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## WILHELM REICH AND ORGONE THERAPY

### AN EXAMINATION OF WILHELM REICH'S DEMONSTRATIONS OF ORGONE ENERGY

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#### Purpose

Wilhelm Reich's early work in psychoanalysis gradually led him into a field which he now calls biophysics. The concept of a new kind of energy, which he calls "orgone energy," is basic to his present work. Reich defines orgone energy as "Primordial cosmic energy; universally present and demonstrable visually, thermically, electroscopically, and by means of Geiger-Müller counters. In the living organism: biological energy. Discovered by Reich between 1936 and 1940." [1]

In his many writings of the past decade, Reich has by means of the concept of orgone energy presented explanations of such varied phenomena as the origin of life, the origin of the galaxies, the aetiology of cancer and neuroses, the belief of people in God, and many other phenomena. To one who has carefully read Reich's work, it becomes clear that if orgone energy does exist and has the properties ascribed to it by Reich, then clearly, an understanding of orgone energy is a most valuable piece of information, useful in explaining many riddles of nature.

The purpose of this paper is to present a critical examination of the demonstrations of orgone energy offered by Reich in his book, *The Cancer Biopathy*. [2] The examination offered in this paper consists of the duplication by the writer of eight crucial experiments offered by Reich as proof of the existence of orgone energy along with control experiments devised by the writer to better ascertain the validity of the conclusions that Reich draws from his data.

#### Selection of Experiments

It was not possible, nor necessary, to duplicate all of the experiments described by Reich. "Bion" experiments involving the use of an extremely high-powered microscope and experiments using a Geiger-Müller counter were not done, because it was impossible to secure the necessary instruments. A study of the therapeutic effect of the Orgone Accumulator upon the human organism could not be attempted, because to do justice to the problem, it would be necessary to have at least eight subjects devote a half an hour a day for a period of at least a month, and such subjects were not available. However, of the eight experiments duplicated, three in particular form the pillars upon which the verification of the concept of orgone energy rests: namely, the visual, thermal, and electroscopic demonstrations.

#### Scope of Paper

It is, of course, obvious but perhaps necessary to state that this paper deals only with that

part of Reich's work which deals specifically with the concept of orgone energy. It is in no way meant as an evaluation of any other part of Reich's work or of his psychological and psychoanalytical theories.

The work outlined in these pages was not done hastily but in all, took eight months to complete. It was all conducted from September 1952 to April 1953 at Ithaca, New York. All of the experiments are fairly simple and can easily be reproduced by anyone interested. The experiments were approached objectively and the conclusions drawn were dictated solely by the data collected.

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## I. Visual Demonstration of Orgone Energy

### A. Flickering in the Sky

[3]

#### Problem

According to Reich, orgone energy can be observed visibly in the sky by looking "as if in the far distance." The energy is perceived as a wave-like, rhythmical flickering, with rapidly appearing and disappearing dots and lines of light. Because the phenomenon changes with various weather conditions and ceases if the eyes are closed, Reich concludes that the phenomenon is present throughout the atmosphere and visible "in the sky."

The experiments performed here attempted to control the focal distance between the retina of the eye and the outside world to determine whether the phenomenon is in the sky or atmosphere of the earth or solely in the eye of the observer.

#### Procedure

Eight naive subjects were used. Each subject was placed in front of a window through which the sky could be viewed. Each was instructed to look as if in the far distance and report when he observed the flickering phenomenon. The subject was then seated in front of a ground-glass screen that was illuminated by an electric light bulb attached to a rheostat to vary the intensity of the light. With his eyes a fraction of an inch away from the illuminated screen with the bulb at its most intense illumination, the subject was asked to report what he saw. The intensity of the bulb was then varied, and the subject was asked to report any changes in what he saw.

#### Results

All eight subjects quickly perceived the flickering phenomenon in the sky described by Reich. All eight subjects, when seated in front of the bright, ground-glass screen reported that they saw the *same* phenomenon as in the sky only that it appeared *more* intense in front of the glass screen. All eight subjects reported that the phenomenon became less intense and finally disappeared as the intensity of the bulb was lowered.

#### Conclusions

If the phenomenon were in the sky, then the phenomenon should either disappear completely or be much less intense when the eyes are directly in front of a translucent screen. However, the results prove, with a confidence limit of 95%, that the phenomenon of flickering in the sky has nothing whatever to do with an energy in the sky but exists solely in the eye and becomes visible upon adequate illumination of the eye. Reich's claim that the phenomenon is less intense on hazy days due to the absorption of orgone energy by the

humidity appears to be without foundation, as the critical factor seems to be the intensity of the field as shown by the fact that all of the subjects reported that the phenomenon disappeared when the light was turned down.

As to just what occurs in the eye which creates this phenomenon, whether it be blood corpuscles moving on the retina or the random discharge of rods or cones, is not of direct concern here but requires further study.

## **B. Perception of Orgone Energy in an Orgone Room**

[4]

### **Problem**

Reich reports that in a light-tight, dark room, only black is perceived, while in an “orgone room” constructed by lining a regular room with sheet metal, the higher concentration of orgone energy is visible in the following manner: “In the course of about half an hour the complete darkness gives way to a vague blue-gray shimmer. It is as if vapors of gray blue color were slowly moving through the room.” [5] The first part of the experiment is devised to see whether the light phenomenon in an orgone room, as described by Reich, differs from that observed in a regular room. Reich maintains that the light phenomena were objective and were magnified with simple magnifying glasses. An attempt was made to determine whether the light phenomena were objective or existed solely in the eye of the observer. Reich reports that in an orgone room, the eyes become irritated, and hence an attempt was made to determine whether such irritation is reported in a regular dark room.

### **Procedure**

Eight naïve subjects were used in two groups of four. Each group on two separate occasions sat in a light-tight, dark room and were instructed to write as best they could on a blank, white card everything that they saw and to make careful note of the possible form, color, and movement, if any, of what they saw. If they saw anything, they were to put their hands in front of their eyes and to report whether the phenomenon changed. They were instructed not to talk while in the darkroom about what they saw. As each group left the darkroom, the members were instructed to record whether their eyes felt irritated.

### **Results**

All but one of the subjects wrote that they saw various colors *other* than black. Only one subject reported that all he saw was black, although he qualified it by describing it as “black of different intensities” to indicate a fog-like formation.

All of the subjects, except the one who saw only black, reported movement of various kinds. Some saw fog-like movement: dots, streaks, etc. The same seven subjects later reported that their eyes felt irritated.

All of the subjects reported that the phenomenon did *not* change in the least way when they put their hands in front of their eyes.

### **Conclusions**

Reich’s claim that in a dark room “We see nothing but black, that is, nothing. . . . In an absolute darkroom there is absolute darkness” [6] appears to be completely erroneous. Immediately or upon adaptation of the eyes, the dark room does not appear black but

generally grayish, and various colors are perceived as demonstrated by this experiment, with a confidence limit of 95%. Hence, the light phenomenon which Reich describes as being peculiar to the orgone room appears to be no different from that observed in a regular dark room.

As the light phenomenon was not affected by the placing of the hands over the eyes, the phenomenon must be subjective and therefore cannot be magnified.

As seven of the subjects all reported that their eyes were irritated in an ordinary dark room; there is no grounds for believing that any energy peculiar to an orgone room is responsible.

Thus, the light phenomenon in an orgone room appears to be the same as that observed in a regular dark room and is a subjective phenomenon. The exact nature and cause of the phenomenon, like the cause of the flickering in the sky, is not of direct concern here but requires further study. The irritations reported by the subjects is most likely due to the straining effect of keeping one's eyes open in the dark for a long period of time without focusing the eyes on any subject.

## **II. Electrostatic Demonstration of Orgone Energy**

### **A. Electroscopic Demonstration of Two Basic Principles of Orgone Energy**

[7]

#### **Problem**

Reich contends that what is known as “static electricity” is in reality orgone energy. He believes that orgone energy has two basic governing principles: 1) orgone energy and organic material attract each other, and 2) orgone energy and metal first attract each other and then immediately repel each other. As will be seen in the problem dealing with the thermal demonstration of orgone energy in an Orgone Accumulator, these principles are basic to the theory behind the construction of Reich's Orgone Accumulator.

The purpose of this experiment was to duplicate Reich's demonstration of the above two principles. He describes his experiment and the conclusions that he draws from them as follows:

A metal sphere is set on a rubber or cork plate. On one side of the equator of the sphere, at a distance of about 2–3 mm., we suspend a small piece of cork, on the other side, at the same distance, a small piece of tinfoil. The metal sphere is connected by a wire with an electroscope.

We then charge a polystyrene rod by stroking it once or twice, without rubbing, over our hair. The rod is then brought near the metal point of the electroscope which is connected with the sphere. . . . The cork will move toward the metal sphere and will adhere to it for a shorter or longer period of time. This means: the orgone energy in the rod has led to the formation of an orgone energy field around the metal sphere, in which organic material is attracted and held fast.

At the other side of the sphere we notice what happens with the tinfoil when we approach the charged rod to the electroscope. We observe that the effect on the tinfoil is *different* [emphasis mine—R.S.] from that on the cork. The

tinfoil is first attracted toward the metal sphere but immediately repelled and held at a distance. That is, two metallic substances in the orgone energy field repel each other. From this it follows also that metal attracts orgone but instead of absorbing it, as organic material does, it repels it. [8]

### Procedure

The experimental design as described by Reich, as above, was duplicated, and data on various days was collected.

### Results

Whenever the electroscope was charged, the cork and tinfoil were attracted toward the metal sphere. As soon as the cork and tinfoil touched the sphere, *both* the cork and tinfoil were immediately repelled and held at a distance. The cork and tinfoil then both gradually came closer to the metal shape and again, as soon as they touched the sphere, both were repelled and held at a distance. This process continued for some time, until the charge originally put on the electroscope was discharged.

### Conclusions

The data obtained directly contradicts Reich's data. In the above experiment, there seemed to be no marked difference between the behavior of the cork and the tinfoil, thus yielding no evidence that orgone energy or static electricity attracts organic material and attracts and then repels metallic material.

The classical theory of static electricity easily explains the behavior of the cork and tinfoil. A charged rod contains an excess of electrons, which creates a negative charge on the rod. This negative charge attracts all neutral objects to it. As soon as the smaller object touches the negative sphere, some of the excess electrons flow into the neutral object, giving it a negative charge, because it then has an excess of electrons. The object and the charged sphere are now both negative and hence repel each other. Gradually, the electric charge on the object leaks off, and the object is once more neutral and is attracted to the sphere. This process continues until the charge on the sphere has been sufficiently dissipated.

## B. Electroscopic Discharge in the Orgone Accumulator and the Atmosphere

[9]

### Problem

As was seen in the previous experiment, Reich believes that what is called "static electricity" and orgone energy are one and the same thing. He claims that the proof of this lies in the fact that the discharge of an electroscope is *slower* inside of an orgone accumulator than in the atmosphere due to the higher concentration of orgone energy in the accumulator. He reasons as follows:

The energy with which the electroscope was charged will be discharged into the air the more rapidly the lower the energy tension is in the air relative to the charge of the electroscope. Conversely, the energy will be discharged the more slowly the higher the tension is in the surrounding air, that is, the smaller the difference between the energy charge of the electroscope and that of the surrounding air. [10]

The purpose of this experiment was to duplicate Reich's demonstration of the relative discharges of an electroscope in an orgone accumulator and in the air.

#### Procedure

Reich does not say whether he used *one* electroscope first in the air and then in the accumulator, or vice versa, or whether he used *two* electroscopes at the same time, one in the air and the other in the accumulator. As will be shown later, these and other methodological procedures turn out to be exceedingly important. His general procedure, which was followed accurately, is to charge an electroscope up to the tenth scale division of the particular electroscope he used and then to measure how long it takes for the leaf to fall until it reads the eighth scale division. This time value is obtained from discharging the electroscope both in the air and in the accumulator. The procedure is repeated on various occasions during all kinds of weather.

The glass back of the electroscope used was replaced with a piece of cardboard that had two large holes in it, so that the air in the electroscope could communicate with the outer air as Reich suggests.

In the beginning of the experiment, the following procedure was adopted: the electroscope was charged in the air up to the ninth division on a cardboard scale. The length of time that it took until it discharged to the seventh division was noted. The electroscope was then charged up to the ninth scale division and placed in the orgone accumulator described in a following experiment, and the length of time required for a similar discharge to the seventh scale division was recorded. The procedure was repeated many times a day on different days during varied weather conditions.

The data obtained from this procedure described above for four days are as follows:

Discharge from	Time in Room	Time in Orgone Accumulator
9-7	(1) 6 minutes	(2) 15 minutes
9-7	(1) 4 minutes	(2) 10 minutes
9-7	(1) 9 minutes	(2) 21 minutes
9-7	(1) 9 minutes	(2) 21 minutes
9-7	(1) 3 minutes	(2) 8 minutes
9-7	(1) 3 minutes	(2) 9 minutes
9-7	(1) 2 minutes	(2) 8 minutes

This data would indicate that the discharge is slower in an accumulator than in the air, as Reich supports. However, after doing the last run, it suddenly occurred to the writer that perhaps the fact that in every run, the electroscope was *first* discharged in the air and *then* discharged in the accumulator might have had some effect on the results. The electroscope was then taken out of the accumulator and recharged immediately in the air and left to discharge. The same discharge which had taken 8 minutes in the accumulator now took 12 minutes in the air! The electroscope was again immediately recharged in the air and the

discharge then took 14 minutes.

Thus, it became evident that the order of presentation seemed to be at least in part responsible for the slower discharges in the accumulator. Continued experimentation revealed the following facts: if the electroscope is repeatedly charged in the air, the time required for the electroscope to discharge a given unit increases until it reaches a maximum limit which remains fairly constant, as long as the electroscope is immediately charged after being discharged. If the electroscope is not charged for a few hours, the same process is repeated until a maximum limit is again reached.

It became obvious that in order to determine whether the discharge in the accumulator was slower than in the air, it was first necessary to bring the discharge time up to its limit by repeated chargings and dischargings, and when the time was a constant for discharge, then measure the discharge in an accumulator.

### Results

Using the above mentioned procedure, the following results were obtained:

Date	Weather	Discharge from	Time in Room	Time in Orgone Accumulator
April 9th night	clear	9-7	(1) 7 minutes	
			(2) 7 minutes	
			(3) 9 minutes	
			(4) 10.5 minutes	
			(5) 12 minutes	
			(6) 12 minutes	
				(7) 12 minutes
			(8) 12 minutes	
			(9) 10 minutes	
			(10) 10 minutes	
April 10th afternoon	clear	9-7	(1) 5 minutes	
			(2) 8 minutes	
			(3) 9 minutes	
			(4) 10 minutes	
			(5) 12 minutes	
			(6) 13 minutes	
				(7) 13 minutes
			(8) 13 minutes	

(9) 13 minutes

April 11th	clear	9-7	(1) 4 minutes
night			(2) 8 minutes
			(3) 14 minutes
			(4) 14 minutes
			(5) 15 minutes
			(6) 15 minutes
			(7) 16 minutes
			(8) 15 minutes

April 12th	cloudy	9-7	(1) 6 minutes
afternoon			(2) 11 minutes
			(3) 13 minutes
			(4) 13 minutes
			(5) 13 minutes
			(6) 13 minutes
			(7) 13 minutes

### Conclusions

It was found that when an electroscope is discharged in the air and then in an orgone accumulator, the discharge in the accumulator is slower. However, it was also found that this effect was at least in part due to the order of presentation, as the time it takes for an electroscope to discharge a given unit increases up to a maximum limit. When the maximum limit was reached in the air and the electroscope was then discharged in an accumulator, it was found that the discharge was *not* slower in the accumulator but that within the accuracy of the instrument, the data revealed *no* significant difference in time values.

As Reich makes no mention of the increase in discharge time that was discovered in this experiment, it is possible that his results are due to the mistake of discharging the electroscope first in the air and then in the accumulator before the electroscope has reached its maximum discharge value. It may be that the effect discovered here does not occur with all electroscopes, although the same effort was found to be present with two other electroscopes built differently than the one used here.



The data thus gives no suggestion that any kind of an energy is being concentrated in the orgone accumulator such that it slows the discharge of an electroscope.

### III. Thermal Demonstration of Orgone Energy

[11]

#### Problem

Believing that 1) organic substances absorb orgone energy, 2) metallic substances reflect orgone energy, and 3) stoppage of the kinetic energy of the orgone energy results in a temperature rise, Reich has devised an apparatus, namely the Orgone Accumulator, already mentioned, with the electroscopic demonstration of orgone energy, which supposedly accumulates the energy.

The Orgone Accumulator can be made large enough for an individual to sit in, as in the orgone-therapy treatment of cancer patients, or smaller for experimental purposes. The design is simple and is basically a box of any size that is lined with a metallic material such as galvanized sheet iron or metal screen and has an outside layer of a nonconducting substance (what Reich calls “organic”) such as cotton or fiberglass. The accumulator may consist of merely one layer of metallic and nonconducting substances or of many layers. An increase in the number of layers supposedly results in an increase in the organotic potential of the atmosphere to the inside of the accumulator and hence a higher concentration of orgone energy. Accumulators used in therapy vary from three to twenty layers.

The purpose of this experiment is to duplicate Reich’s demonstration of the thermal effect of the accumulation of orgone energy. He writes:

The energy particles within the box are thrown from metal wall to metal wall. They are being stopped on all sides. Since heat ascends, any possible temperature rise will be most readily registered above the top metal sheet. There must be a temperature difference between the enclosed air in the cylinder above the accumulator on the one hand and the rest of the room on the other. . . . If our assumptions are correct, the temperature difference must be positive and always present. . . . Measurements taken several times a day over a period of weeks reveal an arithmetic mean of about 0.5degreesC. [12]

#### Procedure

Following Reich’s description of an experimental Orgone Accumulator used in the thermal demonstration of the energy, a box was built measuring one foot square on the inside, lined with galvanized sheet metal and having five layers of steel wool and fiberglass. The walls were about five inches thick on each side. A metal cylinder about six inches long was connected to the top of the sheet-metal lining. A thermometer, accurate to one tenth of a degree centigrade, was inserted through the top of the cylinder and rested a fraction of an inch above the top piece of the sheet metal of the accumulator.

A control box constructed solely out of organic material was built, and a similar thermometer that had been calibrated with the first thermometer was inserted inside the box. The two boxes were placed at opposite ends of a room. The temperature readings for both boxes were taken regularly several times a day for a period of about three weeks and then every few days for a period of about three months. The two boxes were then placed on a porch that had no heating that was separated from the outside by a screen door. The readings were taken every week for about a month and a half.

## Results

The first readings varied from day to day but all followed a similar pattern. As the room warmed up in the morning from the cold night, the temperature of the accumulator ( $T_o$ ) was always slightly lower than the temperature of the control ( $T_c$ ). In the late afternoon, as the room began to cool, the temperature of the accumulator was slightly higher than the temperature of the control. Thus:

Morning  
 $(T_o - T_c) = 0 \text{ to } -2\text{degreesC}$

Afternoon  
 $(T_o - T_c) = 0 \text{ to plus } 2\text{degreesC}$

The temperature was negative in the morning and gradually became positive by the afternoon. The maximum difference reached was about 2degreesC.

As at least part of  $(T_o - T_c)$  was due to the fact that the accumulator was a better insulator than the control box and thus lagged behind the warming room in the morning and cooling room in the afternoon, the temperature differences could not show if in addition to the lagging behind of the accumulator a slight amount of heat nevertheless was created in the accumulator.

In order to equalize the insulating properties of both the accumulator and the control, the control box was stuffed with cotton, which further insulated it from the room temperature. In order to vary the insulating effect of the control, the thermometer was fitted loosely so it could either be inserted deeper into the cotton, to increase the insulating effect, or withdrawn, to diminish the insulating effect. The two thermometers now always read exactly the same, at all times of the day, during all kinds of weather, in the room or on the cold porch, where the temperature went to as low as 6degreesC.

Thus, when the insulating effect of the accumulator and the control were equalized:

In All Kinds of Weather and All Times of the Day  
 $(T_o - T_c) = 0.0\text{degreesC}$

## Conclusions

According to Reich, Orgone Accumulators work everywhere, yet after constructing a control box to equalize the insulating effect of the Orgone Accumulator, no temperature difference was recorded. The data give no indication that any kind of kinetic energy is being transformed into heat. There appears to be no foundation to the belief that an orgone-energy accumulator concentrates an energy which raises the temperature of the accumulator.

In October 1952, a letter was sent to Reich describing the results of this experiment. He wrote back saying that "severe atmospheric disturbances of the last two years" have seriously upset the temperature differences. If one then assumes that due to atmospheric conditions occurring in 1951 and 1952, orgone energy no longer breaks down into heat, then it is a wonder that such a drastic change in the functioning of orgone energy should not have had equally disastrous effects upon the human organism, as orgone energy is supposed to be the basic energy of life. One would expect mass plagues and outbreaks of disease, cancer, and other maladies during those years, yet the health of humanity during those years did not reveal any observable drastic change.

It might be mentioned that if such a temperature could be obtained, it would be relatively easy for an engineer to utilize it as a source of power. Such a power would be inexpensive, constant, easy to handle, and more than plentiful. It could transform barren wastes into thriving communities and provide the whole world with a source of energy that would revolutionize modern industry. Yet no such attempt to harness the reported temperature difference seems to have been made by either Reich or his coworkers. To my knowledge, no discussion of the possibilities discussed above have even appeared in the literature dealing with orgone energy. (See bibliography.)

#### **IV. Orgonotic Attraction in the Energy Field of the Orgone Accumulator**

[13]

##### **Problem**

Reich maintains that the energy field of an orgone accumulator has a specific effect upon a magnetic compass. He writes:

We bring a good magnetic needle close to an orgone accumulator of 1 cubic foot, in the following manner: 1) close to the center of the 4 upper edges, b) close to the center of the lower edges. Result: The magnetic north pole regularly turns toward the center of the upper edges, the magnetic south pole toward the center of the lower edges. Whichever edges we made the upper, lower or side edges, the magnetic needle always reacts as described. Conclusion: The reaction of the energy field of an orgone accumulator is of an orgonotic and not of a magnetic nature. [14]

The purpose of this experiment was to duplicate Reich's experiment and if similar results were found, to devise a control which would test whether it is the specific structure of a Orgone Accumulator that is yielding the results and not merely the metal in the accumulator.

##### **Procedure**

A good magnetic compass was brought to the center of the top edges and then the center of the bottom edges of a one-cubic-foot accumulator, as was described in previous experiments. The accumulator was then turned upside down, and the compass was again brought to the center of the top and bottom edges. The compass was then brought to the top of a piece of sheet metal, one foot square, and then to the bottom. The piece of sheet metal was turned upside down and the procedure repeated.

##### **Results**

As Reich indicated, the magnetic north pole always turns to the top of the accumulator and the magnetic south pole to the bottom of the accumulator, regardless of which edges we make the top, bottom, or side. However, identical results are obtained using an ordinary piece of sheet metal. The top of the metal always attracts the magnetic north pole and the bottom the magnetic south pole of the compass.

##### **Conclusions**

In neglecting to run a control experiment, Reich makes the assumption that the described effect is due to the orgone accumulator and not merely the metal in the orgone accumulator.

He fails to realize that it is a well-known fact that metal, if left standing (such as the hulls of ships or the metallic structures of sky scrapers), eventually becomes magnetized, just as a piece of metal left in contact with a permanent magnet soon becomes magnetized. If the metal is then reversed, it becomes remagnetized. Reich is correct when he says: “The poles of magnetic attraction (south and north) are not interchangeable, except if one remagnetizes a weaker magnet with a stronger one.” [15] He fails to see that this statement also applies to the earth, which is the stronger magnet, and the sheet metal in the orgone accumulator, which acts as the weaker magnet.

One well-versed in Reich’s theory of orgone energy might argue that the piece of sheet metal used as a control in the above experiment is in fact a one-layer orgone accumulator. It is difficult to see how a straight piece of metal, which supposedly reflects orgone energy on both sides, can accumulate orgone energy. But even if this were the case, then surely Reich’s demonstration does *not* prove his contention that “The attraction effect of the orgone accumulator, then, is not due to definite parts of the material, and can, therefore, not be of a magnetic nature.” [16] This statement would only be true if a piece of sheet metal by itself did not give the described reaction.

## **V. The Organization of Matter from Free Orgone Energy**

[17]

### **A. Freezing of Bion Water**

[18]

In what Reich calls “Experiment XX,” he believes he has shown that under special conditions, orgone energy organizes itself into matter. He believes that when earth is made to “swell” by boiling or autoclavation, orgone energy is released from the disintegrating dirt, forming what he calls “bion water.” Bion water is yellow, supposedly indicating a high concentration of free orgone energy. When this water is made to freeze, the yellow color contracts into a spot in the center. When thawed, flakes of matter appear. From this, Reich concludes:

The appearance of a concentrated yellow spot in the center of the clear ice admits of only one plausible explanation: The free orgone energy in the freezing water acts exactly like the orgone energy in a freezing organism; contracting, it retracts from where the freezing takes place. [19]

The first part of the experiment attempted to duplicate this demonstration and then to perform a control experiment to determine whether in the freezing of any colored solution the color contracts toward the center, when the solution is composed of a colorless solvent and a colored solution.

#### **Procedure**

Bion water was made according to the directions given by Reich:

Ordinary garden soil is put through a screen and thus cleaned of stones, clumps, etc. The sifted garden soil is boiled for an hour in distilled or ordinary water (the procedure followed here—R.S.) or autoclaved for half an hour (at 120degreesC and 15 lb. pressure). The water is filtrated from the boiled soil. This clear fluid we call bion water. [20]

The fluid was then frozen and observed.

In the control experiment, potassium permanganate (KMnO<sub>4</sub>) was dissolved in a beaker of water until a purple solution was obtained. This was then frozen, and the behavior of the color observed.

### Results

The filtrate of the boiled earth, which Reich calls bion water, appeared yellow. When frozen, the yellow color contracted toward the center of the solution. Exactly the same phenomenon was observed in the freezing of a purple solution of potassium permanganate: the purple color contracted toward the center, forming a deep-purple spot in the clear ice. The thawed bion water revealed flakes.

### Conclusion

The bion water was found to be yellow and the yellow color contracted toward the center when the solution was frozen, exactly as described by Reich. However, because the purple color of a solution of a dissolved, colored salt yields the same results, the contraction of the yellow color in no way proves that the yellow color is due to a high concentration of orgone energy or justifies the statement of Reich that: “The appearance of a concentrated yellow spot in the center of the clear ice admits of only *one* plausible explanation” (emphasis mine—R.S.).

A much more plausible explanation would involve explaining the phenomenon on a molecular and crystalline basis. As the water freezes, the molecules of water are slowed down and form the crystalline structure of ice. As this process develops from the outside of the solution, which is colder, to the inside of the solution, the particles of dissolved coloring matter are forced to the center forming an intensely colored spot.

Reich is convinced that his bion water is “completely free of particles” [21] because it has been filtered. But that is an erroneous assumption. It is common knowledge that plants obtain food from the soil in the form of dissolved minerals. One cannot filter dissolved salts or even large, dissolved, long-chain organic molecules out of a solution. Reich has never even considered the possibility that the color could be from these soluble substances in the earth, of which he makes no mention.

## B. The Production of Flakes from Distilled Bion Water [22]

### Problem

Reich maintains that “If one distills bion water of about 40 to 50 OP (average concentration of orgone in bion water—R.S.) one finds some flakes immediately after cooling, and numerous flakes after freezing.” [22] This is of vital importance, for if the flakes can be produced from distilled bion water, then clearly the flakes are not due to dissolved particles, as any dissolved matter would not distill over with the water vapor. The purpose of this experiment was to duplicate Reich’s experiment of distilling bion water.

### Procedure

Bion water, obtained from a previously described experiment, was distilled, and the distillate carefully observed for signs of flakes. It was then frozen and thawed and again observed for evidence of flakes.

## Results

The distillate of the bion water was perfectly clear and showed no signs of flakes. The thawed ice was likewise clear.

## Conclusion

The results indicate that the flakes are *not* found when the bion water is distilled and then frozen and thawed as Reich maintains. This indicates that the flakes obtained in the previous experiment were not caused by any energy being transformed into matter but rather by dissolved substances which precipitated out upon freezing.

## Summary

The experiments of Reich, used by him as proof of the existence of orgone energy, fall into two categories. In the first category are those experiments that when duplicated, yield the same results as Reich reports, only by the use of a control experiment, the conclusions that Reich draws from his experiments are invalidated. In this category are the experiments on flickering in the sky, visual phenomenon in an orgone room, the slower discharge of an electroscope in an Orgone Accumulator (if Reich made the methodological error already discussed in that experiment), the orgonotic attraction of a compass in the energy field of an Orgone Accumulator, and the contraction of the yellow color in frozen bion water. In the second category are those experiments that when duplicated do not yield the results that Reich reports. In this category are the experiments on the demonstration of the two basic principles of orgone energy: the thermal demonstration of orgone energy and the production of flakes from distilled bion water.

Eight experiments whose verification are essential to the scientific demonstration of orgone energy as reported by Reich have been duplicated. Orgone energy, with the properties ascribed to it by Reich, either stands or falls on the basis of these experiments. In every case, careful examination of the data in no way proves or even hints at the existence of orgone energy.

## The Therapeutic Effect of the Orgone Accumulator

The results of the work described in this paper do not prove that the use of an Orgone Accumulator for therapeutic aid is without benefit. However, whatever effect there may be, it is *not* due to an energy demonstrable by the means outlined by Reich. In order to prove that the effect of the Orgone Accumulator is not due merely to the fact that it is 1) an enclosed box, and hence a good insulator or 2) lined with metal, which reflects heat well, control experiments must be run. To my knowledge, neither Reich himself nor any of his coworkers have done this. No such experiment has been reported in the literature dealing with orgone energy.

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