

*A Note on "Sympathetic Understanding"**

A group in London once introduced an excellent term for the basic attitude to be adopted by physicians, researchers, and teachers toward newcomers. The term was "sympathetic understanding." The quality of this term was important. It brought into sharper focus what had for decades been in the background of the battle against the emotional plague, namely, an understanding of the enemies of life and truth, a comprehension of their motives, both rational and irrational, and a willingness to help them, if they can be helped. This basic attitude underlay *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Its verbal formulation was thus a real gain for our work.

However, in practice, the goals of our work are at risk if we fail to demarcate precisely the framework within which we should permit this attitude to operate. "Sympathetic understanding," as I see it, has a threefold function:

1. An understanding of the difficulties for a scientist, physician, or teacher to adjust to the fundamental tenets and practices of the new science of orgonomy.
2. An understanding of the truth which is to be explored, the patient who is to be cured, and the child who is to be given a healthy upbringing.
3. An understanding of the efforts of the working scientists who have dedicated their lives to the investigation of orgone energy in all its biological and physical functions.

Now it seems to me that the London group of teachers gave proper consideration only to the first of these functions of "sympathetic understanding," while totally neglecting those under points 2. and 3. But the functions they neglected are no less important than the one they stressed; on the contrary, they seem to me even more significant. Let me try to explain.

*Translated from the German by Beverly Placzek.

The difficulties researchers, physicians, and teachers have in comprehending and committing themselves to orgonomy are only to a very small degree attributable to intellectual immaturity or a lack of rational knowledge. Countless unpleasant experiences have dispelled any doubt that, in cases of enmity or narrow-minded resistance, the underlying rejection is generally the result of a biopathic fear of anything that is spontaneous and alive, and often, also, of a neurotic fear of orgasm and a dread of sexuality. Furthermore, these "deep" motives make use of social prejudices and anxiety to prevail and to survive. People are attached to their parties or political organizations and do not want to risk losing these contacts. They would rather have nothing to do with what they see as the pornographic issue of sexuality. Furthermore, they have firmly rooted opinions about molecules or "airborne germs" or about the rationality of politics or the "personal nature of sexuality," or they simply find it embarrassing to handle the glowing coals of the sex life of the young. I should like to stress most emphatically that the few attitudes mentioned here are themselves supported by general social ideologies, and that these ideologies originate in and owe their resistance to argument and facts to the average human structure, which we call *chronic rigid armoring*. There is no escaping this definitive conclusion. And no one who has not grasped this may presume to have understood orgonomy.

We have, of course, total understanding for the limitations of the average person in our society; indeed, we have devised medical and educational techniques to help him overcome them. But we cannot use these techniques in relation to society. There, we can only apply our knowledge of the mechanisms that underlie the narrow-mindedness of our bitter enemies and hesitant friends. Whoever manages to develop a technique that can overcome the biopathic armoring of the average person in our society without the need for individual treatment will deserve great credit for the improvement this brings to our lives. Still, we cannot remain restricted to this one function of sympathetic understanding. We must consider the other functions as well.

The bitter enemy and the so very hesitant friend are not only objects of our sympathetic understanding and our readiness to

help, they are at the same time completely responsible as "researchers, teachers, and physicians" to discover truths, rescue children from the plague, and cure the sick. The patients and the children who are entrusted to the care of these doctors and teachers must also have sympathetic understanding. They suffer severely and their bodies and souls are endangered if the enemy fights against us too bitterly and the friend hesitates too long. For social ills are created, maintained, and prolonged above all by the limitations of our enemies and our hesitant friends. Thus anyone who is more concerned for the resistant doctor or teacher than for his patients and pupils serves our interests only in part or even in a way that with time can be dangerous. *Sympathetic understanding for the weaknesses of the adult generation must always be accompanied by sympathetic understanding for the suffering of the newborn and the young.*

Thus far, we have omitted from this discussion those who have dedicated their lives to the investigation of orgone energy. We now want to remedy that. We are mere mortals with our own weaknesses, faults, worries, and troubles. Although we are far ahead of the usual way of thinking, still we have imbibed this "culture and civilization" with our mother's milk, so to speak, and we have had to struggle to free ourselves from it as best we could. Experiences extending over almost thirty years leave no doubt that the armored person takes a great deal but gives very little. There is also no doubt that a giving and understanding person will have to grapple not only with the general atmosphere of this mechanistic-mystical era, but, in addition, will at first be viewed as a fool. To be imposed upon and exploited is a by-product of our profession, just as to be covered with soot is a by-product of that of a chimney-sweep. This is a vexing dilemma. Formal authority breeds only slaves. On the other hand, friendly behavior is taken amiss by present-day man. In people who are accustomed to having their lives organized on authoritarian lines, friendliness always provokes impertinence and contempt for the giver and the liberated, as well as a tendency to exploit freedom irresponsibly. This is a grave and undeniable fact.

We must also give thought to our own health and ability to work. As things stand now, there is no one who could take over

our work. If we were to be wiped out, we would not soon be succeeded by reliable workers in our field. So we must not exhaust ourselves in sympathetic understanding of meanness, apathy, and irresponsibility; rather we must distribute the responsibility for the new generations and force it on those who are apathetic and irresponsible. We dare not expend all our strength on hopeless cases; rather, we must be on the lookout for healthier and more willing helpers. Furthermore, we must come to acknowledge and accept the sad fact that today's generation of adults, those over thirty, is lost and that essentially it is the following generations, those of the young people and the children, that matter. There are only a few of us, and we must use what strength we have with care. Characteristics such as pity and sympathy are beautiful and good, but they are often dangerous if they are inspired by irrational motives or are directed to irrational goals.

Here I must warn all those working actively in our field of two dangerous reefs past which we must steer if we are to avoid shipwreck:

1. *We must guard against the opportunistic passion to acquire as many followers as possible in the shortest possible time.*

We have seen how in two great social movements, rich in potential for the future, the accumulation of a large following overwhelmed the core of truth. One of these social movements was Marxism. (We could equally well have taken the American pioneer movement as our example.) The larger the Marxist movement became, the less was said about the production of surplus value as a specific attribute of *living human work power*, the core concept of scientific Marxism. Today, not even a trace of it is left in any sizable Marxist organization. The second great social movement was that of Freudian psychology. Its core of truth was originally the specifically *sexual etiology of psychic illness*. From this, too, nothing remains but a mishmash of correct and incorrect facts, a compromise with the social structure all along the line. I could also cite Christianity here.

Now, for the new science of orgonomy there is the same great danger, namely that its core, the orgasm theory, will get lost if too many followers flock to it too quickly. The orgasm theory

unites the human being as a biosocial creature with his other attribute, that of being a piece of living protoplasm. At present, I see no other bridge between the biological and the cosmic orgone, and I do not believe that any other bridge will be found. The function of the orgasm is that very aspect of the natural function which until now has been most neglected, most wickedly slandered, and depicted in the most grievously distorted fashion; it also is the aspect that evokes the greatest fear in the human animal. This is perfectly understandable, as the development of our civilization has until now made use primarily of chronic armoring to repress this fundamental life function. These interconnections are broad and quite simple, impossible to overlook, and full of hope for the future of mankind.

We are now faced with a difficult situation. In order to propagate our science we have to entrust it to people whose biophysical structure makes them unable to deal spontaneously and free of obdurate impediments with the natural function of the orgasm. It is perfectly clear that the true representatives of the new young science of orgonomy must be healthy people with healthy, fully functioning bodies and emotions, and in the distant future that is indeed what they will be.

I intend no denigration of them when I say that the other carriers of our science, those who are "cured," the half- and quarter-healthy, can only be faithful helpers doing their best, but never true representatives of orgonomy. This is why for decades, perhaps even for centuries to come, the tendency to neglect and eventually to exclude the core questions of orgonomy will remain a danger. And since most of the people living today grew up biologically disturbed, it is perfectly clear and indisputable that the more adherents we seek and win, the greater that danger will be. There is, of course, no doubt that a young person who has fallen ill can only be helped by exact investigation of his biosexual disturbance. Such an investigation requires the most accurate knowledge of the mechanisms of natural biosexuality. This is a very practical matter. No understanding of "energetic functionalism" or "orgonometric study" of the cosmic orgone can replace this knowledge. On the contrary, based on my own experience, I can predict that both energetic functionalism

and orgonometry will err unless the examiner and the researcher are able and willing to deal clearly and trenchantly with the genital functions of the healthy and the sick organism, that is to say, unless the examiners have themselves experienced what total orgonotic streaming in the body really is.

A small but, in our sense of the word, healthy group of people will be a better guarantee for the future of orgonomy than an enormous crowd of sick or half-sick organisms. But this is no reason for us to despair. The need for a radical change in the biology of mankind has entered into the general consciousness. It is being grappled with everywhere, for better or for worse. That is why the time must come when the general social struggle and that within the scientific community will find common ground. Whether this be sooner or later is not important here. How quickly this general knowledge comes to maturity is one aspect of the great responsibility borne by all working people. I see no other social process capable of protecting orgonomy from the fate that has destroyed all other great social ideas.

2. *The second danger we must be sure to avoid is the mystical, religious enthusiasm with which in many circles the orgasm theory and orgonomy are embraced.* This sort of enthusiasm is far more dangerous than open hostility. Let me explain why.

This "redemption enthusiasm" does not grow out of rational emotions or from a living organism's deep understanding for the biological wretchedness into which the human animal sank thousands of years ago. Nor is it inspired by a knowledge of the gigantic social difficulties that stand in the way of a radical correction of human character-formation. This sort of enthusiasm equips no one with the perseverance needed in the struggle for self-regulation of the life functions of the human animal. It is unwilling to make any sacrifice and its demands can never be fulfilled.

Furthermore, this enthusiasm is dangerous for the future of orgonomy because it sees in the orgasm theory a new doctrine of salvation, a new religious belief, and not a perceived truth, the practical realization of which will require the greatest personal sacrifice and risk. The believer expects that now "the joy of love" will simply be dispensed to him by the physician or

teacher as bread is dispensed to the starving. He overlooks the fact that organisms which for decades have been brought up to deny and repress life and the joy of love have structurally lost the biological capacity to give and receive such joy. In addition, they fear the very thing for which they long so ardently. In fact, it fills them with mortal terror if ever it comes their way. Once past a certain age, or where particular life circumstances are too deep-rooted, such organisms are often, all too often, beyond repair. Yet it is precisely these people, who are structurally and biologically incapable of happiness, who now expect salvation. An organism capable of joy is unable to form any such expectations. No, the orgasm theory has not brought redemption to the world, nor is there any salvation.

If, then, the therapist or teacher is unable to fulfill these unjustified and irrational expectations, the enthusiasm easily and quickly turns to dangerous hatred and calumny, on the heels of which emotional plague reactions soon follow. That is why it is necessary to warn against this kind of enthusiasm.

The orgasm theory has never claimed that chronic biological disturbances resulting from severe armoring can be radically cured. Far from it! I have repeatedly stressed, both verbally and in writing, that the great majority of today's adults, who go through life armored, can expect very little as far as any sexual experience of joy is concerned. For this very reason, I have laid the main emphasis on the prevention of biopathies from the day of birth.

Orgonomy has nothing, absolutely nothing to do with redemptionism. It stresses the enormity of the obstacles that stand in the way of a biologically undamaged life for the masses of humankind, and which will continue to stand in the way of such a life for a long time to come. And it stresses the enormous responsibility of everyone involved in any branch of socially vital work to eliminate the emotional plague. Responsibility, endurance, and the willingness to sacrifice are required in the personal and social battle for the protection of unarmored life.

Orgone therapists must therefore be constantly on guard against salvation enthusiasts. Not for an instant can they afford to close their eyes to the great dangers threatening from the car-

riers of the emotional plague. We are far from having achieved absolute personal and practical safety, although we have earned it. We can offer no happiness. On the contrary, we demand responsibility and help from our fellow workers in our great undertaking. No one can help them except they themselves. We can only show them where unhappiness is hatched and the harm it does. That we do with conviction and with fully committed understanding for anyone who will listen to us.