf ignores.

On pp. 193-4 Sharaf gives us Rado's opinion of Reich, that he was a psychotic, when Rado's unprofessional conduct, reported by Sharaf, should deny his "opinion" such easy public access or at least make it highly dubious. Sharaf then gives us Federn's negative view as well but offers no basis for it. Federn, of course, was the man most responsible for the denigration of Reich in the 1920's. On p. 202 Sharaf gives Anna Freud's negative opinion of Reich without suggesting the possibility that it may have been based on her own armoring. On p. 221 Sharaf gives the standard criticism of Reich's microscopic work and then Reich's objections to the criticism. Here his "even-handedness" is exemplary. The only problem is that the uninformed reader has no way to judge between the two, i.e., it is implied that the criticism may be correct. But as one goes on one sees how inadequately the critics who conducted experiments carried them out and how often the critics judged Reich from a distance, an indication that the critics had a poor comprehension of what Reich was about. Sharaf however, does not point this out in the context in which it should be mentioned.

Generally, although Sharaf gives the critic's point of view and then Reich's answer, he fails to distinguish critics who were seriously interested in replicating Reich's work (of which there were almost none) from those whose criticisms can, scientifically speaking, carry no weight. On p. 229, for example, Sharaf speaks of the moralistic Scharffenberg's attack on

Reich and then says “whatever his reasons,” before reporting on what Scharffenberg said. Here Sharaf refuses to speculate on motivation. With Reich, however, as mentioned, Sharaf has no such inhibition. On p. 268 Sharaf mouths Briebl's criticism of vegetotherapy without qualifying it by mentioning that some patients, and possibly Briebl himself, may be too armored to be moved in therapy. Sharaf makes it appear as if Briebl's criticism that the therapy is of no value may be correct. On the following page Sharaf mouths Edith Jacobson's opinion that Reich's latest scientific work was "delusional" without stating her qualifications or reasons. Little by little, therefore, Sharaf accumulates “opinions” that subtly justify his portrayal of Reich as a neurotic or even a delusional madman.

On pp. 281-2 Sharaf mouths critics who ridicule (note; not merely criticize, but *ridicule*) Reich for not knowing why orgone energy penetrates metal. Sharaf could have pointed out how little scientists understand about other phenomena accepted as ‘scientific,’ such as quantum mechanical phenomena, weather phenomena, stellar phenomena, relativity, and so on. Instead Sharaf treats the ridicule as if it may be valid. To think so is to completely misunderstand the nature of scientific inquiry. Reich observed that orgone energy penetrates and is quickly repelled by metal but didn't know why. Someday we may find out. On p. 401 Sharaf lends credence to Eissler's “diagnosis” of Reich by adding that Eissler's colleagues said that he tended to underestimate pathology. Eissler, of course, never examined Reich and, as Sharaf says, he deceived Reich during the interview, but his "diagnosis" is taken at face value.

Perhaps Sharaf agrees with the psychoanalysts' views? He does not come right out and say so, however. What he does is to "liberally" ask the question: Was Reich mad or a genius? (p. 6) There is no question that he thinks Reich was a severe neurotic. On p. 9 he says that Reich had "many" neurotic problems. As one studies his book, however, one begins to wonder whether it was Reich or Sharaf that was (or is) severely neurotic. Sharaf, as he admits, spent a great deal of time *watching* Reich instead of *being* with him. He says that he was "fascinated" and "intrigued" by Reich (p. 27) and that he took extensive notes even of his therapy sessions. Is such behavior not indicative of an attempt to keep the therapy and the therapist at a safe distance?

Did Sharaf ever come to know Reich? Did he ever come to comprehend what Reich thought and felt? And then there is the question of what Sharaf means by "neurotic." Reich lived no ordinary life. He was hounded, ridiculed, misunderstood, chased from country to

country, etc. He became angry, had fits of temper, made errors, etc., but, under the circumstances, does this behavior qualify as “neurotic”? Such a “diagnosis” should at least be backed up with concrete evidence, but Sharaf never clearly defines the contexts in which Reich exhibited such behavior.

Sharaf “diagnoses” Reich as a split personality. To Sharaf there was the “core” Reich and the “historical” Reich, the genius and the madman (p. 10). He further diagnoses Reich as employing his neurotic authoritarianism and Oedipal strivings to fight and protest his real work, his “core,” implying that Reich did not employ genuine assertiveness. This is done as Sharaf “psychoanalyzes” Reich from a distance, a subject we will return to below.

Sharaf’s book is filled with subtle innuendo that functions to insidiously characterize Reich as a neurotic or madman. On p. 12, for example, he says Reich’s work touches us with a “peculiar” intensity. He could have said “intensity”, or “deep intensity,” etc., but chooses the term “peculiar.” Later Sharaf refers to a statement in *Listen Little Man!* as an “unconventional truth,” instead of saying that Reich stated a truth in an unconventional manner. The thrust of Sharaf’s usage is to place the unconventionality, the peculiarity within Reich. The truth Sharaf is referring to, by the way, is the same truth Socrates stated when he said that he was wiser than others because he knew that he didn’t know whereas the others think that they know when they do not—not so unconventional a truth after all.

On p. 66 Sharaf, referring to Reich’s being outside of the mainstream, calls his outsidership “latent,” as if it were a neurotic trait of Reich’s and not a result of the wall armored humanity put up against him. When speaking of Reich’s desire to obtain credentials, Sharaf says Reich was “ambitious for public validation” (p. 67). These remarks add to Sharaf’s image of Reich as a zealot who had “a mission.”

Regarding armor, Sharaf says that Reich had a “penchant” for physical analogies (p, 80) again ascribing to Reich’s character something that could more objectively be explained as the perception of the physicality of armor. Later he says that Reich was “fascinated” by the concrete and tangible when the fact was that Reich noticed that neuroses are grounded in physical muscular contractions. Did Reich have a “penchant” to see this or could he have simply recognized it? Sharaf repeats this later when he says that when he could directly observe certain phenomena Reich had entered one of his “favorite realms.” The effect of this usage is to reduce Reich’s discoveries to Reich’s peculiarities instead of his clear perceptions

and to make a caricature of Reich. Again, on p. 98, Sharaf repeats his characterization of Reich as a man with a “penchant” for the concrete instead of acknowledging that he became aware of the concreteness of neuroses. (That Sharaf chooses to speak in this way, by the way, indicates that Sharaf does not appreciate, accept, or believe that neuroses are, in fact, or objectively, concretely grounded in physical muscular armoring. Instead Sharaf tacitly implies that to see neuroses as rooted in the physical is merely a matter of point of view, of personal idiosyncrasy.)

At one point (p. 107) Sharaf denies that he wants to reduce Reich's attraction to Annie as if she were merely a taboo object and then proceeds to do just that. This is one example of how Sharaf employs double-talk—he says one thing but his writing *does* something else. He says Reich's relationship with Annie “may have contributed to his sense of conquest,” and that he “may very well have” had an “ambition to win a woman from the upper class” (p. 108). In ascribing to Reich such a low-level motive Sharaf effectively reduces Reich although his analysis is pure conjecture and is given without justification. It is as if Sharaf cannot believe Reich (or anyone?) could be motivated by simple orgonotic attraction. In this case as in others, Sharaf leaves it to the reader to try to conceive of an antithetical viewpoint if he should wish to, something that one well-steeped in Reich's work can easily do but not something easily done by the average reader.

The above-mentioned remarks of Sharaf contribute to his portrayal of Reich as an ambitious, driven zealot; a man with a powerful sense of “mission.” On p. 110 Sharaf speaks of Reich's “personal mission” in a way that implies fanaticism when the same facts could be explained more neutrally, namely, that Reich was *moved* by what he learned. On p. 119 Sharaf mouths others' opinions that Reich was a fanatic and later (pp. 120, 146) says he “believes” Reich saw himself as wanting to live a “heroic” life. On p. 207 Sharaf adds to this impression when he says Reich “wanted to prove” his own concepts—the context is the concept of libido—instead of saying Reich became aware that libido was probably demonstrable. On p. 217 Sharaf combines mouthing the “criticism” of those in no position to know with his picture of Reich as a zealot when he says that a “charitable critic”—here we have that “friendly critic” again—would say Reich's bio-electric experiments were misguided, done by a “zealous amateur.” More subtly, Sharaf says Reich tested for spores (regarding the bion experiments) to meet the objections of critics, as if Reich was essentially concerned to

defeat them in battle, when Reich's presentation of the facts makes it appear that he tested for spores to answer his *own*, inner-directed questions regarding the origin of protozoa from organic matter.

On p. 239 Sharaf says that Reich was finally getting to where he had long wanted to be, again making Reich into a zealot rather than a scientist who simply followed the logic of his discoveries. On p. 240 Sharaf says Reich probably had a “rescue fantasy” although he provides no evidence for this. Later Sharaf accuses Reich of starting with conclusions or too strongly held hypotheses and says Reich's critics were right to say so. But Sharaf fails to detail many experiments Reich conducted which add strength to his hypotheses, particularly of the existence of orgone energy (specifically the photographic plate experiments, x-ray photography of orgone energy, the pendulum experiments, and others). Sharaf thus omits some of the crucial evidence which, when seen together with the results Sharaf does report on, makes Reich's hypothesis stronger.

Secondly, Sharaf does not mention that one needs to believe in one's hypotheses if one is to go to great lengths to test them. This is true of science in general, of course. Witness the current development of high-energy particle accelerators costing billions of dollars based on the strongly held belief that such devices will aid scientists in discovering the basic structure of matter. Sharaf, it appears, does not understand science.

Sharaf's caricature of Reich as an arrogant zealot continues when he says that Reich wrote with “supreme self-confidence, even arrogance” (p. 278). This is a judgment I, for one, do not share with Sharaf. Reich's writing is energetic, powerful, etc., but not arrogant. In this context Sharaf ignores Reich's continuous references to his own surprise at what he discovered and to his reluctance to believe the revolutionary implications of many of his findings. Over a decade ago a science major at a college where I was teaching remarked to me how unique he found Reich in relation to scientific writing generally in that Reich admitted his errors and relative ignorance regarding much of what he was investigating.

Sharaf portrays Reich as having a “growing fervor” regarding his conviction that he was on the verge of discovering a universal energy. He could have said that Reich became excited when he made such and such a discovery, as anyone living on Planet Earth would, but if Sharaf simply put it this way it would not add to his picture of Reich as a zealot. This portrayal is added to when he characterizes Reich—with poetic license?—as an “exorcist”

fighting the “devil” of swallowing the blocked gag reflex (p. 312). Here Sharaf makes Reich out to be a buffoon. On p. 370 Sharaf says Reich became “preoccupied” with the relationship between orgone energy and nuclear energy. He could have reported that Reich began to focus, or even focused with great intensity on the relationship, but he chooses to use the term “preoccupied.” The difference between one who tends towards preoccupation and one who simply focuses with great intensity is that between an irrational zealot, a fanatic, etc., and a healthy, energetic scientist.

Much of Sharaf’s portrayal of Reich turns on such subtle choice of terms. On p. 3, for example, he says Reich's life was filled with “paradoxes.” He then explains what he means by referring to the contrast between the opinions of the “professional community”—none of whom were in *Reich's* profession: orgonomy—and Reich's “followers” (does one speak of Einstein's “followers” or to students of relativity theory?). A contrast, however, is not a paradox, and by employing this term Sharaf makes an early attempt to justify his view of Reich as enigmatic, peculiar, weird, etc. Can Reich be blamed for the contrast of opinion? Reich's peculiarity, for Sharaf, as mentioned, also involved his “capacity” to attract “followers” who gave Reich acclaim bordering on “adulation,” as if there was something peculiar within Reich which brought out this “irrational” response. Sharaf could have reported that Reich's supporters loved him, but this would imply that Reich was lovable and perhaps even healthy. (On p. 130 Sharaf refers to Reich's “gift for finding support”).

On p. 29 Sharaf says Reich had a “passion” for priority when he could have said that Reich was concerned lest his discoveries be wrongly attributed, thus distorted. Reich's concern, as far as can be gleaned from his writings, was distortion of the truth, and proper acknowledgement of priority, without guaranteeing that no distortion will occur, at least grounds a theory in the work of the discoverer. Sharaf, however, makes Reich into an egotistical idiot with an irrational “passion for priority.”

On p. 27 Sharaf calls Reich “problematical” when he should have said or admitted, more objectively, that he, Sharaf, didn't understand Reich. Again he puts the onus on Reich, places a trait within Reich that is actually a function of the interaction of Reich and others—in this case, with Sharaf himself. On the same page Sharaf pictures Reich as a “guerilla chieftain” because he happened to be wearing a gun on his hip, a not so subtle attempt to add to his portrayal of Reich as a fanatic.

Sharaf makes a number of errors and misinterpretations regarding Reich's work which, when taken together, add up to a lack of understanding and appreciation of Reich's discoveries. In the 1920's, for example, Reich was virtually alone in affirming adolescent sexuality, public availability of contraception, women's rights, the sex-repressive source of the mass psychology of fascism, the existence of a biological core, the concept of work democracy, and so on, yet Sharaf says Reich was not unique in holding these positions (p. 4) although he admits he was unique in the way he brought them together. On p. 97 he further disparages Reich's individuality by saying that he was unusual but not unique in working with patient's genital strivings. This statement clearly calls for a reference as to who else was doing so, but Sharaf demurs. Sharaf, it appears, doesn't want to admit Reich's uniqueness, not without (unsubstantiated) qualification. On p. 87 Sharaf, without citing references, says the psychoanalysts were aware of vaginal orgasm and thought of it as a criterion of sexual health. Freud, as I have learned from research into the relationship between Freud and Reich, equated the female sexual organ with the clitoris while late in his career admitting vaginal sensation exists³. I do not know how the other analysts felt but Reich believed they took clitoral orgasm as the criterion of female sexual health⁴. For the sake of accuracy, I would like to know where Sharaf got his information. As far as I know, Reich's research into female sexuality was revolutionary. He was the first to document that females experience orgasm in the same way as males, but Sharaf appears reluctant to admit it (or ignorant of the fact).

To further undercut Reich's theory Sharaf says "I believe" that Reich was correct when he said that the basis for pleasurable work was a pleasurable sexual life but that Reich was wrong in that he underestimated people's capacity to use work as an effective way of binding sexual energy in the absence of direct genital gratification (p. 97). Sharaf makes no attempt to justify his "belief" but appears to assume that we should take him as an authority. What Sharaf does, of course, is to reduce Reich's theory and resuscitate the concept of sublimation, a concept Reich effectively argued against in the late 1920's—Sharaf, by the way, does not recognize this or at least says nothing about how his "belief" relates to Freud's original concept of sublimation. The idea, as Sharaf states it, is absurd, however, or else it is a truism. Of course people effectively bind sexual energy in work—but this says nothing

³ Freud, S. *Complete Psychological Works*. Vol. I, p. 51, Vol. VII, p. 220.

⁴ Reich, W. *Reich Speaks of Freud*. New York: Noonday Press, 1967. See also *Function of the Orgasm*, op. cit., pp. 76ff.

regarding the life-affirmative quality of the work. Actually, of course, it is more correct to say that people's sex energy is bound up in armor and that their work comes out of their armored state, and that yes, armor does effectively bind sexual energy just as it effectively inhibits people from finding gratification both sexually and in their work. A study of the kind of work done and available in armored societies is sufficient evidence for the hypothesis that lack of sexual gratification does not result in work happiness.

On p. 95 Sharaf equates Reich's concept of a more or less clouding of consciousness at acme (when orgasm is complete) with the "Reichian world" of a lapse of consciousness, as if the essence of life can be found in unconsciousness. This makes a mockery of Reich's discovery. Another, more subtle way Sharaf undermines Reich's concept of orgasmic potency is that he discusses it completely apart from the concept of orgone energy (to p. 104). It is true that the function of the orgasm was discovered prior to orgone energy, but it is also true that once orgone energy was discovered the orgasm became infinitely better understood. The key was that every observation Reich had made prior to its discovery could now be explained and verified, just as what occurs when gratification is incomplete. In this there is no room for anyone's "I believe."

Sharaf misrepresents Reich when he says that Reich was overoptimistic regarding the value of orgone therapy (p. 104). Reich knew that therapy could not make a crooked tree straight again and emphasized prevention through social and educational change, i.e., he emphasized prophylaxis not cure. To say that he had illusions about the efficacy of therapy is to set up a straw man, to make him into the dreamer he wasn't. Another subtle misrepresentation Sharaf makes is when he characterizes the orgasm formula as a "bold leap" (p. 209). If Sharaf tended to picture Reich as a courageous researcher then the "bold" would have one connotation, but as he tends to picture Reich as a fanatic, the "bold" connotes something else. But was the orgasm formula a "bold leap"? A study of Reich's writings indicates that the orgasm formula was Reich's way of organizing into a coherent whole the observations and information he had at the time. I would characterize it more in terms of a creative synthesis than a "leap." (The term "leap," by the way, subtly relates Reich's theory to religion or mysticism where, as Kierkegaard has pointed out, such "leaps" are necessary.⁵)

⁵ Kierkegaard, S. *Philosophical Fragments*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, pp. 31- 36.

A more serious misrepresentation occurs when Sharaf discusses the bio-electric experiments. He gives equal weight to Hoffman's and Reich's results, for example, yet points out that Hoffman ignored the pleasure/bio-electric expansion relation (p. 215). Those familiar with the experiment know that to ignore the pleasure/bio-electric expansion relation is to ignore the central hypothesis, thus to miss the point. Sharaf then mouths the criticism that Reich failed to properly design the experiment when it was Hoffman and the others who so failed (p. 227). Another misrepresentation occurs on p. 223 where Sharaf says the bion research yielded the first "inkling" of orgone energy when the first "inkling" came via Freud's concept of *sexualstoffe*, then *libido*, and the "inkling" continued to evolve through the bio-electric period, the orgasm formula, and so on. By putting it this way, however, Sharaf subtly disconnects Reich's work even though he, at other times, asserts that Reich's work was connected. As Sharaf should know, and as Reich discovered in the 1920's regarding character traits, what one does or how one does it is often more effective in transmitting a message than what is asserted.

This misrepresentation is connected to Sharaf's presentation or what Reich called the "red thread" that connected all of his work. On p. 266 Sharaf ascribes the thread to either the orgasm or to orgone energy. But Reich's discovery of the function of the orgasm and of orgone energy were 'notes' along the way—or 'knots,' if the thread image is to be maintained—whereas the octave, the thread, began with the question "What is life?" Later Sharaf says that "orgone" was derived from orgasm and organism. Reich, however, says that he derived the term from his research into the orgasm and the fact that the energy charges organic substances⁶.

This kind of subtle factual distortion, of sloppy research, occurs again when Sharaf says that Reich was unable to exclude clearly subjective light impressions from the SAPA bions. He gives no evidence or references on this point. Reich, however, says that he used magnification and sunglasses to test for subjectivity and found that magnification increased the impression while sunglasses diminished them⁷. Reich, in other words, *was* able to show that the impressions were *not* subjective. Why Sharaf leaves this out is difficult to say for it clearly is a misrepresentation of fact.

⁶ Reich, W. *The Cancer Biopathy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973, p. 3a.

⁷ Reich, W. *The Cancer Biopathy*, op. cit., pp. 81-90.

Sharaf gives the impression that Reich's desire to control proposed replication experiments (re: the bion experiments) was irrational (pp, 228-9), but he fails to properly explicate the context in which this occurred. Reich was being slandered, scientists were carrying out his experiments remembering everything but the essential, etc., and then reporting that Reich had discovered nothing. At this point Reich simply wanted to make sure the experiments were done correctly, a motive the opposite of irrational. Sharaf could have pointed out that working with orgone energy is not like working with chemicals—a fact he does point out later in reference to the so-called replication experiments carried out by scientists connected with the FDA—and that those unfamiliar with orgone energy functions could easily and inadvertently make errors that could completely destroy the possibility of obtaining positive results. Sharaf, in fact, reveals his attitude, towards the bion experiments when he calls them the “most ludicrous part of his endeavors” (p. 229). Sharaf doesn't make it clear here if he is mouthing the critics or providing his own “analysis.”

As has been pointed out elsewhere⁸, Sharaf psychoanalyzes Reich in a manner that is not justified. He prepares us for this by saying that character structure is “particularly” important with Reich, although why it should be more important with Reich than anyone else (Einstein? Newton?) is not made clear. True, Reich discovered the relationship between character structure and work, but does this mean that this relationship is more important with respect to Reich than to others? In science, and perhaps in other forms of query, the important thing is the validity of the work, not the character structure of the person, and to focus on the latter is to immerse oneself in gossip and long-distance psychologizing. Perversely, Sharaf criticizes reductionist psychology and says that it was wrongly used against Reich for the purpose of ridicule (pp. 7-8). He then goes on to use it himself, and for the same purpose.

When Sharaf describes his first meeting with Reich he says that Reich seemed surprised when Sharaf told him that he'd heard of Reich from his mother, and that Reich's look expressed his disappointment “as though he had expected I had heard of him from a more academic or professional source.” This “analysis” makes Reich appear egotistical and foolish, but how can Sharaf know what was on Reich's mind? In this instance—and this is not the sole example—Sharaf confuses biography with the historical novel. On p. 64 Sharaf

⁸ *New York Times*, Sunday Edition Book Review of April 3, 1983, p. 1. See also a review of *Fury on Earth* by Lois Wyvell in *Offshoots of Orgonomy*, No. 6, Spring, 1983, p. 52.

speculates that Reich cut off psychotherapy because of childhood guilt. On p. 80 he reduces Reich's "impatience" with reconstructing childhood traumas to Reich's unresolved childhood conflicts. His use of the term "impatience" is not even qualified with the possibility that Reich had made a conscious decision, based on his understanding of orgone energy functions, to approach therapy in this way. Missionary zealots, of course, do not make such conscious decisions. Sharaf continues by saying "I would suggest" Reich used a direct approach to armor dissolution due to his own need to master his early trauma. His "suggestion" functions to reduce Reich's method to an unconscious, unresolved neurotic source.

On pp. 111-112 Sharaf speculates on Reich's motives regarding his brother and later reduces Reich's relationship with Freud to his acting out of his conflict with his father (p. 118). The dearth of concrete evidence makes it appear as if Sharaf is merely exhibiting what he apparently takes to be his incisive analytical abilities. As a psychologist, however, shouldn't he be more circumspect and cautious in his analysis of Reich's internal motivation? I do not question his right to make such an analysis, but shouldn't he temper it by mentioning other possibilities? On p. 119 Sharaf interprets a photograph of Reich (during the time he had tuberculosis) in such a way that Reich appears a fool. Reich's note to Grete Bibring is taken by Sharaf as evidence for incipient psychosis when it appears to me to be simply a reaching out for contact (the note accompanied the photograph). In this case, Sharaf adds a more benign interpretation afterwards, but in the context of the book as a whole this appears less convincing and appears to represent Sharaf's "even-handedness."

Generally speaking, Sharaf pictures Reich as a blind man who acted out of unconscious motives and failed to see the consequences of his actions. As to the first point, on p. 139 he reduces Reich's work with childhood sexuality to his own childhood experiences and on p. 146 explains arguments Reich and Annie had over finances in terms of symptoms of a deep disturbance on Reich's part. When he reports on Reich's relationship with his daughter Eva he criticizes Reich for taking her to a political demonstration ("pushed" instead of urged her to go) and says that it "backfired completely" in that Eva realized that she did not believe in the cause. But this interpretation is so naïve. Did Reich have reasons for taking Eva that Sharaf (and even Eva) cannot fathom? Did the experience ultimately prove beneficial to Eva in that it helped her to understand and define her sense of who she was? Sharaf never even speculates on these possibilities. Similarly when he reports on how Reich determined who

would ride in his new car (p. 193)—Eva was left out and was hurt but was this bad for her or good for her? By refusing to consider such possibilities Sharaf not only reveals his own naïveté regarding parenting but also how he delights in taking every opportunity to denigrate Reich, to show how Reich was a failure, in this case as a father.

On p. 147 Sharaf has recourse to a technique associated with his psychoanalyzing of Reich and one that he employs throughout the book, namely, explaining a particular situation by saying of Reich, “characteristically,” “usually,” “always,” etc. In this case he says Reich has “always” shown a tendency to meet opposition with indignation and belligerence and calls him “paranoid.” Besides having no scientific right to make such a “diagnoses” since Sharaf never examined Reich, Sharaf never asks if Reich had good reasons to respond indignantly or with belligerence in such and such a situation. Had the wall of armored humanity gotten too hard? Were Reich's responses a symptom of energetic life constantly meeting the frustration of the armor? Sharaf could have at least *asked* these questions in the contexts in which he provides his “diagnoses.”

On p. 199 Sharaf says that Reich “characteristically” overlooked trouble when he preferred not to see it—as if Sharaf, like a novelist, was privy to Reich’s inner mental life. On p. 203 he says that Reich “always tended to underestimate his own contribution to the unhappiness connected with his disrupted relationships.” But is Sharaf really aware of how Reich felt or understood these things? “Characteristically,” says Sharaf, Reich picked up a question that Freud had dropped (p. 207). Is this the way it was or was it that Reich saw a truth or the possibility of one that Freud had not? Sharaf goes on to say that Reich did this in order to affirm the younger Freud against the older Freud and the analytic establishment, again attributing low motives to Reich, as if his actions could not have been grounded in simple scientific awareness.

Sharaf pictures Reich as a user of people (p. 211). He speaks of a “trade-off” “typical” of Reich without qualifying his remarks to point out that all of us use one another, that when ‘one hand washes the other’ we normally consider our relationships positive and helpful. Not for Sharaf. He never uses people or is used. It is Reich that is the pathological user.

On p. 211 Sharaf says Reich “earned well” as if to say that he ripped off his patients but not that he actually earned or deserved what he received. On p. 224 Sharaf mouths

Fenichel's criticism that Reich abused the transference situation as patients sometimes contributed to Reich's work. Sharaf agrees with Fenichel but offers no evidence. More objectively, Sharaf could have remarked that he was not privy to what transpired between Reich and the patients who helped him; that his criticism is based on his concept of transference; and that Fenichel already was against Reich when he made this accusation, also from a distance (i.e., based on rumor).

On p. 225 Sharaf says Reich's anger was the "kind of rage" that is grounded in guilt. He pictures Reich's response to the Norwegian attack in a way that makes Reich look like the sick party (p. 233f). He says that the attack reinforced Reich's sense of being a "marked man" that Reich had acquired from childhood, an interpretation that fits well with Sharaf's image of Reich as a missionary zealot who wanted to lead a "heroic" life. Sharaf, of course, fails to note that Reich *was* a marked man, that he was viciously attacked and persecuted by frightened, armored organisms. Sharaf puts the blame on Reich. On p. 241 he again refers to Reich's anger at his attackers and attributes it to unreleased anger at his tutor when a child. But all of this psychoanalyzing misses an important point: if Reich had not gotten angry when attacked as he was then his reaction could have been seen as sick (see also pp. 254-5).

Sharaf analyses Reich's relationship with women in a way that makes Reich appear the sick one⁹. On pp. 253-4 he states that an actress became a patient of Reich in order to seduce him (these are the actress' words), and because she succeeded Sharaf blames Reich for being neurotic. Reich, as Sharaf points out, admitted that he had made a mistake in allowing the seduction to occur, but is this a sign of neurosis? On p. 256 Sharaf speaks of Reich's "patterns with women" as if the neurosis was Reich's when his relationships could easily be seen as a case where the women could not follow Reich all the way. Sharaf appears to forget that he is not dealing with an insurance broker but with a giant whose work left everyone in the dust, including Reich's female partners. Sharaf criticizes Reich for expressing anger in some of his books says that it "disfigures" them (p. 266). But does it? I, for one, don't think so. Core anger is real, it puts one in touch with one's own core, it makes one feel. Sharaf, it appears, doesn't like that.

On p. 285 Sharaf psychoanalyzes Reich's independence of thought and doesn't even qualify it with a "perhaps." On p. 323 he says Reich's outbursts of rage resembled those of

⁹ See also Wyvell, op. cit.

his father. This remark is truly amazing, again showing Sharaf as an incipient novelist rather than a scrupulously honest biographer. It would have been different if Sharaf had been present at Reich's father's rages or if he knew that the motives for each were the same. What he ends up saying, by implication, is that all rage looks alike, not such a profound statement, but the way he says it of Reich reduces him to an impulsive, unconscious child-adolescent.

On p. 355 Sharaf says that Reich was wrong in his assessment of William Washington's motives without providing any evidence. He uses this judgment to generalize that if Reich could have been so wrong about Washington he could have been so wrong about many things. He then calls Reich "paranoid." The problem is that no one knows why Washington suddenly disappeared with the orgone energy motor. How can Sharaf say Reich was wrong? And how can he then go on to say that he was "paranoid" when for all Sharaf knows Reich was *right*?

On p. 368 Sharaf says that Reich fought the FDA the way that he did because of guilt feelings. Here Sharaf sounds as if he was completely out of contact with what Reich was being put through at the time. Later he accuses Reich of being blind when he took a lull in the FDA investigation to signify that the investigation had ended, but then he adds that "a more realistic side of him did continue to worry." Here we again have Reich the split personality who was blind to his real nature. But can Sharaf be sure that Reich was split in this way *inside*? Certainly Reich may have hoped that the FDA had tired of the attack and would allow him to carry on his research in peace and quiet, but this in no way signifies the kind of blindness Sharaf attributes to him.

At one point Sharaf accuses Reich of being a latent homosexual (pp. 390-1) but offers no evidence whatsoever for this "diagnosis." He quotes Reich on the subject in an attempt to defend his assertion that Reich was neurotically "moralistic" regarding homosexuality, but, strangely enough, the quote contains no moralistic overtones at all (p. 391). This attribution, in certain respects, can be taken as the lowest blow of all, for it claims that Reich, the champion of healthy heterosexual love, the man who discovered that superimposition of oppositely charged organisms and energy streams is the creative principle *per se*, was actually a homosexual (at least latently). Sharaf, of course, could not be criticized if he offered concrete evidence, but in that he doesn't we must seriously question his motives, and not merely for making such an unwarranted attack but for writing his biography at all.

Sharaf, it appears, wants very much to portray Reich as sick. He repeats the split personality “diagnosis” on pp. 403 and 409, and again psychoanalyzes Reich’s anger (p. 404). On p. 414 he calls Reich's belief in UFO’s, and that the Air Force was aware of his work “irrational” instead of saying that Reich may have been wrong. This is easy, for nearly everyone will agree that belief in UFO’s or that the Air Force could have been sympathetic to Reich are irrational beliefs. The problem here is that if one studies the literature^{10 11} one sees that these beliefs were grounded in objective experience and were held by Reich’s co-workers as well as by Reich. Reich could have been wrong, but Sharaf goes beyond the evidence when he calls them “irrational.”

I could continue in this vein, but I believe the case has been sufficiently stated. What I glean from Sharaf’s book is that Sharaf hates Reich and that he wrote the book to try and destroy Reich by reducing him to the level of a neurotic psychopath. In the process he attempts to denigrate Reich’s discoveries, but this is not so easily done. Orgone energy is bigger or more pervasive than Sharaf, than Reich, than any of us, and, as usual, it will continue to pulse whether or not we wish to acknowledge its existence.

¹⁰ Reich, W. *Contact With Space*. New York: Core Pilot Press, 1957.

¹¹ Reich, P. *A Book of Dreams*. Greenwich, Conn., Fawcett, 1970.