

## *The Silent Observer\**

### SIGMUND FREUD'S POSITION IN THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

When Wilhelm Reich (WR) coined the term "Sexual Revolution" in the 1930's, he had the vision of a basic change from the then prevalent negation of life and love to a rational, life-positive, happiness-enhancing handling of the love functions of mankind.

In 1952, WR's son frequently comes to his father and tells him a delightful love story: this girl has looked at him, that girl has kissed him, and another girl has refused to look at him. Forty years ago, most fathers would have beaten their sons for such talk. In the conservative, quiet New England village where we live, as in many other American villages, everyone knows, though few say it openly, that the fifteen-year-old girls have boyfriends and they embrace in certain places at night. There are many children from these embraces because, still, no public agency has taken up this social problem in a benign, protective manner. But the adolescents live their love life, even though some go down emotionally because of hasty, compulsory marriage in cases where children are born.

The church congregation knows all this. Some old ladies frown upon it or gossip about it, but everything remains peaceful, and everybody hopes the community, like many others, will keep out the freedom peddlers and politicking meddlers. This is actually what, among other things, WR termed "Sexual Revolution." It will change the world of man completely.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1927, when WR and Sigmund Freud discussed such things, it was altogether different. There was no talk anywhere of adolescent genitality. One spoke with great dignity of "cultural puberty," which meant complete genital absti-

nence during the years of adolescence. Freud had just a few years previously objected to a daughter of his friend Rie cutting her hair short into a "bubikopf." WR evoked a stir in the Viennese psychoanalytic community of 1920 because he never wore a hat and because he hiked with his friends through the Vienna woods in short trousers with bare knees, as was quite common at the time but unheard of in the circles of the culturalist psychoanalysts who officially advocated the sublimation of all instincts. Later, they praised WR's *Die Funktion des Orgasmus* privately. For example, Eduard Hitschmann told WR, after the publication of this book, "Sie haben den Nagel auf den Kopf getroffen." (You have hit the nail on the head.) But in the psychoanalysts' seminars genitality problems were not mentioned, or mentioned only clandestinely, just as "orgastic potency" fails to appear in psychoanalytic literature today and is still handled with silk gloves in circles of medical organomists.

To social-economists, sexuality was a highly private matter, if not pornographic fun, to be lived out at costume balls, but never mixed with "high politics." They still hobble along, trailing far behind actual developments. But there are already some social-economists who send in papers on human armoring to be published in the *Orgone Energy Bulletin*.\*

In 1927, there was no sexological institute in Vienna. The Berlin Institute of Sexology under Hirschfeld was concerned mainly with the legal affairs of sexology, treatment of perversions in the courts, etc. The Marcuse Institute of Sexology was open-minded, but the views of hereditary ethics, not science, governed the scene. There could be no talk of an American birth control physician going to India to help out in questions of planned parenthood. The USA Babbitt was still fighting Margaret Sanger, the great pioneer in American birth control, who had just been imprisoned for her good work. In 1952, you can buy contraceptives freely at the counter of any drugstore in any small village of the USA. The Catholic Church is still against it, of course, but it too has had to yield. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury is advocating birth control, incredible as it may

\*Written in English, 1952.

\*A journal on Reich's work published in the United States between 1949 and 1953. [Eds.]

sound. There *is* progress in this world. American theological institutions openly deal in sexual matters, in some cases even positively. The sexuality of the child is recognized as existent, even if the genitility of the adolescent is still prohibited. But everybody studies books on the subjects, good ones and bad ones, the latter prevailing.

Bestsellers are bestsellers in the USA in 1952 because they handle the problem of human social and personal sex-economy in a frank, open manner. *From Here to Eternity* describes truthfully the sexual misery of the soldier, but still badly misses the point of social sex-economy. Everybody reads about love life in the brothel or in the home of the commander, but the love life of adolescents remains taboo. In *The Caine Mutiny* the writer, Herman Wouk, penetrates deeply into the secret of the Little Man character. Yet the basic trends of the sexual revolution are still not integrated; the common functioning principle of human bioenergetic existence is still obscure for the majority. Nevertheless, all this is clearly in the direction of the sexual revolution.

In the middle of the 1920's, people began to feel that with Sigmund Freud something crucial had happened in human society. As WR expressed it in one of his books, *sexuality became aware of itself in the person of Sigmund Freud*, just as economy began to be aware of itself in the person of Karl Marx. The trend to unite Freud and Marx in Europe started to prevail in about 1927. At that time, there was no indication of the future split of a mechanized and ruined Karl Marx who would be confined to an imperialist Russian tyrant state, and a badly mauled Freud confined to the USA, appearing frequently in a commercial manner as thousands of "lay psychotherapists."

In 1927 WR had no inkling of any unification of Marx and Freud or, for that matter, any later antagonism between them. He was going to learn it all the hard way. He would fall into this pit unaware of his true function which, around 1940, turned out to be the discovery of the common functioning principle of both Freud and Marx, i.e., the *life energy in the libido theory*, and the *life energy in the theory of surplus value*.

WR also had no idea at the time of his talks with Freud in 1927-28 that, in 1934, a few men in the International Psychoana-

lytic Association would have succeeded in destroying the splendid relationship between him and Freud, and that he would be maneuvered out of the IPA for the alleged reason that he drew the social consequences from the libido theory. These same consequences were a matter of course in the 1940's in the USA, just as many social innovations and ideas of Karl Marx (strikes, social security, participation of workers in the distribution of wealth, 8-hour workday, child labor laws, representation of labor in government) were taken for granted in the USA and extinct in Stalinist Russia. While ignorant American Babbitts tried to persecute free thought, at the same time they justly fought the red fascist, underhanded, subversive spy who was around whenever he could sneak in, Marx's basic ideas, born in the misery of the manual worker's life in English manufacturing towns of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were alive in the splendid social legislation in the USA and other western countries. In the USSR, the workers had no legal protection.

But no one in Europe or in the USA had an inkling in 1927 of the events of a few years later, when millions of helpless and rebellious Little Men would carry a nuisance of an incompetent house painter to supreme power over seventy million people. And no one at that time could have even guessed that a Djugashvili,\* a third-rate politician from Georgia, would sneak and shoot his way to supreme power over many millions, again on the basis of human helplessness and mystical, authoritarian need for leadership. The Russian Revolution had been concluded only a few years before in 1920. Lenin had been dead only three years. Progressive sexual legislation was still active in the USSR; it was far superior to what the European conservative had to offer to the pioneer in social sex-economy. WR did not know that, in 1929, he would realize that this Russian legislation would be withdrawn and replaced by extreme sexual reaction around 1935.

WR had several talks with Freud on these issues and the following facts were clear and agreed upon in 1927:

1. The psychoanalytic technique for treating neuroses was far

\*Stalin's given name.

from effective. It needed much improvement. The technical possibilities were studied in the Vienna Psychoanalytic Technical Seminar led by WR. Freud was being kept informed about this work by Anna Freud who was a regular participant in the seminars.

2. At that time, Freud began to withdraw his interest from medical affairs in general and psychoanalytic technique in particular. He told WR on several occasions not to be too eager in his therapeutic zeal. The technical, therapeutic side of psychoanalysis was, to his mind, limited. Its main value lay in its power to understand the depth of human nature. But Freud stated explicitly that, though this was true, WR should go on probing into the possibilities of changing human psychic (later, so-called structural) functions. From this, great insights into the operations of the human unconscious mind were to be expected. In these discussions about psychoanalytic technique and depth psychology, Freud knew of no such thing as an ego psychology set against a libido theory, an "either sex or ego" and "either biology or sociology." WR never had the impression, or even as much as the indication of such an impression, that the libido theory was to be abandoned and replaced by an "ego theory." All such claims are concoctions of the minds of fearful, socially anxious, spell-bound psychoanalysts who had nothing in mind but getting away as quickly as possible from the unpleasant task of studying the bio-sexual structure of man. Freud explicitly and repeatedly stressed the point that the libido theory stands and would continue to stand. The ego theory was *not* set up against the libido theory. The Id, of which the Ego was only an outer part, continued to contain the powerful, affective libidinal drives. The death instinct was no more than a speculation he had engaged in for a change. WR should continue to do clinical research and not worry about the animosity against the libido theory. The problem of anxiety in its relation to the libido still remained to be solved (a "non liquet" Freud felt in his book on anxiety, 1926). Major discoveries were to be expected in the realm of human biology which most likely would help solve the core problem of human anxiety.

3. In these talks, Sigmund Freud repeatedly and continually stressed the clinical, empirical view, the operation of theory formation by way of experience. WR had the impression that, though he did not say so explicitly, Freud was worried about the attempts on the part of a few prominent psychoanalysts to solve the great problem of human structure formation by way of a single supposition, such as the birth trauma, or the will to power, or economic class interests of two centuries duration. The problem was clearly much deeper. But it was unclear where it was rooted.

No one in 1928 could have predicted that Freud would refuse to fully understand the character armor, that he would reject WR's direction in mass psychology which led through the Marxist political parties, that WR would be rejected by both Marxists and Freudians after a brief period of enthusiasm over his success, that, in 1939, an American psychoanalyst would advise WR not to lecture publicly on the libido theory to students of psychiatry, and that WR would give up individual therapy entirely in 1950.

4. There was no indication in these talks, which delved into the human misery, of an antithesis or contradiction between a "biological" and a "sociological" school in psychoanalysis, as later claimed and maintained by the respective schools. There was never any doubt but that the biology of man could not be separated from his social existence, that biological drives were moulded by the social forces at work in the particular period. Freud knew very well that he had, of necessity, devoted himself mainly to the biological or psychological side of man's structure. Nobody else had done it before or had done it with his new method of opening up the unconscious mind. Freud was, there is not the slightest doubt about it, fully aware of the crucial importance of the "outer world" which exerted its influence on the child by way of the family (Oedipus complex). True, Freud adhered to the patriarchal view of the family, to the *biological* nature of the Oedipus conflict. True, he interpreted society wrongly in many places, but he was perfectly clear as to the impact of social, outer-world influences upon the "instincts."

He had only not delved into sociology, except in such books as *Totem and Taboo* or the later *The Future of an Illusion*.

To summarize: Freud did not neglect or deny sociology. He refused, however, to fully realize and to accept it as a plain fact that, in Europe, sociology, as represented by the actions of multitudes of people, ran according to Marxist principles. He did not see that one had to deal with this tremendous sociological fact in 1928-1934, just as the U.S.A. is forced to deal with it in 1951. But Freud had done enough and should not be reproached for this.

One should also keep well in mind that the world was quite different in the 1920's from what it is in the 1950's. A tremendous number of grave things have happened: Fascism (red and black), a second world war, migration of millions upon millions of people upon the earth, sociology as a nightmare, the sexual revolution in the realm of infant and child upbringing, etc. Reading Freud in the 1950's gives the impression that the Freud of the 1920's did not know a thing about social matters. This is definitely wrong. Sigmund Freud was one of those few who opened up the view toward the social impact upon the psychological apparatus. Nobody can reproach him for not having known in 1920 what we know today in 1952. The reproach toward Freud, if any, is in an entirely different place.

*Sigmund Freud accepted the world's acclaim of psychoanalysis too easily.* He did not make it as hard as possible, not difficult enough for the world to accept him. He said clearly in 1926 that the world was accepting him only in order to destroy psychoanalysis, which it did, in the late 1920's. He knew very well what the game was. But he did not resist strongly enough the pull of the world which was to level out the sharpness of his discovery and mitigate what was so revolutionary in it: the discovery of the psychic energy and infantile sexuality.

Freud permitted himself too readily to fall for the mystical attitude of his students, though he knew he was caught in organizational mire. And he refused to enter the new venture of facing the social emotional plague.

The eagerness with which he followed WR's early undertakings proves that Freud knew well, true scientist that he was, that

he was only a beginning, and he said so candidly. More, much more was to come from the exposure of the depth of the human mind. Nobody could tell what kind of new surprises were to come, but they were certain to come. The nature of the sexual urge, the sadism of man, the confusion, the illusions, the hypocrisy, the great miseries, all this and more of the stuff which was at the roots of the mess of the twentieth century was somehow latently present in these talks. It was this that later jolted WR so irresistibly into experiencing man's political plague.

It was quite obvious that making nothing but a paying profession out of psychoanalysis would ruin its research qualities. It was equally obvious that the social riddles and their solutions were buried deep in the small, private lives of the people at large, and not in the offices of individual, well-to-do psychoanalytic physicians.

There could be no doubt about the fact that the psychoanalytic polyclinic in which WR worked so avidly (and he spoke often to Freud about the headaches caused by this clinic) could not possibly solve the problem of the neuroses. There were too many sick. So little was known about most emotional diseases, and so little medical skill was at one's disposal. This was perfectly clear. Clear, too, was that only further research into human structure would possibly accomplish things, and for this purpose it was necessary to stick to the guns of the libido theory which was dying at the hands of many psychoanalysts.

The differences between Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Reich began to appear when the Modjus\* started digging and confused an issue which otherwise could doubtlessly have been resolved. It was a matter of how to study the effects of society on the human depth. Was the "free association" method sufficient? Or had one to develop, as WR did in the psychoanalytic technical seminar, a new technique to cope with what was termed then for the first time the "character resistance?"

There can be little doubt that such differences could have been dissolved, had the Modjus kept out. They felt threatened

\*Acronym for *Mocenigo* and *Djugashvili*, two historical representatives of the emotional plague in the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively. [Eds.]

by the new and great strides in the development of psychoanalytic research techniques. Character analysis opened wide the gates into a depth from which later was to emerge the discovery of the life energy in man. They just sat there with their association method and influenced Freud in an underhanded manner and most likely by plain lying about WR. Nobody had an inkling of what WR later came to call "Emotional Plague," but it already operated right there in the Psychoanalytic Association in Vienna, and it destroyed a human relationship of great value.

All involved, including WR, became victims of the activity of the human depth structure which refused to be revealed fully and effectively: Sigmund Freud by permitting himself to be seduced into abandoning the emphasis on libido in his later years, and into dropping WR; WR in that he did not understand what was going on, what was happening to him, in view of the splendid work he did in the polyclinic and in the technical seminar. He permitted himself to abandon the psychoanalytic movement altogether and to give himself over to the high seas of the social storm of the time. However, he never for a moment lost his bearing as a natural scientist and physician. Modju Paul Federn and companions fell victim to the emotional plague by permitting themselves to become tools of underhandedness against a highly esteemed member of the psychoanalytic community, using calumny and defamation against this man since they could not contradict him factually and had to acknowledge his accomplishments even during the feud. And, finally, the hundreds of psychoanalysts who fell prey to expediency, organizational quarrels, intrigue, boiling their petty little psychoanalytic soups on petty little stoves, and, unintentionally, messed up a clear, clean theory of human depth.

It is only natural then that Sigmund Freud withdrew completely around 1924, not only because of sickness, but in disillusionment, giving up hope. WR went his own way, extricating himself completely from the mess of psychoanalytic organization politics. He went a way which later led toward the discovery of the orgone energy (Life Energy). The psychoanalytic movement split up into dozens of schools with little theoretical direction, some accomplishing much, most of them accomplishing

little as far as basic scientific work is concerned. But one great thing happened: *The public at large took over*, not in the form of clear theory formation or special organizations, but *in the form of biting deep into the sexual problem of living man*. It is here to stay and will never again disappear from the social scene, no matter what turn this great and true revolution in the life of the human species may still take; no matter whether the road will be straight or twisted, whether there will be great or little clarity regarding the economy of human bioenergy, whether our children and children's children will live their little and great loves freely and happily in twenty or in two hundred years.

Sigmund Freud can only be understood in these terms. He was one of the very few pioneers, a crucial step in the course of the biological (biosexual) revolution of mankind. However, he was not the first and not the last. He opened up vast domains without working out a fraction of what he had opened up. To be aware of the basic and true nature of all this is crucial to one's procedure in life, as well as in the science of man. One will blunder less if one will be more aware of the meaning of the *biosexual revolution of mankind*. On the other hand, one will help in the mass killing of babies to the extent that one will *not* be aware of this.

To understand Sigmund Freud, his accomplishment, his mistakes and hesitations, in a candid, friendly, and one would like to say, loving manner, means a great deal. And to be truthful toward him is to handle him the way he would have been the first to insist upon. All this requires guts and truthfulness. Until the sexual revolution will bear its fruits, many stupidities will occur.