

The Genital Character and the Genital World*

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Editor's Note: *It is amazing how well this article, originally published almost 30 years ago in 11 (2), 1977, has stood the test of time. The utopian distortions that Mathews exposed in 1977 still appear regularly in publications of those who claim to represent orgonomy, and baseless fantasies about the Trobriand islanders occupy a prominent place in such distortions. The recurring images of a non-competitive, non-violent, semi-anarchical ideal of health represent an attempt to eliminate the spontaneous motion of life from human thinking and to replace it with a castrated, immobilized fantasy life that is less threatening to the over-intellectualized. A thorough review of all of Malinowski's writings about the Trobrianders shows a people fiercely competitive in the acquisition and display of wealth, using war and other forms of violence without hesitation in defense of their vital interests, aggressively full of the joy of life, and able to handle social conflicts with a spontaneous flexibility and respect for the vagaries of human nature that has nothing in common with the modern standards of political correctness.*

Mathews' seminal article deserves another reading by our long-term subscribers and is a welcome 'find' to the new generations of students of orgonomy. [Robert A. Harman, M.D.]

The social existence of the human animal is, indeed, seen bioenergetically, a small summit on the gigantic mountain of his biological existence.

Wilhelm Reich

- (Prefatory Note, *Selected Writings*)

Sometimes it seems that orgonomy courses deal mainly with the sick, neurotic structure of human beings and their world, which is not so strange when we consider that world. The practical fact is that we are so engulfed by the problems of neurotic, biopathic humanity that we don't have much time to devote to the topic of genitality and the genital world.

*Based on a lecture given at the Social Orgonomy course at New York University in the Spring of 1977.

How many of us have actually known ideal genital characters or experienced the modalities of a genuinely genital world? Perhaps in our dreams-dreams of paradise, beauty, and love-perhaps in some magical world of literature, art, and music. Reich stated that it is in the arts that man has most preserved the essence of his genitality (1946); and certainly for those capable of love, it is found in the arms of their loved ones.

From the earliest days, people have dreamed about ideal worlds and described them: Plato's *Republic*, Plutarch's Sparta, the "lost Atlantis" of Greek, Norse, Celtic and Arabic legends, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, the ideal worlds of Hobbes and Rousseau, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Butler's *Erewhon*, Hilton's "Shangrila," and, of course, the heavenly fulfillment of Judaic, Christian, Islamic and other theologies of both civilized and primitive cultures. Some contemporary science fiction is also an expression of an ideal universe beyond our limited earthly existence. All of these visions have excited the imagination and longings of human beings for millennia.

Why has mankind so consistently expressed these longings and visions? Is it the memory of a once-experienced existence during the sunny innocence of infancy and childhood? Is it a form of cosmic contact that yearns for the ideal beauty of the universe? We can only speculate.

Unfortunately, most utopians have been enamored in mystical-mechanistic concepts of happiness and fulfillment that were at once compensatory and detrimental. Like all neurotic mechanisms, they tended either to dull the senses or heighten euphoria and illusions. This, in turn, distorted perception and thought, which were expressed in irrational social concepts. For Plato, utopia was the intellect-the realm of the "philosopher king"; to More, it was the communal society, with criminals and adulterers as slaves and patriarchal elders as the guiding spirits; Shangrila is a dreamy, passive world of pacifistic and ascetic ideals; in the more recent worlds of sci-fi utopias, we find ourselves in the realm of emotionless, sterile, and/or sadomasochistic existence, in computerized, robotized horror-worlds such as are expressed in the literature and cinema of "Clockwork Orange," "2001," "Logan's Run," and "Star Wars."

The relationship between utopias and political characterology was well expounded recently by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn (1977). He states:

There can be little doubt that utopias serve very often as secular substitutes for the religious concept of an other-worldly paradise or even for Paradise lost here on earth ... The efforts to establish utopias have, without a shred of doubt, created untold harm; oceans of blood have been the consequence. ... needless to say that the driving motor in the transformation of most utopian visions into reality is an ideology.

Here Kuehnelt-Leddihn has in mind the utopian political ideologies of Naziism and Communism.

It is clear to the functional thinker that what has eluded the progenitors of all of these systems is what Freud and Reich called genital primacy. None of the utopian movements has understood the biological core of the problem of creating a better world. All of these systems, stemming from neurotic character structures, have been sex-negative. Reich points out in *Character Analysis* (1949a, pages 164-73) the sexually guilty and negative structure of the neurotic. The concept of a healthier, better world being an extension of orgasmically potent human beings has been and is foreign to the utopians. Even today, with some intellectual grasp of Reich's functional concepts, humanity is hardly structurally ready to live those principles.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to speculate about the nature of a genital world. We know that there have been indications of such genital living in certain primitive societies, those of the Trobrianders as shown in Malinowski's studies (1929) and in Reich's interpretive study of Malinowski's findings (1971), perhaps the Australian Aborigines according to Roheim's studies (1950), and the Bushmen of the Kalahari. These are gentle, loving, and friendly people --- hunters and gatherers. The Trobrianders were a matrilineal society in which genital sexuality was affirmed from the earliest age. They give us some clues as to the possible nature of a more civilized, genital world.

Because of Reich's work, and that of his orgonomic colleagues, we can at least make some educated speculations about a genital world. To that end, it would be worthwhile to review what we have learned about the nature of genitality.

From Freud (1962) and Reich (1949a), we have learned that man passes through several stages in his sexual development-oral, anal, phallic, and genital (age 4). Reich looked upon the anal stage as an artifact of our toilet-training society. We know that a fixation at any of those stages, due either to repression or unsatisfaction, results in a neurosis characteristic of that fixation, i.e., oral-dependent or depressed; anal-compulsive or masochistic; phallic-narcissistic, genital-hysterical, etc. Baker has postulated that the eyes are an erogenous zone that can, with fixation, produce an ocular character (schizophrenic).

The genital character cannot regress to earlier levels of development to handle his conflicts and tensions, and must face them at his own level, either by rational confrontation (as in the healthy genital type) , by aggression (phallic), or by flight and contactlessness (hysterical) (Baker 1967). The healthy genital character accepts his genitality. This implies a certain set of conditions. We know from Reich's work that only through orgasmic discharge can one maintain the orderly energy economy that is a prerequisite for health. The true genital character is capable of this economy because he has survived with a minimum of armor, the flexible armor necessary for protection in an armored world. He has no Oedipus conflict, for he has transferred his genital desires to a heterosexual love object who is a real love object and not a substitute for the incest object. Whatever pregenital desires he has are either in the service of his genital sexuality-as foreplay, which excites movement of energy towards the pelvis-or in some sort of work sublimation.

Because he has no guilt-laden oedipal problem, he can enjoy sexuality for its own sake and is, thus, sex-affirmative, whereas any neurotic must be sex-negative to some degree. The conflict between the neurotic's oedipal guilt from within, as well as the oedipal-fixated social pressures from outside, and his basic biological needs drains him of both energy and will. Thus, the neurotic prefers to avoid the sexual question, looks at it philosophically, or fights it destructively (emotional plague reaction) if he is highly charged and strongly blocked in the pelvis. Whereas the neurotic must try to prove his potency or resign, the genital character feels it naturally and accepts it as being as much a part of his existence as breathing.

Reich states about the neurotic (1949a, page 167):

Since there is always a more or less conscious feeling of impotence, social achievement becomes primarily a compensating proof of potency. This, however, does not decrease the feelings of inferiority. The compensating proofs of potency in social achievement cannot in any way replace the genital potency feeling.

From this quotation, we can see the etiology of the so-called driven character who seeks achievement and power because~ these things represent substitutes for his orgasmic potency. More than this, the very act of social striving stirs up more energy, increases the pressure and feelings of inadequacy, and produces, in cyclical fashion, even more neurotically activated strivings.

The genital character's social achievement, on the other hand, is based upon his pleasurable and even joyous feelings about his work and on his identification with what is best and most satisfying in people and society. He has the three basic forms of contact: with his core or self (independence), with his environment (responsibility), and with the cosmos (belonging) (Baker). Because he is unblocked, he can experience all of his emotions appropriately and strongly, as well as express them with either his natural aggression or capacity for natural surrender, i.e., he is neither destructively aggressive nor neurotically submissive. He has a healthy body that is flexible and tonic but not hard, good skin turgor, and sparkling, contactful eyes. (See Reich (1949), Baker (1967) and Raknes (1971).)

Whereas the neurotic's behavior is motivated by avoidance of anxiety and by guilt, the genital character is motivated by that which gives him pleasure and satisfaction. He is not bogged down in irrational hate and vengeance, nor in resignation, as a consequence of an unresolved oedipal problem. Thus, people are perceived for what they really are and not as symbols of frustrating and repressed objects in the stygian darkness of the secondary layer. Therefore, the genital character will behave rationally towards people, responding with respect and kindness where it is given, and anger and rage where it is deserved and appropriate, even killing if necessary. His relationship with a mate will be determined by love and pleasure, not by guilt and compulsion. His monogamous behavior will be determined by healthy criteria, and he may be polygamous where it is necessary or rational (Reich 1945). The neurotic, on the other hand, will remain in a sticky, compulsive relationship or will flit, promiscuously and tactlessly, from one partner to another, or will engage in sadomasochistic forms of polygamous sex, e.g., polymorphous-perverse group sex. The latter he frequently rationalizes as therapeutic or expressive of free and alternate modes of sexuality. The genital character, as Dr. Elsworth F. Baker has stated (page 103), "is indifferent to perversions and repelled by pornography."

The intelligence of the genital character is in harmony with his genital primacy (orgastic potency) and serves as a true expression of his pulsation from core to cosmos. That is, whereas the neurotic suffers from disturbed pulsation, either in the direction of contraction against expansion or expansion against contraction, depending on the characterology and circumstances, the genital character simply pulsates. (See Figures 1 and 2)

Unlike the neurotic, the genital character does not use his intelligence as a defense against threatening truthful knowledge or as a destructive weapon on the social scene. The emotional plague character is the classic example of the latter (Reich 1953). His rationalizations represent a disguise that is an expression of something deeper that must be defended at all costs.

The genital character not only tolerates feeling but enjoys and encourages the natural expression of aliveness in any form. I stress "natural" because his orgonotic senses tell him immediately when something is false aliveness, substitute contact (Reich 1949a, Baker), or insidious misuse of natural biological strivings. He knows the difference between perversion, pornography, and natural sexuality, between folk singers and folk agitators, freedom lovers and freedom peddlers, truth lovers and truth peddlers; he knows the difference between good, fair, bad, and worse-between the imperfections .of American ideals and government and the horror of a Red Fascist or Black Fascist society (Reich 1953). The neurotic freedom peddler has no feeling for these things, and the Red Fascist Modju knows that such a society must be destroyed if he is to survive.

Given some of these technical and social premises about the healthy genital character and his differentiation from non-healthy genital types and pregenital types, what can we surmise about a genital world? First, let us distinguish the ideal, nonexistent genital character from the real one. Reich states (1949a, page 165), "The real {genital} characters are mixed types and whether libido economy is possible or not depends on the degree of admixture." That is, there is a distinction between an ideal genital type and one who functions essentially as a genital character. Dr. Elsworth Baker feels that Reich was such a functional genital character (Reich 1949b). For example, a functional genital character may work, compete, and fight for something he wants very strongly, whether for a mate or for some specific material possession, or status and position. His desire for these ends is not motivated by neurotic needs (substitute potency), but by the genuine pleasure of achievement. His entire mode of achievement, however, will have a qualitatively more decent, honest, and realistic cast. Being a "mixed type," he may even yield, occasionally, to a neurotic or emotional plague manifestation, but will be able in most instances to recognize it, handle it, and recover from it.

Now, what would a society based upon such a character structure be like? Would there be competition for things and position? Probably. Would there be conflicts and disagreements? Of course. Even wars? Yes.¹ Machines and industry? Why not? Criminals and punishment? Yes. Sexual perversion? Some (the Trobrianders had some). Schools? Most likely. Mental institutions? Of a kind. Then, what would differentiate a genital world from the present neurotic one? I believe, essentially, this: that in a genital world, action and reason would be largely congruent; that schools would mainly serve the basic biological (and thus intellectual) needs of children; that mental hospitals would attempt to reestablish organotic contact in a functional way; that conflicts and disagreements would be based upon present realities and not past infantile fixations; that criminals would be those who violate decency and biological health, as well as those directly expressing secondary drives in an overtly destructive and harmful manner; that industrialization would rationally serve the needs of people for a happier and healthier existence; that competition would be based upon the pleasure and satisfaction of achievement in any area, rather than power, exploitation, and suppression.

As for wars, granted that a more genital-type world would minimize conflicts and handle them more rationally; nevertheless, with a broad world of differing groups and organizations, as well as large populations, occasions for actual armed conflicts could arise. Perhaps, at least, such conflicts in a genital-type world would be fought with a greater appreciation of the potential for global extinction of life and the capacity to preclude it.

Elsworth F. Baker emphasizes that an ideal world can be only conceptual, that only a functional genital world is possible, if even that it would not be possible to have a world completely devoid of wars, conflicts, and irrationality.

¹ Some of my colleagues have objected to this concept, so I would add that ideally there would be no need for wars between genital characters. But, in the nature of things, whether internally or externally induced (in the latter case by DOR, etc.), segments of a society might develop acute emotional plague reactions that would require forceful suppression. See, also, Dr. Baker's ideas included in this article.

Should this conclusion discourage us? Not if we are interested in working towards a considerably better world than we have, rather than a mystical, utopian paradise; and not if we can understand the proper directions to take to move towards that better world, like population control, more healthful child-rearing practices, and self-regulatory life styles. Mystical aspirations tend to paralyze the will as soon as disappointment sets in, whereas reality gives us perspective, patience, and strength.

Let it be emphasized also that these observations in no way invalidate the organomic criterion of health, which is genital primacy. Regardless of the many self-styled neo-Reichians, who tend to distort Reich's basic concepts and thus mislead the public, genitality remains the crucial factor in Reich's teachings. To deny the primacy of genitality is to deny the existence of all living functions of which the orgasm formula is the basic model. Reich asserted (1949b), "I have in reality made only one single discovery: the function of the orgasmic plasma contraction. It represents the coastal stretch from which everything else has developed."

Reich had ideas about a society structured on his concept of work democracy and peopled by functional genital characters, his "children of the future" grown up (1946). He also envisioned a world without leaders as we now know them, i.e., a world guided by a "new leader" who would not lead in an authoritarian fashion, but guide and help people to lead themselves; who would burden them with greater responsibility for themselves, not less (1953, pages 203-23) ; a world where decisions and planning would be done by those who were best qualified by the "vitally necessary work" of all kinds that they did, and not by neurotic, power-oriented politicians. This world of Reich's would be one where love and natural sexuality were not merely tolerated, but fully accepted as necessary prerequisites.

This was Reich's great vision of a genitality oriented utopia, a concept certainly more sound, realistic, and scientific than any other utopian society proffered by man. Even so, Reich realized the speculative nature of his dream. Yet, it is something to strive for, if we do so without illusions. At least we have, for the first time, a firm, lawful energetic foundation, identical in man and cosmos, to guide us through the labyrinthine fabric of our armored past and present.

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