

Archival tape excerpts for 28 July session transcribed and summarized by James Strick

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#1) meeting of the Orgonomic Infant Research Center on 19 February 1950: The first half was devoted to demonstrating a thirteen month old child, and here one was able to see Reich the observer in action, studying the subject in front of him with his heart as well as his intellect. The second half was described a bit in pages 78-88 of *Children of the Future*, a review with the staff of the previous week's meeting [12 Feb.], where Reich describes the first overt emergence of emotional plague reactions among the workers of the OIRC.

The child demonstration was introduced by an orgonomic physician (Dr. Victor Sobey) who had worked with the child for a month or so: The father, 45, had been severely depressed since the child was born and paid little or no attention to it, except for occasional sadistic pinching, slapping, pushing his face up close, etc. The mother, 42, was hypertensive and hysterical, and she had deliberately conceived against the wishes of her husband expressly to "cement the marriage." After a caesarian delivery, the mother and child saw each other only five times in the first two weeks. Then the baby went home to a sadistic and rigid-schedule-oriented nurse, who fortunately only lasted two weeks before being let go (only because the family could no longer afford it). There was no breastfeeding at all. The maternal grandmother took over as nurse and was a bit more relaxed about feeding schedule but very tight about sleeping and anal functioning. She had been chronically constipated her entire life and, when asked about her views on toilet training, said "it hurts me too much when a baby doesn't have a bowel movement." She sometimes even gave enemas if the baby missed a daily bowel movement and began attempts at toilet training when the infant was about five months old. The grandmother also wiped the baby extremely harshly after bowel movements, so that after a few months of this the baby had severe dermatitis over the entire anogenital region, including running sores. The pediatrician diagnosed this as a severe diaper rash due to strong urine.

The baby continued to suffer and was brought to an orgonomic physician. He found the skin temperature of the pelvic region colder than that of the thoracic region and much whiter in appearance, indicating chronic contraction there. The baby was put on a self regulating schedule and immediately put in an orgone energy accumulator for five minutes, after which the sore, blistered areas were locally irradiated for two minutes more with a shooter, followed by local irradiations twice daily. The very next morning after the initial irradiation, the dermatitis showed truly dramatic improvement. Over the next few weeks the baby laughed, cried vigorously, and generally seemed livelier. The grandmother was able to see and admit that what she had been doing was obviously wrong. The mother was more hesitant at admitting that the improvement was due to self regulation.

Reich observed [16 minutes 35 secs into the video]:

"Note that the main point is the evasiveness of the parents and their hatred for the child...I want you to look at this face [indicating the baby]. Can you feel the quiet which is about her? The withdrawnness? There's more to it: what would you say?... The fear is extinguished; I wish she were still afraid. The passivity, the withdrawnness... There is resignation....Now, who sees the real thing now?" One doctor responds: "Bewildered." Reich: "That's right. Bewilderment is quite clear in her face... She does not reach out at all. This is not usual in a child... The left eye is already definitely armored...The eyes are sunken—that's part of the picture. I want you to

remember that now. There are millions of children like that in the parks and in the streets...This is the result of the hate of the armored individual against the living substance." One Dr: Most would say she's a very nice, quiet little girl...

Reich: "Notice that the reaching out is a very hesitant kind of reaching out....[21:35 into the video] I have the feeling that she gives back to us what was given to her: she looks at us as if we are animals in a zoo. She was looked at as if an animal; Nobody understood anything about her, her expressions were not understood...The way the hands are held is limp, despairing..."

Dr. Sobey notes that the child wants to be held, but after 15 or 20 seconds with anyone, demands to be held by someone else, because she cannot make contact with any of them. Reich responds [about 23:45 into the video]:

"Now I would like to ask you whether you feel too that the main thing is the facial expression... the face. That says everything... She's not armored, she's immobilized... She doesn't breathe. I want you to see that the chest doesn't move. Everything about her is quiet...She has no contact with her eyes....Here you have your wars, right here. The inability of people to move out, to express themselves."

One woman suggests that therapy may help strengthen the child, even if she must continue to live in the home that created the problem. Dr. Sobey asks: what will happen to this child if she loosens up a little more even, then goes back into that home environment? Reich says [about 26:30 into the video]:

"Is it better to take a child like this out of such an environment for four weeks, eight weeks, and then send them back into it? Or is it better to just leave them in the environment? What do you all think?"

At this point in a 1993 conference, Mary Higgins interrupted the tape to recount her experiences working for a little over a year at a very progressive hospital for abandoned children in New York City. She said her basic impression was that the children taken out for a brief period and treated with kindness, when put back into the hospital would "go crazy," so much so that in one case she recalled, rope netting had to be put over the child's crib afterwards because the child went so berserk. The conclusion was that as an adult who wants to intervene and give the child some pleasure occasionally, the absolutely crucial question is: can you come regularly, consistently? Can you supply something the child can depend on when it faces the agony of going back into that situation? Returning to the tape, after some discussion among the OIRC staff, Reich said [about 28:40 into the video]:

"I think this question belongs to those questions which cannot be answered....Don't overrate therapy. Whoever tells you that he's a sorcerer and can [therapeutically] cope with and solve a situation like this [as long as the environment does not change], he's a quack. Just doesn't know what it's all about. This problem is a sociological problem, not a medical problem anymore. How do you feel about such a child when you see it?"

Answers like "Sad," "Angry," from the OIRC workers. Reich:

"That's an important question. If you're sad, this may prevent you from getting angry about it. Are you angry about the brutality of these people?...I personally feel angry because I feel helpless. I don't know what to do. One could deal with this case, but there are millions. [I get angry] when I hear people very proud of themselves when they give a few kids some more milk,

some bread or clothes, or a chance to go to the movie theater more often..." [i.e., It's an incredibly superficial remedy compared to how deep he can see the problem really is].

[Break in notes on recording, up to 31:30 in video]

Martha McGinty: "We reacted to that child....I felt a little identification with the child."

[33:30 in video] Reich: "I want to ask you all: do you feel responsible at all when you see this [kind of cruelty to a child]?"

McGinty: Yes.

Reich: "I don't know how many of you feel this. I do. I do. Very much so. It makes me feel like I'm no good, just plain no good....We write books, feel very smart, and so on, but we are not going after the real issue.... [Tape 15, part 2, 0:18 on tape] I think: we do not go at the main problem." [about 34:20 in video] Do we agree that we're really not going at the problem?...There's a paralysis here (laughter)—in this group here.

Reich: "Is that all?" Do you think that we don't step out because we are afraid of the consequences?" One woman replies: "I don't know what to do. I felt helpless." Reich: "You are helpless. Who agrees with that?... Do you think that if we continue this course, that after two years you would be willing to step up? After two years you would know more, you would be better able to step up and do something about it, and then you would no longer be afraid of the consequences, of the outside?...I would appreciate if you would take these questions in a very good way. There's no one here who has the answers. We must be very modest." [3:11] McGinty says "I'm not so sure of myself since the last meeting." Reich replies: "So since the last meeting, Miss McGinty is aware of the fact that she's not so sure of herself. Now who else? Go ahead. Now who's not sure of himself?" [4:10] Numerous workers say they feel fear, lack of knowledge, that if they were more outspoken in public the work might be attacked and destroyed, but also [one man]: "Not fear about the work, but fear for our own selves; insecure that we don't know what will happen to us."

[4:40] Reich: "You say insecure. Insecurity is not just that. What makes you insecure?" Reply: "Fear of losing your job, of social criticism, etc."

[5:15] Reich: "If I would secure your job, the money to support your family, then what would you do? Would you then feel more secure? Would you then be ready to go out and do something?" The reply from one worker: "It's much deeper than that. We were afraid. And we masked that by complaining about the way procedures were conducted."

Reich used this opportunity to begin the discussion of the previous week's meeting (see *Children of the Future*, pp. 78-88) [39:10 into the video]:

"Yes, it's much deeper. The socio-economic view that tries to explain such things, such as for instance that juvenile delinquency is due to socio-economic conditions—of course it is, but the way it is presented is a clear evasion of the deeper problem....[40:14 into the video] I want to convince you that what happened last time was the real thing. For the first time—I knew it would happen but I didn't think so soon—last week, the fear and the hate of the Living substance bumped out quite clearly, and very few were aware of it. If I took a vote on this now, I don't think I would succeed [in convincing you]. You don't have to agree with me in the end,

but I intend to try to convince you that the fear and the hate of the living that came out was not from the mother, was not wrong procedure, was not because the chair was too narrow, as one of the people at the meeting said, and it was not because I put the question wrong. These things are 'air germs.' I'm going to put this very clearly in front of you now, even at the risk of busting up the whole thing...I'm going to work very hard to convince you of this: behind what was coming out was hate. A certain very important issue which goes to your guts is brought forward [the mother had been speaking very frankly and unabashedly about her premarital sex life], and some smart one tries to divert the attention onto something more pleasant....People felt about the subject, and the direct way it was being talked about, that 'one doesn't do such things.' ...

I'm pursuing very strictly now my line. I want to convince you that deviation, or this evasion, is the main obstacle in the way of our work.... Do you think we would encourage any of you to go out and speak about genitality to an indifferent audience?"

Sobey: "I gave a talk before a group of mothers and grandmothers. And when I confronted the core issue, several in the audience said 'Throw him out!'"

Reich: "You cannot give a talk on genitality to 400 mothers. Here we fall prey to things. We are misguided or misled by the fact that the interest is so great, and the problem so burning. I made this mistake 20 years ago. I went out and thought I did a very great job [i.e., in the Sexpol movement]. And today I'm astonished that I survived, that they didn't kill me.... [50:00 into the video] Now if I have this trouble here, with you, without this reaction, then how can you imagine that you could do anything outside? The fact is that the reaction of the average person to this MUST be, first anxiety, and then hate...

How does this hate manifest itself? Did you say that I am bad? No. The hate was displaced.... The first reaction was deep embarrassment. You want to go out and do mental hygiene work with people, and yet you can't get this embarrassment about the premarital sex relationship out of your minds. Please, see it as it stands! [ends about 56:00 into the video] The purpose of this course is to convince you that the flier, before he goes up into the air, must know that he won't react with anxiety when he flies the airplane."

One doctor had asked the mother about "bearing down pains" and told her that in her answer she was hostile to him. Reich: "Notice: she was hostile to you. Poland was hostile to Germany. We must begin to see these things in the wider realm of sociology."

2) Tape 25, 22 October 1950.

Reich: "I was swinging like a pendulum between two judgments..."

[60:00 into video, 1:00:00] "The work is not any longer resting with us here. It's out of our hands....According to the spread of the literature and the work that is going on, e.g., the biopsychiatric work, though this is not the most important part...in hundreds of universities as well as by single individuals, researchers...that means it's taught outside. I do not think that you, singly or as a group, can be responsible for the work....I have no idea to what extent they are watering down our ideas."

In some core parts of his work, Reich was in **tension** with simplistic ideas about 'democracy,' particularly because he had been so long under such intense attack: "We are at war against the cancer disease and against the plague... As long as you remain connected with the Orgone Institute, you are *not* free agents, you cannot do as you please. If you want to be on your own and do as you please, you must disconnect yourself from the Orgone Institute. Why? Because if you're on an army staff at war [with the

emotional plague], with lives at stake, self-regulation is not valid there. There is a basic natural law, which I described in the paper on orgonometric equations, and that law binds you down....

I would like to ask you to help me kill the license attitude and ideology in our midst....If you want to do as you please, do it on your own but not on the back, and on the authority of the Orgone Institute. Do it on the outside, build your own organization. But not on my back....[The main necessity is that of fighting the plague.] That means that we are organized not like an organization of free human beings, but more like a university staff or a staff of a military service....I am at war for thirty years. That's not my personal choice, but I am at war..." [1:07:50 into video]

"No one here has the right to say anything [as representing] The Orgone Institute....If I hadn't done [organized] it that way, we would have gone down many times already....I don't permit any dependency of whatever kind. I learned that. I can do it that way. [1:09:17 into video]....

"Now that is valid, and to a greater or lesser degree it extends to every one of you. The one is more independent, the other is less. But that cannot be left to chance. The work is too important for that. The importance of the work I don't have to describe; you know what it's all about. So that's the Orgone Institute. And the worker who joins the different organizations that are in the Foundation now—in the Infant Research Center, or in the laboratory—is an assistant... He has a full right of expression of course. He must have, otherwise he can't function. But he can not mess up a situation with his own irrationalism, his own little private interest, his own private little fear, his own...the ties which are binding him down. And that very much needs to be learned. And that's about the situation with the organizations. We shall have to talk about the Infant Research Center in New York where Singer and Duvall work.

Here I can say already a few words beforehand, and that is this: [1:11:40 into video] for instance yesterday, Dr. K asked whether he can join the Infant Research Center. Now according to usual standards—if you work in, say, the Menninger Clinic—then you go there and ask that question—'of course, I want to go and learn' [so they'd say yes, automatically.]—But that's wrong here, it wouldn't work. Why? Because we have a special task, a new special task, and that is the healthy child. And we don't know much about it. And we have to be specially structuralized to work in that—that we know. So you can't just go and work in little bits in the Infant Research Center. Is that clear? Can't do it! Not because I don't like you, or you, or you. But because the work demands that people who enter that have a certain type of structure, a certain way of going about things." [1:12:37 into video] Dr. X, may I mention your case as an example?" [Dr. X agrees] "Dr. X is a very good physician, we know that. And he is around the Infant Research Center. Now I have discussed this with Dr. X, I have told him that he can not approach a baby, a newborn baby. And Dr. X was perfectly in agreement with me with me... not because I forced this opinion on him, but because he *realized* something. It is important that he not approach babies because he would frighten them." [R again asks permission to be more specific; the doctor agrees.] "His eyes would frighten a newborn baby. And so I tell him: please don't approach a baby. You can work in the IRC in some capacity: you can have deliveries, you can supervise a pregnancy, but you must not touch a baby. That's an order. And I don't give that order because I like to give orders, but because the work demands that I tell Dr. X 'please, do not approach a baby.'..." [1:13:12 into video]

Another doctor ("may I say it?") "is afraid to get with her hands at the little organism....There are lots more examples. I can mention the case of Dr. R, which we had about a year ago. When the Infant Research Center was established, everybody rushed into the IRC, and I had to keep people out. And there was a special reason why I asked Dr. R—who is again a good physician and knows his things—not to join the Infant Research Center. Or Dr. Y. And that does not mean that they are bad or incompetent. It just means in a certain respect they are limited....But there were several times when workers were offended by this....Now we must eradicate that *completely*." [1:16:10 into video]

No [tax-deductible] contributions go to the Orgone Institute, which is a business, a registered private enterprise that pays taxes. Reich: “Any money like that goes to the daughter institutions, which are under the [nonprofit] Foundation. Now does anyone have any questions about this? Don’t be embarrassed to ask because I’m talking about money.

When a new organization starts, we watch it for a couple of years to see if it’s capable of functioning independently along our line. For instance, I started the Infant Research Center last year, and Dr. Singer and Dr. Duvall have taken it over and are working more and more independently and seem to be doing this with no regard to public opinion, but focused only on the interests of the child. It may be a little too soon to say, but so far they seem to be able to do it.”¹

He has gone to great lengths to set up a structure in which mere voting by people who have not done the work cannot take over something done by actual workers. Reich: “I know from experience over a long period of years that the little man, just with his vote, could take over *anything*. It happened to [A.E.] Hamilton.” He’d gotten voted out as head of the school he himself started and spent years establishing in NYC, the Boardman School. “The discoverer of television dynamics is out, and a few little clever, politicking guys took it over....

[In a rational structure,] you ‘vote’ by taking responsibility for what you’re doing—by *working*. [1:36:00 into video] We can ‘vote’ with or without raising our hands. Raising of hands doesn’t do any *fighting*—you understand? It’s not a responsible democracy. It’s not a real, true democracy—it lacks responsibility and toil, and sweating it out, and worrying....All formal democracy went down because of that. Because the one who had to toil didn’t have the time to counteract the ones who were politicking. ...[1:38:42] Dr. [Helen] McDonald, for example, works in the lab here as my assistant....If she wants to go back to the West Coast and establish a research lab elsewhere and develops according to our line, we’ll have the development of a new function. But if she makes a discovery which goes against me, then she’s got to fight for it on her own. Not an opinion about it, but work. That’s Work Democracy. She’s got to support such a thing based on her own *work*, not just on a vote. We cannot go and *vote* about whether to freeze a tube of bion preparation. You can’t vote about it—that’s *work*! You have to *do* it! You have to watch out for the one who—knowing the least—wants the most of honor. These are the Stalins, the destroyers of human society.” [1:40:30 into video]

“I had to burn all my bridges” in order to keep the work moving forward. This was REICH’s WAY of functioning. But how many of us, if any, can function in this way? Realistically, very few. [continues thru end of video 1:42:16]

¹ By August 1951, as previously stated, Reich had become discouraged over the structural inability of most of the OIRC workers. After that time, he quietly discontinued the OIRC.