

Wilhelm Reich's Early Writings on Work Democracy: A Theoretical Basis for Challenging Fascism Then and Now*

Philip W. Bennett

The Historical Context: From Psychoanalysis to Work Democracy

Wilhelm Reich began his studies with Sigmund Freud while a medical student at the University of Vienna, and by the time he was graduated in 1922, he had already been a psychoanalyst for three years.¹ In addition to contributing heavily to the development of psychoanalytic theory and practice (he was chosen to lead the Seminar for Psychoanalytic Therapy in 1924),² Reich was drawn to the fundamental question of the origins of human neuroses and began studying sociology as well as psychiatry and biology. After witnessing first-hand the famous police riot in Vienna in July of 1927, Reich became politicized and joined The Austrian Communist Party.³ He was one of the first to forge a synthesis of Marxism and psychoanalysis,⁴ but he was no armchair radical: he set up clinics for workers, first in Vienna and later in Berlin, after he moved to Berlin in 1930.⁵ In Berlin he taught at the MASCH, the Marxistische Arbeiter Schule (Marxist Workers School);⁶ Reich also engaged working youth in very practical ways,⁷ becoming a dominant force in the German Communist Party-supported Unity League for Proletarian Sexual Reform, more popularly known as the SEX-POL, a confederation of different groups committed to fostering sexual hygiene among the workers.⁸

* With gratitude, I wish to thank the Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust for permission to quote unpublished archival material from The Archives of the Orgone Institute. I am also indebted to a number of friends and colleagues who commented on earlier versions of this paper, among them Wendy Kohli, Harry Lewis, Elise Springer and James Strick. Special thanks to Grier Sellers who inspired this investigation and provided important suggestions as it developed.

¹Mary Boyd Higgins, "Introduction: Reich's Development, 1922-1934," in Wilhelm Reich, *Beyond Psychology: Letters and Journals, 1934-1939*, edited by M.B. Higgins (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), p. vii.

²Ilse Ollendorff Reich, *Wilhelm Reich: A Personal Biography* (New York: Avon, 1969), p. 33.

³*Ibid.*, p. 39; Higgins, "Introduction," p. xiv. See also, Anson G. Rabinbach, "The Politicization of Wilhelm Reich: An Introduction to 'The Sexual Misery of the Working Masses and the Difficulties of Sexual Reform,'" *New German Critique*, 1, Winter, 1973.

⁴Wilhelm Reich, "Dialektischer Materialismus und Psychoanalyse," *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, 3, 1929, pp. 736-771. Reprinted as "Dialectical Materialism and Psycho-analysis," *Studies on the Left*, 6, July-August, 1966, pp. 5-45; also in Wilhelm Reich, *Sex-Pol: Essays 1929-1934*, edited by Lee Baxandall (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 1-74.

⁵Higgins, "Introduction," pp. xiv, xix.

⁶Wilhelm Reich, *People in Trouble* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), p. 139.

⁷His 1932 publication, *Der sexuelle Kampf der Jugend* (The Sexual Struggle of Youth), is an example. The final chapter, "Politicizing the Sexual Problem of Youth," is reprinted in Reich, *Sex-Pol*, pp. 251-274. Reich's own edited version of the original pamphlet is available as "The Sexual Rights of Youth," in Wilhelm Reich, *The Children of the Future: On the Prevention of Sexual Pathology*, edited by M. Higgins and C. Raphael, M.D. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983), pp. 161-221. There are a number of other books and pamphlets by Reich from this period where there is a political analysis of human sexuality; perhaps the most significant is *Die Sexualität im Kulturkampf. Zur sozialistischen Umstrukturierung des Menschen* (Sexuality in the Cultural Struggle. On the Socialist Restructuring of Man), 1936. An edited version of this text was published in English in 1945 as *The Sexual Revolution*, one of Reich's more widely read and influential books. Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution: Toward a Self-Regulating Character Structure* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974).

⁸Reich, *People in Trouble*, pp. 101-102, 149-150; see also Bertell Ollman, "Introduction" to Reich, *Sex-Pol*, p. xiii; and Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform: 1920-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 124-127.

But Reich's understanding of the sources of human misery were never doctrinaire. In his lecture before the World League for Sexual Reform in 1930, he made very clear that sexual repression cut across class lines.⁹ Increasingly, Communist functionaries became wary of Reich's discussion of the sexual repression of the workers, especially the youth. In December 1932, they stopped distributing Reich's literature¹⁰ and formally threw him out of the German Communist Party a few months later. Contemporaneously, Freud in particular, and the leadership of the psychoanalytic movement generally, sought to distance themselves from Reich's politics¹¹ in the vain attempt to portray psychoanalysis as politically neutral, and thus able to function in Germany even after Hitler's rise to power in 1933.¹² Reich was removed from the German Psychoanalytic Association in 1933 and henceforth was no longer considered a member of the International Psychoanalytic Association. He learned of this only when he attended the Lucerne conference in 1934.¹³

After a brief sojourn in Denmark and Sweden, Reich settled in Oslo, Norway, then a haven for many on the Left. Trotsky was there until his expulsion in 1936; Willy Brandt was also in exile there and became one of Reich's subjects for his experiments on the electrophysiology of pleasure and anxiety.¹⁴ In addition to being dismissed from the German Communist Party, Reich was barred from joining the Danish Communist Party and though still writing as a communist, never joined the Norwegian Communist Party, despite rumors to the contrary.¹⁵ In 1935, using the *nom de plume*, "A Laboratory Worker," Reich circulated privately a pamphlet entitled, *Masse und Staat*.¹⁶ Here, still

⁹Wilhelm Reich, "The Sexual Misery of the Working Masses and the Difficulties of Sexual Reform," *New German Critique*, 1, Winter, 1973, pp. 98-110.

¹⁰Higgins, "Introduction," p. xix.

¹¹Reich claims that Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* was written in direct response to a paper Reich delivered in 1929. See Reich, *Reich Speaks of Freud*, edited by M. Higgins and C. Raphael, M.D. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), p. 44.

¹²Bernd Nitzschke, "Psychoanalysis and National Socialism: Banned or Brought into Conformity? Break or Continuity?" *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 12, 2003, pp. 98-108; and Bernd Nitzschke, "Psychoanalysis during National Socialism: Present-Day Consequences of a Historical Controversy in the 'Case' of Wilhelm Reich," *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 86, 1999, pp. 349-366. See also, Benjamin Harris and Adrian Brock, "Freudian Psycho-politics: The Rivalry of Wilhelm Reich and Otto Fenichel, 1930-1935," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 66, 1992, pp. 578-612.

¹³Reich devotes a chapter to the Lucerne conference in his *People in Trouble*, pp. 224-253. In addition, there is an English translation of an article published in 1935 on his expulsion, in Reich, *Reich Speaks of Freud*, pp. 255-261. See also Riccardo Steiner, "A New Kind of Diaspora," *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 16, 1989, pp. 35-78. The appendix to this article includes letters from Ernest Jones to Anna Freud concerning how to handle the "Reich problem."

¹⁴Myron Sharaf, *Fury on Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 264, fn. The experiments referenced are discussed in detail in Wilhelm Reich, *The Bioelectrical Investigation of Sexuality and Anxiety*, edited by M. Higgins and C. Raphael, M.D. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982). Gertrud Gaasland, then Brandt's fiancée, worked in Reich's laboratory in Oslo and later accompanied his archives, equipment, and furniture to New York in May of 1939; Reich himself left Oslo for New York that August. Reich, *Beyond Psychology*, pp. 215, 229.

¹⁵Philip W. Bennett, "The Persecution of Dr. Wilhelm Reich by the Government of the United States," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, forthcoming, 2010. In this article I give a detailed account of two of the three investigations of Reich by the U.S., the initial FBI investigation begun shortly after he emigrated which led to his imprisonment as an "alien enemy" in December, 1941, and a later Immigration and Naturalization Services inquiry to determine if there were grounds to "de-naturalize" Reich, who became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1946. Reich's purported membership in the Norwegian Communist Party played a central role in both of these cases.

¹⁶An English translation of this pamphlet was published serially by the *Journal of Orgonomy*: Wilhelm Reich, *Masses and State*, *Journal of Orgonomy*, Vol. 30, 1, thru Vol. 35, 1, 1996-2001. An edited version of the pamphlet was added to the first

speaking of the dictatorship of the proletariat and affirming Lenin's view of revolution, Reich was quite critical of the Soviet Union; this publication received a damning review in the Norwegian Communist Party press,¹⁷ in which Reich was identified as its author. This attack was soon followed by a sustained vicious press campaign against him and his work. The focus of this smear campaign was Reich's biological work, but the bulk of the letters attacking him were published in the left Labor Press, *Arbeiderbladet*.¹⁸ He was also attacked in the fascist press as a "Jewish pornographer of the worst kind."¹⁹

Reich's bioelectrical experiments mentioned above were his first attempt to study the libido as a palpable energy rather than a mere explanatory concept. This move to the "physical" from the "psychological" paralleled the development of the extension of psychoanalytic character analysis into the realm of the body: Reich observed the correlation of his patients' muscular patterns of holding with their psychological resistance to the flow of sexual energy within them. His therapeutic methodology evolved from character analytic work into what came to be called "vegetotherapy" and still later "orgone therapy."²⁰

Reich was increasingly drawn to the biological and began studying microorganisms using state-of-the-art microscopes. He carefully documented his observations with extensive time-lapse films and was one of the first to make such films. He described the development of microscopic structures he called "bions." In a process later described by Reich as "natural organization,"²¹ bions derived from the disintegration of plant cells were observed to form clumps around which membranes could develop, giving rise to motile protozoa.²² But these studies of biology, and indeed all of Reich's natural scientific inquiry, were carried out within the framework of dialectical materialism and Reich's later elaboration upon it.²³ At the same time he was thinking and writing

English edition of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, originally published in 1946. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), pp. 205-284.

¹⁷Håvard Nilsen, "The Troll Circle: The Social Construction of Wilhelm Reich as a Pseudo-scientist," paper presented at the International Conference on Orgonomy, Rangeley, ME, 2007.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, and Gunnar Leistikow, "The Fascist Newspaper Campaign in Norway," *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone Research*, 1, 1942, pp. 266-273.

¹⁹Leistikow, *ibid.*, p. 272.

²⁰A brief description may be found in Joel Kovel, *A Complete Guide to Therapy* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), pp. 175-187; for a more thorough treatment, see "The Expressive Language of the Living," chapter 14 of Wilhelm Reich, *Character Analysis*, third enlarged edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), pp. 355-398.

²¹Wilhelm Reich, "The Natural Organization of Protozoa from Orgone Energy Vesicles (Bions): Experimental Groundwork for an Understanding of Cancer Biopathy," *International Journal of Sex-economy and Orgone Research*, 1, 1942, pp. 193-225; reprinted in Wilhelm Reich, *The Cancer Biopathy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), pp. 14-73.

²²James Strick, "Wilhelm Reich als Laborwissenschaftler: 1934 bis 1939 und Später," *Wilhelm Reich Revisited* (Vienna: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2008), pp. 83-99. An English version of this essay, under the title, "The Place of Reich's Bion Experiments in the History of Biology and Medicine," was presented at the International Conference on Orgonomy, Rangeley, ME, 2007.

²³Part Two of Reich's *Die Bione* is devoted to "The Dialectical-Materialistic Interpretation," see Wilhelm Reich, *The Bion Experiments on the Origin of Life*, edited by M. Higgins and C. Raphael, M.D. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979). Later Reich referred to his methodology as "energetic functionalism" or "orgonomic functionalism," and while acknowledging its roots in dialectical materialism, writing in 1947, he said that his new methodology "has as much to do with dialectical materialism as a modern electronic radar device with the electric gas tube of 1905." See editor's note to *The Bion Experiments*, p. v.

about the “natural organization of protozoa,” he was continuing his sociological and political writings.

From The Natural Organization of Microorganisms to the Natural Organization of Work

Reich coined the term “work democracy” (*arbeitsdemokratie*) in 1937. His archives, housed at the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard, include numerous as yet unpublished papers on the topic. In 1939, using the same nom de plume as for *Masse und Staat*, Reich circulated *Die Natürliche Organisation der Arbeit in der Arbeitsdemokratie* (The Natural Organization of Work in Work Democracy).²⁴ In 1941, by which time Reich was in New York, he circulated the companion pamphlet, *Weitere Probleme der Arbeitsdemokratie* (Further Problems of Work Democracy);²⁵ again using the pseudonym, “*einem Laboratoriumsarbeiter*.”

These two documents were never published in English or distributed by Reich in the United States. There are reasons to think that later in his life Reich was not satisfied with these early work democracy writings and wished to distance himself from them. Though they are listed in the *Bibliography on Orgonomy* (which supposedly includes a complete list of all of Reich’s writings through 1952), they appear as an afterthought, put into an Appendix, and with regards to the first one, both mis-named and mis-dated.²⁶ And while there is some indication that he at one time planned to publish English versions of them,²⁷ they never did appear in print in English. Reich also adopted a rather ironic tone in his own discussion of these two early works in a later work democracy paper.

One of the specific issues here is Reich’s relationship to his former comrades on the Left and the various political parties with which he had been associated. While it is clear that the two early work democracy documents are “Marxist,” in some sense of that overly abused term, they are far less doctrinaire than other of his writings from the mid-thirties—for example, *Masses and State* mentioned above. In the article, “Work Democracy versus Politics,” originally published in 1943 and later incorporated into the expanded, third edition of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Reich writes:

In 1937 [sic], i.e., two years before the outbreak of World War II, as the storm clouds were gathering over Europe, a pamphlet entitled “The Natural Organization of work in work-democracy,”²⁸ appeared in Scandinavia. [It was printed in Oslo, Norway.] It did not bear the name of its author. It was merely stated that it had been written by a laboratory worker with the consent of other men and women engaged in practical work in this field. It appeared in German, not in a printed form, but

²⁴Wilhelm Reich, *Die Natürliche Organisation der Arbeit in der Arbeitsdemokratie*, von einem Laboratoriumsarbeiter, Politisch-psychologische Schriftenreihe, No. 4, Sexpol-Verlag, Oslo, January, 1939 (*The Natural Organization of Work in Work Democracy*, by a Laboratory Worker, Political-Psychological Writings, No. 4).

²⁵Wilhelm Reich, *Weitere Probleme der Arbeitsdemokratie*, von einem Laboratoriumsarbeiter, Politisch-psychologische Schriften No. 5, Sexpol-Verlag, Europa/Rotterdam, April 1941 (*Further Problems of Work Democracy*, by a Laboratory Worker, Political-Psychological Writings, No. 5. The Preface is dated August, 1940).

²⁶Wilhelm Reich, *Bibliography on Orgonomy* (Rangeley, ME: Orgone Institute Press, 1953), p. 17.

²⁷In an FBI file on Reich prepared at the time of his arrest in 1941 as an “alien enemy,” an agent quotes Carol Bernard, a laboratory assistant, as saying that translations were being made of both pamphlets and that they would be published upon completion. They never were. I discuss this arrest and the FBI file in Bennett, *op. cit.*

²⁸The term “work democracy” is sometimes hyphenated in Reich’s writings. We retain the hyphen here and throughout as it appeared in the original text.

merely mimeographed. Later it was translated into English. It was not widely circulated, for it was not backed up by any political propaganda apparatus and had no political pretensions. ...[Q]uite the contrary, it was a pamphlet *against* politics, written by a working man. Yet, somehow two things stuck in one's mind, and they were brought up again and again...One thing was the word "work-democracy." The other was two sentences. They sounded unworldly, alienated from politics, utopian, and, at bottom, hopeless: "*Enough, let's have done with politics once and for all! Let's get down to the practical tasks of real life!*"²⁹

Reich also mentions *Further Problems* in this article. He says that "in 1941... a continuation of this first pamphlet [*The Natural Organization*] appeared under the title, 'Additional problems of work democracy.' Like its predecessor, it too was smuggled into several European countries and was even 'intercepted' by the American secret police, the FBI."³⁰

In the original Wolfe translation of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, published in 1946, after the reference to the FBI, the sentence concludes "and made the basis for questioning."³¹ Why Reich chose to delete the reference to his 1941 arrest is unclear.³²

The End of Politics

Throughout *The Natural Organization of Work*, Reich juxtaposed Hitler's regime with "formal democracy." Chamberlain, who is on the receiving end of Reich's scorn, is his representative of formal democracy. Prior to demanding "an end to all politics," Reich says:

What shall we have in the place of political corruption? ... Dictatorship a la Hitler is not possible. Is "democracy" possible? No. Firstly because there is no democracy at all but a masked dictatorship (Chamberlain!). Democracy is not possible for a much more essential reason, hitherto overlooked: Which is, that Democracy would be right, if it were a fact that mankind were able to make free and rational decisions. This however they cannot do. They cannot do so, as long as society has not given them liberty and the possibility of making their own decisions. There is only one possible answer after 4000 years of psychic suppression, of apparently disastrous democratic forms of bourgeois liberalism, and the experiences which fascism offers, and of irrational thoughts and feelings visible everywhere in daily life.

Democracy can only be valid for rational life—democracy cannot be valid for the irrational thoughts and feelings of mankind, as they are today...³³

And just after the passage calling for an end to all politics, we read that "today new political parties [are] meaningless and dangerous. There is no possible climax of a party-system beyond Hitler."³⁴

Marxists have always seen bourgeois politics as *Scheindemokratie*, "feigned democracy" (a phrase Reich also uses in this context), but not so their own political efforts. Anticipating the objection that one should distinguish fascistic or bourgeois parties from socialist ones, Reich lumps them all together: "*No, there is no longer any difference between bourgeois and socialist parties.* The conception

²⁹Reich, *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, p. 361, here and throughout, italics are in the original.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 361-362.

³¹Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, 3rd edition (New York: The Orgone Institute Press, 1946), p. 311.

³²Reich often tweaked his manuscripts so that the more recent translations include slight editorial changes, as in the instance just noted.

³³Reich, *Natural Organization*, pp. 13-14.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 14.

of socialism has altered; for it no longer means a party “conviction” but practical, real and honest work for the tasks of life.”³⁵

The rejection of politics as the avenue to social change continues in *Further Problems of Work Democracy*; indeed, this is one theme that will remain constant across the years. Here no distinction is made between Hitlerism and Stalinism, anticipating Reich’s later use of the terms *red* and *black fascism*. Both are seen as “political knavery,” as “a symptom of the mass pestilence of our century and [they] cannot count on any future period. In that future, *only work, with its prerequisite: knowledge, and its goal: human happiness, will rule*, and not politics, be it called what it may.”³⁶

Reich’s rejection is not solely based on his own personal experience with socialist and communist groups in Austria, Germany, Denmark and Norway. It is also reasoned: how can any one person or group decide for everyone else? Only people can decide for themselves, or at least people freed from the irrationality engendered by authoritarian child-rearing and the mystifying hegemony of cookie-cutter education and the mass media.³⁷

By 1939, Reich is explicitly rejecting a transitional dictatorship of the proletariat, a phase he had accepted in the 1935 *Masses and the State*. In *The Natural Organization of Work*, in the context of a discussion of a viable world economy, Reich raises the question, “Who will lead a world economy?”

Can *one* man or even *one* group of men supervise, judge and manage this most complicated and ramified network of society? No! It is quite impossible, and therefore the dictatorship of an individual or a group, or any kind whatever, is impossible in the long run.³⁸

In *Further Problems* we read:

It started to become clear: neither “dictatorship of the proletariat” nor “formal democracy,” neither “totalitarian dictatorship” nor “kingdom” [read: monarchy] or “anarchism” would be able to cope with the situation. The dictatorship of the proletariat would not be able to do it because there does not exist a proletariat in the old meaning of the word. *There is nothing else but workers in the fields necessary to life*. Formal democracy cannot bring salvation because it is a hollow form, and is not willing to give any responsibility for the fate of human society to the masses of the working people...³⁹

(I’ll turn to Reich’s dismissal of “anarchism” in this passage in a moment.)

If not the dictatorship of the proletariat, what then in the transitional phase from the way things are to the new order of work democracy? “Politicians of today are a necessary evil.” They will ultimately be replaced by the International Council of Work.⁴⁰ But those who will eventually replace them, “the representatives of work and consumption,” are themselves only human and raised up under the old capitalist regime, “men grown up and infected in the evil old way.” They could well

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁶Reich, *Further Problems*, p. 20.

³⁷This aspect of Reich’s work has been well-explored in the still popular, *The Irrational in Politics*, by Chris Pallis writing as “Maurice Brinton,” a pamphlet originally circulated by the Solidarity Collective in 1970 and now widely reprinted. *The Irrational in Politics: Sexual Repression and Authoritarian Conditioning* (Tucson, AZ: See Sharp Press, 1993).

³⁸Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 33.

³⁹Reich, *Further Problems*, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁰Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 46.

evolve into the very political creatures they are supposed to replace. This will be prevented, Reich hopes, if we keep clear that they represent “the needs of mankind. They cease to decide as soon as they no longer represent them. Their authority is not obtained by rank, name or wealth but only because of their professional ability and knowledge.” Their authority is “*professional objective authority*,” not “authority without meaning or foundation, bureaucratic, formal authority.”⁴¹

Instead of Politics, Work Democracy

When it comes to the details of work democracy, Reich sounds very much like an anarcho-syndicalist or council communist. His direct contact with Rudolf Rocker, author of *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*, is unknown, though both Rocker and Reich were in Berlin in the early 1930s, and both had to flee for their lives in 1933. As for council communism, one of its key advocates at that time was Anton Pannekoek, who wrote his *Worker's Councils* in the early 1940s in Nazi-occupied Holland. This is significant, since Reich had a Dutch following, and *Further Problems of Work Democracy* was mimeographed in Rotterdam. The similarity between Pannekoek's book and Reich's early writings on work democracy is striking, but I can find no direct evidence to link the two.

Here is a perspicacious description of anarcho-syndicalism, taken from a review of Rocker's *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*, published in England in 1938:

It is anarchist in so far as it aims at freeing mankind from the coercion of the State, which is to be replaced by a federation of communities, and it is syndicalist in so far as it proposes to free the workers in industry from employers' control and to place economic power in the hands of the trade unions.⁴²

Reich might object to a few things in this definition, but it certainly captures the spirit of his work democracy. Rather than trade unions, Reich speaks of “organizations of specialist workers,” and such organizations would not be limited to industrial workers but would include all those who do what Reich comes to call “vitaly necessary work,” work to fulfill human or other living needs. But the elimination of the State in favor of work communities working in consort is certainly at the heart of Reich's work democracy.

Similarities with Pannekoek's writings are easily found. Consider the following description of what Pannekoek calls “labor democracy”:

This labor democracy is entirely different from political democracy of the former social system. The so-called political democracy under capitalism was a mock democracy, an artful system conceived to mask the real domination of the people by a ruling minority. Council organization is a real democracy, the democracy of labor, making the working people master of their work. Under council organization political democracy has disappeared, because politics itself disappeared and gave way to social economy. The activity of the councils, put in action by the workers as the organs of collaboration, guided by perpetual study and strained attention to circumstances and needs, covers the entire field of

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴²E.H. Carr, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement* on April 23, 1938, quoted in Nicolas Walter's “Introduction” to Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 1989), pp. ix-x.

society. All measures are taken in constant intercourse, by deliberation in the councils and discussion in the groups and the shops, by actions in the shops and decisions in the councils. What is done under such conditions could never be commanded from above and proclaimed by the will of a government. It proceeds from the common will of all concerned; because it is founded on the labor experience and knowledge of all, and because it deeply influences the life of all. Measures can be executed only in such a way that the masses put them into practice as their own resolve and will; foreign constraint cannot enforce them, simply because such a force is lacking. The councils are no government; not even the most central councils bear a governmental character. For they have no means to impose their will upon the masses; they have no organs of power. All social power is vested in the hands of the workers themselves. Wherever the use of power is needed, against disturbances or attacks upon the existing order, it proceeds from the collectivities of the workers in the shops and stands under their control.⁴³

The significant difference between Reich's work democracy and anarcho-syndicalism, council communism, and other forms of political anarchism is that Reich is not interested in a movement with its advocates, propagators, meetings, and the like. For Reich, work democracy isn't organized politically or in any other way. Recall the title of the pamphlet: *The **Natural** Organization of Work* (emphasis mine). Reich believes that such groupings of workers will happen spontaneously, insofar as those in the group are in touch with their rational cores and act accordingly. As one of Reich's biographers puts it, "the difference between Reich's approach and those of the anarchist groups was that Reich did not advance work-democracy as a new form of political goal or organize a new political movement around it. He regarded it as the natural form of social organization..."⁴⁴

Work democracy requires that people who do a particular kind of work—for example, laboratory workers, taking the group into which Reich places himself by his use of the anonymous descriptor, *einem Laboratoriumsarbiter*—come together, form groups that are run democratically and make decisions regarding their work accordingly. Laboratory workers choose a representative, or one naturally emerges as a leader, and this person sits on a central work council where she meets with representatives from other work organizations to decide what work to do and how to do it. If the laboratory workers need microscopes, their representative talks directly with the representative of the microscope manufacturers; the microscope builders talk directly with the glass manufacturers, teachers directly with the text book publishers, who in turn speak directly with a representative from the paper mills, and so on.

All producers belong to groups that represent the kind of work they do, the kind they know best. Thus the obvious value of work democracy is that the people making the decisions know what they are talking about and make their decisions in light of a common value, fulfilling the needs of life.

Just as workers naturally organize themselves, so too with consumers, whose groups may remind the producer groups just what is needed, when, and how much. There is no incentive for producers to abuse consumers—to produce shoddy goods, for example—since all producers are themselves consumers. Reich doesn't fill out the details much beyond what I just suggested, but this

⁴³Anton Pannekoek, *Workers Councils*, 1946, online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoek/1947/workers-councils.htm>, accessed June 15, 2008.

⁴⁴David Boadella, *Wilhelm Reich: The Evolution of His Work* (Boston: Arkana, 1985), p. 213.

seems to be his schema. From *The Natural Organization*:

*The formation of organizations of specialist workers in all branches of human life is the very first measure to guarantee the birth of a new society out of the economic collapse of today's chaos, to hold this new society and to protect and secure its development; specialist workers who not only are brilliant masters of their profession, but also have the courage to face its consequences and the will, under all circumstances, to defend them. If economics and society are determined by human needs and no longer ruled by private profiteering and diplomacy, then only specialist workers in all branches could be the reorganizers.*⁴⁵

Only an organic, natural connection of economic units adapted to the peculiarities of all branches of work (connected with natural and direct relation between producers and consumers) guarantees an effective working world plan-economy.⁴⁶

*The elected representatives of work and consumption—at any time dismissible—would be the bearers of social order. In this way social power is exclusively transferred to work and consumption. Each representative of work is at the same time a consumer and each consumer is a worker. In this way the interests of work and consumption interlace in the function of social guidance, so that a division into exploiting and exploited classes becomes impossible from the beginning.*⁴⁷

Reich is less detailed in *Further Problems*, but here, too, he mentions work organizations, work democracies, as the basis for society:

Human society must live, that is search, work, produce and consume. Human work goes on, no matter which political faction is fighting for supremacy. The existing work organizations must function, whatever the circumstances may be. Human society could exist without political ideologies and parties, but it cannot exist for one day without its work organizations.⁴⁸

Reich's vision is of people naturally organizing themselves into democratically functioning work and consumer groups. These work democratic organizations may or may not be realized—that depends upon the ability of people to take responsibility for their lives, which in turn requires that people be raised and educated in ways that foster self-rule, self-governance, “self-regulation,” the latter being the term that Reich would increasingly come to use. Here it is worth recalling that the subtitle of Reich's famous *The Sexual Revolution* is “Toward a Self-Regulating Character Structure.”

Despite the obvious affinity of Reich's work democracy to Rocker's anarcho-syndicalism and Pannekoek's council communism, Reich nonetheless is explicitly critical of anarchism. His overarching criticism is that the anarchists do not provide a plan or vision on how to move from humanity as it is today—a humanity crushed by 4,000 years of patriarchal authoritarianism—to people capable of work democratic self-government. In *The Natural Organization*, Reich characterized anarchists thus:

The anarchists who are always “against the State” cared much too little about the answer to the decisive question, what should replace authoritarian social administration. In the Spain of 1937 the anarchists experienced directly that structural quality of the masses, which makes suppression

⁴⁵Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 27.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴⁸Reich, *Further Problems*, p. 37.

possible. From State to Non-State, from government-control to a free living society lies the task of overcoming the thousands of years old [sic] destruction of man by man.⁴⁹

Much the same criticism is found in *Further Problems*, where, in discussing the possible political alternatives to formal democracy, Reich says that “anarchism cannot bring a solution, because it neither asked nor solved the question of the capability of human beings for freedom.”⁵⁰ Reich holds that anarchists are “psychologically” naive, and though his work was always of great interest to anarchists, to the very end of his life he rejected their adoration. From his point of view, they, like most other progressives, fail to appreciate the depth of human rigidity and do not understand that meaningful social change can only come about gradually as we develop liberatory child-rearing and pedagogies that honor the free flow of life energy in children and adults.

Is work democracy incompatible with capitalism? While it is clear that one can be a strong critic of capitalism and its machinations without being a socialist, in the case of the two pamphlets under consideration, the rejection of capitalism—not just its myriad excesses—is quite explicit as is the assumption of a socialist economy. First, recall the passage above concerning the purported difference between bourgeois and socialist political parties; I quote it once more:

People will say that one has to distinguish between “bourgeois” and “socialist” parties. *No, there is no longer any difference between bourgeois and socialist parties.* The conception of socialism has altered; for it no longer means a party “conviction” but practical, real and honest work for the tasks of life.⁵¹

Real and honest work for the tasks of life is work that fulfills the needs of the living, “vitally necessary work,” and such work is *identified* with socialism.

*Only politics based on human needs can therefore be correct. That means politics must be guided by those who work and care for the satisfaction of human requirements. Living socialism can only represent t h i s kind of politics.*⁵²

And, “*Socialism is the essence of vital life.* But it is continually obstructed by politicians.”⁵³

In *Further Problems*, an entire section is entitled, *Krankheit: Handel*, literally, “Illness/Disease: Commerce/Trade.” The Archival translation is, “The disease called ‘Business.’” Some passages:

“Business” is a special variety of the pestilence which devastates human society. True, it makes sense to exchange vitally necessary goods, to carry them from one country and from one place to another. True, it makes sense that people make a profession of carrying on this exchange. But just as Hitlerism confuses fucking with loving, so it confuses “business” with the necessary exchange of goods.⁵⁴

⁴⁹Reich, *Natural Organization*, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁰Reich, *Further Problems*, p. 6.

⁵¹Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 15.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 26, spacing in the original.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁴Reich, *Further Problems*, p. 27.

Reich goes on to mention cases where countries sold material to Germany which was later used against those very countries or their allies.

Where the businessman smells a profitable deal he sheds the cloak of nationalism. "The market" is a manifestation of the pestilence which manages to pull the wool over the eyes of millions of thinking people so that they are unable to see these atrocities. "Business" is a pestilence which *stops at nothing*. Basic dishonesty is as essential for the practice of this profession as is manual dexterity for the pickpocket. To provide the consumers with good consumers[?] goods is an activity of vital significance. But to seduce people into buying things is fraud. Business is the pestilence which keeps great medical discoveries from becoming common property. Business in radium is the pest which impedes cancer research. Scientific workers become the tools of rackets which, for the sake of business, advertise all kinds of drugs and appliances for the easy and certain cure[s]... People need respite from work, hygienic living, possibilities of rearing children without worries, and sexual happiness. If they have these, all the widely advertised remedies for constipation and hemorrhoids will become unnecessary. "Business" is the rottenness which interrupts a radio-broadcast about the deaths of thousands of people, to talk about "Glamourdent Toothpaste." Business should again become the distribution of needed goods. It should not happen again that huge loads of wheat and coffee are destroyed while children go hungry...⁵⁵

Like his Marxist colleagues before him, Reich assumes that work democracy will be global in nature. In *The Natural Organization* he devotes an entire section to "The natural organization of work in world economy." Writing in the late 1930s, Reich anticipates the European Common Market of today and suggests that just as borders make no sense in Europe, ultimately they make no sense globally:

The technique of international traffic has made a unit of the peoples. Traffic has become international and so has the average standard of civilization. The borders of the various States are only ridiculous relics of a past where a voyage from Venice to Munich was an unrealizable dream. The technique of the process of work has long since produced the base for supplying all the inhabitants of this Earth with all their needs.⁵⁶

Since what separates the globe into separate countries is the existence of the modern nation-state, and since Reich, like other anarchists, see the state withering away to be replaced by a society of workers in democratic consort, his internationalism is an expected outcome. It continues in *Further Problems* and in his writings to the very end of his life.

The *work* of work democracy is work that meets living needs, work that is necessary for life. Reich introduces here distinctions that he will elaborate upon in his later work democracy writings: there is work which meets human needs, vitally necessary work; there is work that has nothing to do with human needs but rather with the artificially created wants of capitalism, and there is work that thwarts the meeting of human needs.

To secure the domination of work in society, the destruction of deep-rooted conceptions is indispensable. We must distinguish between *vital* and *non-vital* work. There are branches of work which have nothing to do with the demands of life, but even work *against* them. The consciousness that such branches of work exist, has completely disappeared. For instance the soldier and armament

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁶Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 32.

production! The priesthood will be replaced by the psychiatrist and the pedagogue; moreover there are branches of work which would belong to life on a higher scale of social development, but are useless branches of work today. For as long as absolutely vital work is not secured for mankind in all respects, society cannot afford itself the luxury of unproductive institutions. House-building, agriculture, education, scientific work are necessary, indispensable social functions. Armament manufactory, jewelry, building of private castles etc. are unproductive branches of work.⁵⁷

In distinguishing life-necessary from life-hindering activities, Reich demands a thoughtful, nuanced application of these categories, especially when it comes to science, since the potential utility of scientific inquiry is not always immediately apparent. “The work of a scientist is indispensable, even if his work perhaps only first proves its necessity to life centuries and decades ahead.”⁵⁸ The fundamental criterion to be used is this: “*What needs of the masses are to be satisfied?*”⁵⁹ The ultimate goal is “*happiness and joy for all the workers of the world.*”⁶⁰ While some ideas for improving human kind may be useless and motivated by personal aggrandizement, when it comes to science, we must be cautious in our judgments, given “the danger that narrow-mindedness and conservatism may hinder the acceptance of new ideas.”⁶¹

Everyone who maintains that he can offer new and important acquisitions, must be given time, place and opportunity of proving it. He must be helped materially, and have the use of institutions specially founded for this purpose. Unless the spirit of discovery is promoted and secured no society can advance in the long run....Perhaps many of those who are now taken for blockheads and lunatics will be able to prove that they had something to say. Perhaps, very many of the authorities of today will also prove that they are nonentities.⁶²

Given the history of the attacks upon his work in the extended Norwegian press campaign that began in 1937, and the consequences of it upon Reich’s life and research in Oslo, it seems evident that he is at least in part pleading his own case in this passage. Labeled a “blockhead” and worse, Reich was forced to fund his own research from his personal earnings as a therapist and from friends and former patients.

“Socially necessary” work figures prominently in *Further Problems* as a way of combating Hitlerism. Indeed, engaging in such work together with democratically minded comrades is itself liberatory and helps to detoxify the worker from his former attraction to felt powerlessness and the worship of the Führer:

Only by practical work can a productive human being develop a social responsibility and immunize himself against unproductive political ideologies. This is the first and most important step for anchoring a “work democracy” and a destruction of Hitlerism.

*Only that work that is socially necessary with strict elimination of external influences can guarantee a safe social order. It is contained in the manifestation of productivity not to be wasteful but to serve vital human needs...*⁶³

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Reich, *Further Problems*, pp. 10-11.

What makes work democracy different from other “political” systems is that decisions are made not by “private individuals with their ideologies and ideals but by human beings in their work functions.”⁶⁴

The vitally necessary work has its own logic and its reaction on human beings.... *The vitally necessary work originates in the deep biological needs of the people and gives the best basis for natural self-consciousness.* Work democracy means space and possibilities for the expression of the will to work and the interest in work. Thus, according to its basic nature it would repudiate war industries as they are today. It is in opposition to forced labor.⁶⁵

Recall the reference to advertising in his devastating remarks about business, above: “To provide the consumers with good consumers[?] goods is an activity of vital significance. But to seduce people into buying things is fraud.” Surely such seduction would be paradigmatic of work that is not only not vitally necessary, but the kind of work that thwarts fulfilling human needs. This is no exaggeration: people spend far more time being passively bombarded with advertisements than they do embracing their lovers.

Liberalism Rejected

While the rejection of politics as a meaningful road to liberation and the vision of democratic worker councils running society are the heart of Reich’s work democracy, Reich also rejects the tenets of classical liberalism, placing limits on the traditional liberal freedoms of a free press, assembly, and the like. On the one hand he embraces such values, having himself endured censorship in the past from both Communists and Nazis. But he shares the Left critique of bourgeois liberalism and sets limits that would not please a civil libertarian.

Readers who came up through the sixties or have studied the decade’s impact on progressive thought are probably familiar with the stir generated by the slim volume, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*.⁶⁶ My own interest focused on Herbert Marcuse’s contribution to this collection; by the time I read the Marcuse essay, I had already read Paul Robinson’s *The Freudian Left*,⁶⁷ where Marcuse and Reich were linked, and Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*,⁶⁸ which seemed to draw heavily upon Reich but only mentions him briefly and dismissively. I was also aware that Erich Fromm appropriated many of Reich’s ideas, especially in his *Escape from Freedom* (in the U.K., *Fear of Freedom*), which is seen by many, including Reich himself, as a sanitized popularization, without credit, of Reich’s ideas in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.⁶⁹ What I didn’t know then but do now is that Marcuse, Fromm, and all of the other members of the Frankfurt School were well aware of Reich’s thinking.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969). The book was first published in 1965.

⁶⁷Paul Robinson, *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

⁶⁸Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

⁶⁹Reich says of Fromm that he “managed to disregard completely the sexual problem of masses of people and its relationship to the fear of freedom and craving for authority,” Reich, *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, p. 219. See also, Harry Obermayer’s “Social Reconstruction without Sex-Economy,” a review of *Escape from Freedom*, *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone Research*, Vol. II, 1943, and Myron Sharaf’s review of *Man for Himself*, in *Orgone Energy Bulletin*, Vol I,

Whatever the connection between Reich and Marcuse, the latter's position on unlimited civil liberties in 1965 is identical to that of Reich in 1939 and 1941. Marcuse:

However, this tolerance cannot be indiscriminate and equal with respect to the contents of expression, neither in word nor in deed; it cannot protect false words and wrong deeds which demonstrate that they contradict and counteract the possibilities of liberation. Such indiscriminate tolerance is justified in harmless debates, in conversation, in academic discussion; it is indispensable in the scientific enterprise, in private religion. But society cannot be indiscriminate where the pacification of existence, where freedom and happiness themselves are at stake: here, certain things cannot be said, certain ideas cannot be expressed, certain policies cannot be proposed, certain behavior cannot be permitted without making tolerance an instrument for the continuation of servitude.⁷⁰

Reich, writing in *The Natural Organization of Work*:

On the larger scale of life's necessities and claims of work *full freedom of expression, of activity, of objective competition and expansion of individual human initiative*...naturally dominates. Nothing else is possible, because the development of creative life is completely free...

But in the sphere of life-hindrance, not in life rooted actions and opinions, an inexorable, rigorous, legally sanctioned "No" rules.⁷¹

Later in that paragraph Reich gives as examples those activities not to be tolerated: "unnecessary and life-hindering activities are religious sects, life-denying morals, profiteering, trade, etc." The original list in the German includes *Sittlichkeitspolizei*, the morality police.

The theme continues in *Further Problems*, where Reich is both more explicit and more damning of Western liberalism in the face of fascism:

Nobody would dare to confuse the kindness and humanness of a constructive work-democratic system with the indecision and indolence of the former democracies of the past. The natural function of work and knowledge is so all embracing that it can claim to be the most important social factor. Everything else is beyond the pale of human society and thus **without reason for existence and without protection**. *What is not comprehended by science, work and love, is irrational*. Even the slightest traces of chauvinistic, imperialistic, nationalistic (not national), anti-semitic, anti-social business activity of a political variety **should be ruthlessly punished**... [A]ctual Hitlerism, such as the formation of gangs, of front-fighter-bunds, of corps of Wotan or Hildur have no reason for existence. Just as Hitlerism ruthlessly suppressed every faintest trace of human decency and liberty, there should be **no toleration of the slightest trace of political reaction**. We finally should have learned a lesson from the years between 1919 and 1941.⁷²

...to be liberal in the face of thieves and political criminals, that is, people who capitalize human helplessness, is synonymous with suicide. Hitler never would have gotten to the top

1949. These journals were destroyed by the U.S. government, but are now available from The Wilhelm Reich Museum, online at: <http://www.wilhelmreichmuseum.org/bookstore.html>.

⁷⁰Wolff, Moore, and Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, p. 88.

⁷¹Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 44, my emphasis in bold, italics in original.

⁷²Reich, *Further Problems*, pp. 19-20, my emphasis in bold, italics in original.

without the irresponsible liberalism of the former democracies which was his most important help-mate in the non-German countries.⁷³

This rejection of liberal tolerance was not new to Reich's thinking. In the Berlin of the early 1930s with regards to an abstract demand for free discussions within psychoanalysis made by his left-wing colleagues, Reich demurred, asking if the Communists in Germany should have defended the Nazis' rights "to publish and hold meetings...Reich asserted that Marxists should not demand freedom of expression for ...Nazi collaborators."⁷⁴ He continues this position with regards to an abstract decontextualized liberalism for the rest of his life.

Fascism

The two pamphlets presuppose a familiarity with Reich's analysis of the origins of fascism, found in his 1933 text, *Massenpsychologie des Faschismus*, a work not to be confused with the 1946 expanded third edition, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Very briefly his basic position is that fascism is less a political movement than it is an expression of a deep pathology in the character structure of all those raised in patriarchal authoritarian social settings. Those so reared tend towards two poles of behavior: blind obedience to those in authority, or mindless rebellion against them. The former response is the compost out of which fascism grows. An additional component is mysticism, the belief that The New Leader will solve all our problems; this adoration of the leader nicely parallels the belief in a supernatural Father, the commonplace analysis among Freud and his associates—certainly Reich read Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*. Concomitant with this mystical belief in the leader, the Führer, is a felt powerlessness, a giving up of one's personal responsibility to act in the world towards addressing one's own problems.

Given that work democracy is seen as an alternative to fascist rule, it is worth considering, however briefly, the position towards fascism adopted in our texts. In *The Natural Organization of Work*, Reich insisted that fascism is not an ideology imposed upon people by Hitler or Stalin or other charismatic leaders. Rather, "it exists in our very being":

In man's fear of happiness, which turns into romantic dreams; in his helplessness and irresponsibility; in the education of life by irrational feelings and actions; in the art of lying, fraud and circumvention, whose peak is reached in diplomacy and politics. Fascism is the abomination of human structure in the form of revolutionary ecstasy, a compromise between the most sacred yearning and brutality formed in millenniums of human oppression. ... Fascist mentality and sentimentality manifest themselves in the stupidity of today's hereditary-psychiatry, in the pedagogical arrogance of helpless and therefore authoritarian teachers and parents; in the cowardice of the scientific workers in maintaining their convictions, as well as in formal commonplace correctness, for instance in the pride of a little bourgeois when a "gentleman" shakes his hand; in the reverence for authority of rebellious intellectuals, as well as in the weak cultured scepticism of bourgeois academicians; in the awfulness of a modern Shylock, as well as in the excellence of Jewish scientists. In simple words Fascism is the wish to shelve problems; love of nature in crinoline; sensuality doing the goose-step; desire for life in trenches; courage or cowardly deeds; rigorous honesty in basic deceptions; inexorable consistency in exploited human helplessness.⁷⁵

⁷³Reich, *ibid.*, p. 30, my emphasis in bold, italics in original.

⁷⁴Harris and Brock, "Freudian Psychopolitics," pp. 599-600.

⁷⁵Reich, *Natural Organization*, pp. 11-12.

If the tendency towards these modes of being and thinking “exist in our very being,” then defeating Hitler in the war, clearly a necessity, will still not achieve an end to fascism. What is needed is a wholesale change in our psycho-social-sexual education in the family and in society at large. Socialists and others on the Left promise such change but do so in ignorance of depth psychology. This is Reich’s central complaint about those on the political Left, and what motivated, at least in part, his initial attempts to synthesize Marxism and psychoanalysis.

The conception of fascism-within-us as opposed to fascism-imposed-upon-us continues in *Further Problems*, where the label generally used is “Hitlerism.” “We know for a long time that it is not Hitler who is important but, that which is in the masses of the people to which he appeals. No sensible human being can doubt; *this is a mental plague of the masses.*”⁷⁶

*...[T]he masses of the people, contaminated by Hitlerism in their daily struggle for a rational life process, will have to learn to do away with their old helplessness and take upon themselves the full responsibility for the individual and social contents of life. This would equal the uprooting of Hitlerism and at the same time lay the foundation for true democracy.*⁷⁷

...Hitlerism is not the misdeeds of a small group which stands in opposition to the wishes of the whole population and therefore can easily be physically annihilated. Hitlerism lives in every human being everywhere in the world...Hitlerism is a sickness of the masses which cannot be cured by execution squadrons. Hitlerism is a universal plague in the thinking and feeling of the masses.⁷⁸

In Reich’s mind, these passages would be equally true were we to substitute “Stalinism” for “Hitlerism.” The analysis also applies to all stripes of religious fundamentalism we are encountering today.

The Scientist in Work Democracy and the Fight Against Fascism

Reich concludes the 1936 lecture, “Character and Society,” with a discussion of the scientist as radical, in the sense of someone who goes after “the root of things,” a definition of *radical* that Reich attributes to Marx. Reich sees science as a bulwark against the mysticism of fascism. Though reactionary forces are in positions of political power, still,

...strictly speaking, there cannot be such a thing as reactionary science. All the things that call themselves science and are at the same time in the service of reactionary ideologies, can easily be shown to be not science, but mysticism and superstition.... The scientist has only one correct social task: *to continue his search for the truth in spite of everything*, not to give heed to any restrictions that the bearers of life negating ideologies may try to impose on him.⁷⁹

Reich picks up this thread at the beginning of *The Natural Organization* with a discussion of the objectivity of science and its relation to politics. Under current conditions, science must be committed to the political goals of liberation, a viewpoint Reich held even before the 1936 lecture—one that was used as the explicit reason to marginalize and eventually to expel him from the

⁷⁶Reich, *Further Problems*, p. 5.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁹Wilhelm Reich, “Character and Society,” *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone Research*, 1, 1942, p. 256.

International Psychoanalytic Association. Science can only become “unpolitical” once there is no longer “a contradiction... between actual social and principal scientific interests.”⁸⁰ Later in the text, Reich suggests that the idea of a neutral, apolitical science serves the interests of “political reaction.”⁸¹

Science is never complete or finished, and thus often provides only fragmentary answers to pressing questions. Politicians step in, filling out the missing “answers” with mysticism, thereby keeping people from cultivating scientific understanding.

There is a wide range of problems still unsolved and therefore unmastered by man today, and this is the sphere where mysticism, submission, subjection, political gossip and human meanness flourish and this is also the sphere where the reactionary and conservative psychic structure of the mass of mankind grows exuberantly—the same masses who constitute social life. Mysticism will not fade away, until science of life will be easily accessible to all, and until mankind will be sufficiently secured in its economic needs to acquire and use knowledge.⁸²

In addition to combating the mysticism of organized religion and fascist politics, the natural scientist helps us to understand why it is that people act so irrationally, why humans, at present, seem unable to govern themselves, and what steps will be necessary to make the transition from authoritarianism to work democracy. Thus it is no accident that both *The Natural Organization of Work in Work Democracy* and *Further Problems of Work Democracy* are both authored by a working scientist, a “laboratory worker.” Indeed, both pamphlets are seen by their author as scientific inquiries into the source of human misery. To their author, the success of science and social progress towards freedom are inseparable.

⁸⁰Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 1. See also, Wilhelm Reich, ¹⁷“Biophysical Functionalism and Mechanistic Natural Science,” *International Journal of Sex-Economy and Orgone Research*, 1, 1942.

⁸¹Reich, *Natural Organization*, p. 29.

⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 2.