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Harry T. Hunt  
*Brock University*

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# Intimations of a Spiritual New Age: II. Wilhelm Reich as Transpersonal Psychologist Part 2: The Futural Promise of Reich's Naturalistic Bio-Energetic Spirituality

Harry T. Hunt  
Brock University  
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

This is the second part of a consideration of the later Wilhelm Reich as anticipating a future planetary-wide “New Age” form of this-worldly spirituality in ways overlapping with figures from the same era of Western crisis from the 1930s through the 1950s, including Jung, Toynbee, Bergson, Heidegger, Teilhard de Chardin, and Simone Weil. Where the first part of this treatment of Reich as transpersonal psychologist traced his evolution from his bio-energetic psychotherapy to a Weberian this-worldly mysticism of a universal life energy, his cosmic orgone, with its attendant features of conflicted “spiritual emergency,” this second paper seeks to further develop some of its still largely unrealized implications. These include the relation of his later system to neo-shamanism; transpersonal psychologies of presence, Being-experience, and self actualization; essentializing reinterpretations of the historical Jesus; evolutionary continuities in contemporary consciousness studies; emergent system approaches in science; and the potential for a New Age planetary identity for humanity.

**Keywords:** *New Age, globalization, this-worldly mysticism, shamanism, sexual sublimation/energization, presence, schizoid/anorgonotic, spatial orientation, protozoa, neuronal depolarization, quantum approaches, structuralism, metaphor bi-directionality, emergent complex systems, UFO phenomenon*

A previous discussion of the life and work of Wilhelm Reich (Hunt, 2018) placed him with other key figures from the 1930s through the 1950s, including Jung, the later Heidegger, Toynbee, Teilhard de Chardin, and Simone Weil, in their largely overlapping intuitions of a futural “New Age” spirituality. This can be understood as the needed compensation for the growing secularization of traditional religion in modernity and the need for a spiritual renewal in sense of meaning and purpose in the context of an impersonal, globalizing capitalist economy—with its sensate, materialist values prioritizing the individual over a more traditional communalism. In terms of the understanding of world religions developed by Max Weber (1922/1963), a spiritual New Age that could help to unite the diverse peoples of the world in a

shared planetary consciousness and re-sacralization might be expected to take the form of his “inner-worldly” mysticism, as the sensate and this-worldly cultivation of numinous-ecstatic experience within our predominant valuing of everyday social life and individual personhood (see also Hunt, 2003, 2017).

Reich's development of his earlier bio-energetic psychotherapy into a “new religion of life” for the “children of the future” (Reich, 1953, p. 197; 1999, p. 360) is a major example of just such a naturalistically understood sensate or “this-worldly” spirituality. Its multiple components not only anticipate more recent developments in transpersonal psychology and the new movement of consciousness studies, but have continuing, largely underdeveloped, implications for any still more distant global re-sacralizing of human existence.

### An Original This-Worldly Mysticism

Reich's naturalistic psychology of spirituality shows a striking resonance with more recent transpersonal understandings of native shamanism, meditative enhancement and schizoid deletion of embodied presence, and New Age re-interpretations of the historical Jesus.

#### Reich and Neo-Shamanism

There are significant neo-shamanic elements within the sensate mysticisms, variously exemplified in Toynbee's (1957) use of Bergson's vitalism, Jung's (1955/1963) alchemical imagination, Heidegger's (1935/2014) sacralizing of Rhine and Black Forest, Thoreau's (1854/1982) abstract animism of New England woods, and especially in Wilhelm Reich's use of the form constants of wind, water, and luminosity to mirror the inner experience of vital presence. Indeed, Weber's category of inner-worldly mysticism comes the closest in his typology of the forms of world religion to an original shamanic template common among hunter-gatherer peoples (see also Hunt, 2003).

Shamanism combined vision and psychedelic trance (Bourguignon, 1973), hands-on energy healing and collective community guidance (Tedlock, 2005), with a metaphorically structured matrix of the natural order—as the rooting for Levi-Strauss (1966) of the complex mythological systems that provide mirrored self reference for the non verbal levels of personhood brought forward in numinous states (Hunt, 2003, 2016). A sensate mysticism of the future, supported by the mirroring evocations of water, land, and sky, would also be important in any planetary spirituality that might step back from ethnic fundamentalisms, while still conserving some degree of regional identity and at the same time respond to the globalizing crisis of ecology and environment. The latter was something especially central for the later Reich, who now emerges, sadly unbeknownst to himself, as essentially a modern shaman.

It is an irony of time and place that Reich came to define himself with the Eurocentric concept of "genius" rather than as *sui generis* "shaman"—a category not then available to him since the more recent literatures on these worldwide ur-spiritualities

did not yet exist (Eliade, 1964; Tedlock, 2005; Walsh, 2007). That identity, however, was far more consistent with Reich's (1976) own interest in an original matrilineal spirituality, and his spontaneous development as exquisitely sensitive virtuoso of bodily healing, and later focus on psychosomatic roots of cancer, along with his utopian revolutionary response to the collective misery and class struggle of a postwar patriarchal Europe. There is even the common preliminary calling to the shamanic path by early parental death (Walsh, 2007; Krippner, 2012), and a later awakening initiation that fits the characteristic pattern of "creative crisis" or "spiritual emergency"—with features that could only be seen as "psychotic" by his traditionally oriented psychoanalytic colleagues.

He was in fact led to his more biological and physical researches by his own spontaneous visionary and bio-energetic awareness, as in the blue radiating energy he saw between both lovers and stars in the night sky—also proving so disconcerting to a young Erik Erikson in 1933 (Evans, 1969). It was these visualizations and inner bodily energy streamings, augmented by their parallels with lightning and northern lights, spinning blue waves in darkroom accumulators, orgasmic sensation, and the pulsating pattern underlying all animal movement that led him to intuit orgone as a universal life force—within and without. As the felt energy aspect of Rudolf Otto's (1917/1958) numinous, it was then largely superimposed over his increasingly controversial attempts at its grounding in physical science.

Classical shamanism, and the neo-shamanism of contemporary transpersonal psychology (Walsh, 2007), in their empathic animation of physical nature, is simultaneously universal and intensely local. Reich spent hours and hours observing the woods, lakes, and ever changing weather of rural Maine. That resulting sensitivity helps to understand Reich's work with the cloudbuster less in terms of "weather control" than as a dowser-like exteriorization of his inner empathic resonance with the larger patterns of atmospheric change. Observers of Reich's procedures with the cloudbuster stress that he would not proceed without first "feeling" the air to see if such intervention would be "safe,"

since its effects could be unpredictable and even untoward. His cloudbuster operations were often followed several minutes later by changes in wind direction and moisture, which is as consistent with an unconsciously anticipatory intuition as with any causal control (Raknes, 1970; Reich, P., 1973). Many of his weather observations and *post hoc* interpretations thereof center on one-time anecdotal changes that imply it is his own sensitivity that is responding to larger patterns of atmospheric pressure often miles away (Reich, 1954, p. 80). What one sees here is an impactful charismatic personality opening himself and his final few followers to palpable inner energies directly resonant with, and so potentially guided by, similar patternings in nature.

Shamanic spirituality involves cultivation of an inner life energy, based on sensations of inner bodily “streaming” and its outward resonance (Tedlock, 2005), sounding strikingly similar to Reich’s orgone. Where Walsh (2007) sees an identity between shamanic energy experiences and Chinese chi, Reich (1942/1961) saw the same parallel with Indian prana—similarly stressing that its cosmic manifestations in nature behaved more “meaningfully” than in any traditionally “causal” fashion (Reich, 1951, p. 326). Tedlock (2005) stresses that multiple shamanic peoples use the same words for this inner energy of spirit as for lightning and the northern lights. She describes her own visualizations of its beyond-the-body externalization as healing “balls of light,” much as with Reich’s observations in his dark room accumulators. It is especially striking, given Reich’s elaboration of orgone out of his phenomenology of orgasm, that this shamanic energy and its initial activation has a directly sexual aspect, most clearly so in its “feminine” traditions (Eliade, 1964; Tedlock, 2005). Early Western missionaries were often especially upset by what they saw as the explicitly orgasmic quality of ecstatic trance in women shamans (Eliade, 1964).

There is a sexually androgenous aspect to tribal shamanism, with cross-dressing male shamans often wearing traditionally female clothing, and vice versa for women shamans. This has strong echoes of Jung (1928/1960) on the early stages of spiritual development as involving the felt assimilation of one’s opposite anima/animus gender identity—

which, as in the accounts of Whiteman (2000), can be with a hallucinatory vividness. Tedlock (2005) goes further in distinguishing the feminine and masculine traditions of shamanic training, with the former, whether for individual men or women, emphasizing exactly the developmental continuity between sexuality, inner bodily energy, and empathic healing methods that re-emerges in Reich—the male tradition being centered more on metaphors of a spiritual combat. Tedlock stresses that women shaman are often seen as the more powerful healers and that numerous tribal traditions believe they were the first shamans. Reich (1946/1970) seems to have had his own anticipation of this difference in his use of the anthropologist Malinowski to distinguish a patriarchal religiosity of the West from an earlier matrilineal “mysticism” of the more economically egalitarian and “sexually affirmative” native societies—based for Reich on their direct linkage of “orgastic experience” and an “animistic interpretation of natural processes” (Reich, 1946/1970, p. 138).

Keeping in mind the likelihood that a future New Age spirituality might reflect both sensate values and the continuing empowerment of women, it seems significant that Reich’s own spontaneous shamanic development, perhaps impacted by his own identification with his secretly witnessed mother’s sexuality, follows this feminine pattern. Consistent with Tedlock, recent research (Silvia, Fayn, Nusbaum, & Beaty, 2015; Costa, Destana, Costa, & Wittman, 2016) finds that not only do women report more spontaneous mystical and peak experiences, but that women reporting such experiences describe more intense sexual experiences than women lower on the questionnaires of “openness to experience” that also predict such states. Where traditional accounts from Plato in the *Symposium* and Indian Tantrism (Guenther, 1976) picture a male pattern of spiritual sublimation going from sexuality to mystical ecstasy based on the suppression of the former, Tedlock (2005) and Laski (1961) describe an experiential continuity between female orgasm and ecstatic states—the first potentially morphing directly into the second (see also Hunt, 2003). This is the pattern of development that Reich himself describes, from

orgasmic potency, to inner “streaming,” to cosmic orgone.<sup>1</sup>

Any further support needed for a broader identity of Reich as spontaneous shaman could make use of the astonishing similarities between his orgone movement and the earlier Native American Ghost Dance religion, begun by Wovoka (Jim Wilson) as the syncretic fusion of shamanism and the American work economy, and spreading rapidly across the Southwest from 1890 through 1920 (Warren, 2017). Indeed, Warren treats the Ghost Dance as a kind of paradigm for revolutionary New Age religions to come. It was based on a communal circle dance on the model of the traditional Sun Dance, combined with aspects of Pentacostal revival, and culminating in ecstatic visions of an apocalyptic future of reunion with dead relatives, the re-greening of the desert and return of the buffalo, and a shared work economy in which there would be no hierarchical difference between Natives and Whites—a utopianism also reminiscent of Reich’s (1946/1970) post-Marxist hopes for an egalitarian worldwide “work democracy.” One could almost conclude Reich had emigrated to the United States to create his own version of Wovoka’s “red Messiah” movement, with both also intuiting their own Dionysian versions of Jesus, both affirming a primary sacredness of life energy, and both rejecting the “machine” of hierarchical capitalism.

In both movements ecstatic trance-like streamings and bodily vibrations led to personal transformation and spontaneous healing, with even a shared practice of weather control to combat desertification, and well intentioned but fantastical protections against the destructive weapons of the dominant civilization—as in Ghost Dance immunity to soldier bullets and Reich’s work against atomic radiation. Finally, where Wovoka turned to the skies in traditional shamanic soul flight, Reich encountered his UFOs. As if all that were not enough, both movements drew down a harsh government persecution, also leading both Wovoka and Reich to reach out to higher governmental powers for greater understanding, and culminating instead in the needless tragedies of Wounded Knee and Reich’s own death in prison. Wovoka himself lived into old age, better supported by his communal identity and

inner cohesion as “shaman.” This, with his identity as self declared “isolated scientific genius,” Reich would have to forego—missing the potential New Age identity that might have offered him some consolation.

### **Reich on Spiritual Transformation: The Vitalization of Presence vs. its Schizoid/Anorgonotic Deletion**

Reich’s vitalization of the sense of presence or beingness is best understood in the context of the this-worldly spiritualities of Being-experience in Gurdjieff (1975), Almaas (1986), and Maslow (1962). Both Almaas and Heidegger (1938/1944) see our self-aware capacity to experience Being as the core of the experience of numinous awe and wonder. Presence is real and factual, rather than a construction or interpretation, and as such has the potential to be the focal understanding for a spiritual New Age that would, as Reich aspired, unify spirituality with the factual empiricism of science. “Life,” as the unifying principle for Reich, as it was previously for Nietzsche (1888/1967) and Bergson (1907/1944), is treated by him as an *experiential* concept—both sentient Being and the sentience of Being.

There are two levels of this experience of presence, both reflected in the later Reich. His capacity for the experience of a cosmic orgone corresponds to Almaas (1996) on realization of the “point” and Maslow (1962) on one’s identity as Being-as-such. Meanwhile, Reich’s descriptions of “orgastic potency” as a vitalization and felt enhancement of a “personal presence” correspond to Almaas (1988) on personal essence and Maslow (1962) on self actualization—with one’s more personal beingness felt as the synthesis of an autonomous strength (Almaas’s red *lataif*) with both the “gold” of merging love and the “green” of a givingness and compassion (Almaas, 1986). Indeed, phenomenal descriptions of the closely related Gurdjieffian “self remembering” include feelings of kinesthetic aliveness and a downward bodily flow of awareness felt as a “living water” or “elixir” that seems very close to Reich’s inward “streamings” (De Vilaine-Cambessedes, 1997; Almaas, 1986).<sup>2</sup>

It is this more personal sense of presence or alive Being that would be especially important

for a futural this-worldly mysticism (Hunt, 2003). Just as Max Weber (1905/1958) saw the this-worldly propheticism of the Protestant Reformation as needed to sanctify the new ethic of economic vocation, and to make more tolerable the growing pressures of the new capitalism, so its further development into a society of individuality intensified to the point of a widespread isolated schizoidness (Fairbairn, 1954) and compensatory narcissism (Lasch, 1978), would require its own transformative spiritual renewal. This becomes the this-worldly mystical movements seeking the development of the expansive presence or “I am” experience of Maslow, Almaas, and Reich (see also Friedman, 2013).

Weber’s (1922/1963) notion of a modern “disenchantment” in which meaning and purpose are for many no longer mediated by Judeo-Christian tradition, is more specifically reflected in Gurdjieff’s (1950) depiction of a widespread culture of schizoid dilemma in the sense of experiencing oneself as “asleep,” machine-like, and with no sense of a central I or felt essence—all covered over by a fragmented role playing. More recently Sass (1998) has noted the schizoid quality of much 20th century culture, with its hyper self-consciousness, feelings of an inner deadness, and “half awake” detached sense of self. Further intensified, this becomes the diminished self-presence and involuntary absorption in normally latent features of immediate consciousness in Sass’s (1992) account of the prodromal phase of a schizophrenia, which he also sees as a syndrome especially characteristic of the 20th century West.

Reich’s version of this continuum between enhanced presence and its widespread schizoid deletion, with the latter as the dilemma of modernity, comes in his contrast between vitalized streaming and an “anorgonotic” emptiness, inner deadness, and loneliness. He saw in most of his clients a stereotyped woodenness and depersonalization, compensated by “substitute behaviors” of artificiality, role playing, narcissistic grandiosity, and “mechanized” resort to a sexual release without any intimacy or empathic concern (Reich, 1949/1961). Reich (1953) would later generalize this rigidification of spontaneity and inner freedom into a culture wide “emotional plague,” potentially exteriorized in

the experience of an environmental bleakness and flatness, and with widespread feelings of dullness, incipient vertigo, and nausea. In his bio-energetic therapy he describes a core contraction of the “body armor,” resisting a more natural fullness of breathing, and a rigid, catatonoid freezing or “shock paralysis.” Any initial relaxation in the move towards vitalization and fully embodied presence can then trigger a reactive nausea and anxieties of “falling,” “dissolving,” or “bursting” (Reich, 1948/1973, 1949/1961). These are also Winnicott’s (1971) “primal agonies” or instabilities in the core sense of self.

Reich is here describing a widespread syndrome of loss in a background sense of equilibrium in bodily and spatial orientation that anticipates the philosopher Charles Taylor (1989) on Weberian disenchantment as the impairment of personal coherence based on a felt loss of place, grounding, and spatial orientation. What Taylor meant more metaphorically, Reich was already locating in direct experience. He is especially prescient in his anticipation of more recent discussions of healthy phenomenal consciousness as “embodied” (Gallagher, 2005; Hunt, 2007), and the relation of a continuum of felt presence and its deletion to coherence vs. incoherence in body image—based on its inner sense of equilibrium, balance, and spatial orientation (Valera, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Hunt, 1995).

There has been much research on the impairment of physical balance and difficulties of spatial reasoning in schizophrenia (Aylward, Walker, & Bettes, 1984), as well as related transitional findings of poor balance in chronic nightmare sufferers (Slater & Hunt, 1997; Ayers, Beaton, & Hunt, 1999), psychedelic “bad trips” (Barr, Langs, Holt, Goldberger, & Klein, 1972), and those responding to questionnaire measures of dissociative and schizotypal tendencies (Michalica & Hunt, 2013). Meanwhile more integrative enhancements of consciousness, including reports from spontaneous mystical and peak experience, long term meditators, and frequent lucid and archetypal dreamers, show statistically superior performance on tasks of physical balance, spatial orientation, and spatial reasoning (Gackenbach

& Snyder, 1988; Hunt, 2007). Reich would have anticipated such findings

The key point for a Reichean this-worldly spirituality, fully consistent with Heidegger, Gurdjieff, Maslow, and Almaas, is that we *do* actually exist, and exist as embodied beings. Being-experience is not a “model” or “representation” of “something else.” Being experience, as the core of numinous meaning, is not a model of itself. It is itself. It is our human attunement to the existential reality of being alive. But our capacity to fully feel and embody that—or suffer its painful deletion and sense of emptiness—will vary—individually, historically, culturally.

For Reich we share a background “is-like” of consciousness—based on its sensed flow, pulsation, and expansion out and contraction away—common to all motile organisms, down to the protozoa. Human self-awareness, in its more presentational or felt aspect of our self-referential symbolic capacity, allows the amplification of these basic forms of all consciousness. In our everyday experience these stay mostly implicit, as what Damasio (1999) termed the “background feelings of life itself,” and these background “feelings of the world” (Smith, 1986; Ratcliffe, 2005) will then inform and guide more differentiated functioning. Their explicit enhancement—as mediated by abstract metaphors of light, space, depth, and flow (Laski, 1961)—become the numinous meanings of awe and wonder that can become further schematized in the major religious traditions (Otto, 1917/1958; Hunt, 2007). Meanwhile, the felt deletion of these inner forms of the “is-like” of living consciousness—experienced as the sense of emptiness, futility, and loss of reality—will become widespread and normative in eras of disenchantment—now as the increasing collectivization of Fairbairn’s (1954) schizoid dilemma and Reich’s anorgonotic loss of vital presence (see also Hunt, 2007).

Reich saw the cultural expression of this deletion of presence in a characteristically Western understanding of consciousness, personhood, and life on the model of “machine” or “mechanism”:

All the notions man has developed about himself are consistently derived from the machine he has created. ... The machine has had a mechanical

“dulling” and “rigidifying” effect on man’s conception of his own organization. ... In the process of this development, man’s functioning was actually changed in a mechanical way. ... Now he is filled with mortal fear of the living and the free. ... The machine became, is, and will continue to be his most dangerous destroyer, if he does not differentiate himself from it. (Reich, 1946/1970, pp. 335–336, 341)

Accordingly a Reichean perspective on Harari’s (2015) futurism of an artificial intelligence (AI) civilization becomes fairly clear—with its notions, fantastical or not, of nanobot augmentations of brain function, ubiquity of artificial “expert systems” in all areas of human life, “uploading” of consciousness into a digital pseudo-immortality deprived of the is-like of any lived meaning, supposed future emergence of sentient self awareness in recursive enough artificial systems, and the “singularity” of a final take-over by such a fully perfected artificial intelligence (Chalmers, 2010). The tendency to reconceptualize physical processes as units of “information” has even encouraged a new speculative metaphysics of the entire universe as itself a sort of higher order computer “simulation” (Bostrom, 2003; Atmanspacher, 2015). For Reich such worldviews show only the further reduction of the spontaneity and is-like of all living sentience—which Nietzsche and Bergson saw as the actual creative thrust of the universe—to a “computational” and so essentially “mechanistic” understanding. It would be the triumph of his “emotional plague” in a worldwide civilization that would be collectively and in a sub-clinical sense “schizoid.”

It is not that such a reduction of mind and consciousness would have to be “true” to have these damaging effects. The computational model of mind is after all the elaboration of an earlier philosophical behaviorism with its skepticism about other minds—already elaborated into the schizoid fantasies that other people than oneself could just as well be “zombies” without any needless epiphenomal “is-like” (Dennett, 1991), and a Turing test denying any meaningful difference in “process” where “simulators” and “reals” cannot be outwardly differentiated (Searle, 1990). Such views are all based

on the modern, uniquely Western understanding of consciousness as something inherently “inside” and cut off from outer access in a manner that fully lived out would indeed be the definition of a withdrawing schizoid mentality. Wittgenstein (1969), Mead (1934), and Ricoeur (1992) have long since refuted such culturally systematized narcissism by showing the essential equivalence of first, second, and third person modes of access to human experience. With Heidegger (1935/2014), and one might add Reich, “lived experience in its power to transport us out, ... to open up ... does not refer to somewhere inside, but signifies the most extreme outside of a naked exposure” (pp. 30, 125). Fully felt and embodied consciousness *shows*—its potential to hide is a secondary consequence of self-awareness, its “privacy” is part of the “strange fruit” of Western modernity (Hunt, 1995).

So the issue would not be the “truth” in such a computational reductionism of consciousness, but in the danger that a materialist globalizing civilization of the future would choose—out of its values of control, power, and commodification—to redefine consciousness and life in terms of that image. Put bluntly, if an entire culture in the form of Nazi Germany could become sociopathic and paranoid, so a worldwide culture of the future could become schizoid—its values laid out along an autistic/Asperger/schizoid continuum as the metaphysical elaboration of mind as computation. Reich would have fully agreed with Harari (2015) and Schneider (2017) that the only alternative then becomes the sort of re-sanctification of an emergent uniqueness of life and consciousness that became the essence of Reich’s final system.

### **New Age Christianity and Reich’s Dionysian Jesus**

A New Age planetary re-spiritualization would entail some degree of essentialization/simplification of the traditional world religions—as reflected for instance in the Eastern meditative traditions by the spirituality of liberated presence in Krishnamurti (1973/1987; Hunt, 2014). Such essentializations and re-alignments have been part of the histories of all religion, and in the future could be expected within any spiritual attunement to the socio-economic consequences of globalization—much as for Weber (1905/1958) the Protestant

Reformation helped to mirror the individualizing values of the new capitalism. This becomes especially important for future developments in Christianity itself, since much of the valuative aspect of economic globalization has already been fueled and/or supported by the further secularization of its sanctification of social personhood.

Accordingly, and following further Weber’s linkage of mysticism and individualism, rather than prophetic communalism, one would expect any such re-essentialization of the Christian message to move in the direction of a more mystical Jesus—as in Jung (1959) on Christ as archetype of the Self, Teilhard de Chardin (1959) on all life as divinely incarnated, and Simone Weil (1951/2009; Hunt, 2017) on the suffering of Jesus opening to a mystical grace. Already Gurdjieff (1973; in Ouspensky, 1949) had described his Sufi-inspired system as an “esoteric Christianity,” suggesting that a truly Christian love could only have been originally empowered for the earliest Christians by the inner strength of felt presence conferred by the charismatic impact of Jesus and his key disciples. Christian doctrines of love and forgiveness could only be fully sustained through that sense of energized numinous presence. One can see how coming to fully believe that all one’s past sins had been completely and finally forgiven, and that all following this path of love—“On Earth as it is in Heaven”—could never die, would have created and empowered this sense of a timeless here and now presence—with feelings of grace and gratitude and love of others emerging out that sense of empowerment (Hunt, 2012). It would be, for Gurdjieff, this experience of vitally embodied beingness, *supporting* the ethics of love and compassion, that would more easily have been lost in a later mainstream Christianity.

The later Reich’s (1953/1969) understanding of a Dionysian Jesus picks up this same aspect of the empowered “joy” and “glad tidings” of the early Christians, ostensibly from Nietzsche’s related critique of institutional Christianity in *The Antichrist* (1888/1954). Nietzsche rejected Pauline dogmas of resurrection and afterlife as a “misguided war against life.” Rather, the historical Jesus, fully empowered by a joyous aliveness, was teaching not a doctrine but a “state of the heart,” a “new way of life” based



on the here and now “feeling of the transfiguration of all things” that gives life back its intrinsic “center of gravity” (pp. 585, 606, 608, 616, 618).

While Reich was clearly influenced here, his *Murder of Christ* (1953), despite its reiterated bitterness over his government persecution and his identification with an impending martyrdom, develops its own version of Jesus as this-worldly sensate mystic—its importance for Reich reflected both in his diaries and in the many books on the historical Jesus in his personal library (Reich, 1994; Sharaf, 1983). Without the dogmas of virgin birth or afterlife, his Jesus—with his “soft glow” and “orgonotic radiance” (Reich, 1953, p. 35) would have known the fullness of genital love—consistent with more recent discoveries of some of the Gnostic gospels (King, 2003; Kasser, Meyer, & Wurst, 2006). Actual dying for Reich becomes a near-death experience of mergence back into cosmic orgone, while the incarnation becomes Reich’s hope for “the newborn infant, the eternal child of the future,” with its “inborn potentialities” finally understood and supported (Reich, 1953, p. 197).

Reich goes so far as to state that a true establishment of Christianity, as reflected in the life-affirming embodiment of the historical Jesus, would have led directly into his own contemporary orgonomy.

### **The Nature of Consciousness**

The later Reich articulates his own version of an organismic-holistic cognitive psychology, with its implications for long standing debates on the evolution of consciousness and a surprising congruence with current cognitive approaches to metaphor.

### **Protozoan Continuities**

Reich (1942/1961, 1948/1973) was led to his microscope work and conclusions that single cell organisms show the first evolutionary emergence of a basic sentience based on their outward behavioral reflections of his phenomenology of the flow, pulsation, expansion/contraction of human orgasm. He identified the physical expansion of the amoeba in its exploratory behaviors and its contraction against aversive stimuli as an ur-pleasure and pain. He makes the alternation between contraction

and expansive release, which he terms “orgastic convulsion,” criterial for all sentient life—reflected in the flow and pulsation of protozoan movement, the pattern of forward extension and backward contraction in running animals, and in the actual outward drop-like shape of primitive organisms.

The orgastic convulsion is specific for the living domain. ... it differentiates the living from the nonliving ... . A Thundercloud [does not] constitute an “orgonotic system” ... it possesses no “core”, no “peripheral membrane” ... . Therefore it does not convulse ... like a living organism ... it only discharges accumulated charges. (Reich, 1949/1973, pp. 178–179)

It is crucial to the parsimony of Reich’s argument for a felt sentience in protozoa that consciousness will always show outwardly to some degree. This allows its direct sensing by a human self-awareness. In the later sense of the holistic biologist Hans Jonas (1996, 2001), only life knows life, and this not so much by inference as by empathic recognition.

Literally, “emotion” means “moving out,” “protruding” ... . Microscopic observation of amoebas subjected to slight electric stimulation renders the meaning of “emotion” in an unmistakable manner. Basically *emotion* is an expressive plasmatic motion. Pleasurable stimuli cause an “emotion” of the protoplasm from the center towards the periphery. Conversely [for] unpleasurable stimuli ... . These two basic directions of the biophysical plasma current correspond to the two basic affects ... pleasure and anxiety. (Reich, 1949/1961, p. 358)

Parsimony thus leads Reich to this notion of a common “is like” of consciousness—however implicit in more self-aware creatures—across the entire evolutionary continuum.

Reich’s method of theorizing here—which he calls “orgonotic functionalism” (Reich, 1949/1973) is the abstract form of contextual description that Piaget (1970) called “structuralism” and made the basis for his developmental observations of childhood cognition. Piaget (1963) models his notion of equilibrium, as reciprocal cycles of

cognitive assimilation and accommodation, on the amoeba's expansion of pseudo-pods to assimilate nutrients and its contractile outer molding to all more resistant objects. Freud (1914/1959) similarly conceptualized the alternation of a primary narcissism and outwardly extended object libido on this same model of amoeboid behavior. Meanwhile, Erikson (1963, p. 92) contextualized Freud's specific psychosexual stages in terms of more fundamental organismic "modes" of incorporation, retention, expulsion, and intrusion/inception, citing Konrad Lorenz that these were also the core patterns of behavior in single cell organisms lacking the specific sexual organs that were Freud's concern.

Reich could not have anticipated the support for his notion of a basic sentience in protozoa that would come from later research (Eckert, Randall, & Augustine, 1988) showing the same electrochemical processes mediating both protozoan movement and the "convulsive" action potentials of neurons, but his observations of protozoan behavior also continued an earlier Darwinian tradition—prior to the advent of a more restricted "methodological behaviorism"—that felt it warranted to posit a basic sentience at the protozoan level (see also Hunt, 1995).

Darwin's student Romanes (1883/1977), the holistic biologist Von Uexküll (1934/1957), the experimental psychologist Binet (1888/1970), and comparative psychologists Jennings (1906) and Washburn (1917) all followed Darwinian principles of evolutionary continuity in concluding that the novelty and complexity of protozoan behavior warranted positing it as the point of emergence for a proprio-locating sentience necessitated by the comparative rapidity of their movements. Jennings (1906) went so far as to say that if an amoeba were the size of a dog, we would have no problem in attributing consciousness to its behaviors. Washburn (1917), anticipating Reich here, concluded that the amoeba lifeworld would consist of moment-by-moment flashes of sentient self-location, with its successive "nows" of expansion as proto-pleasure, and contractions as sentient distress.

Meanwhile, Binet (1888/1970) had suggested that just as stomach cells would be protozoa specialized for digestion, and thereby no longer

needing a self-locating sentience, so neurons would be protozoa specialized for sensitive motility—that motility capacity, in metazoan brains synaptically stimulating other sensory and motor neurons. The implication being that metazoan nervous systems do not create consciousness after reaching some level of neural complexity, but gather, organize, and direct a primary sentience already present in each neuron. Binet would not have anticipated his rather startling confirmation by later research showing the same electrochemical processes of "convulsive" membrane depolarization and hyperpolarization in both neurons and protozoan movements (Eckert et al., 1988). This led Hunt (1995) and the neuroscientist Norman Cook (2008; Cook, Carvalho, & Damasio, 2014) to the view that neuronal/protozoan "spiking" and its membranal flow is the template for all sentience.<sup>3</sup> It would be the sentient template for Gibson's (1979) ambient flow of the "navigational" movement of more complex animals moving through their environmental "array"—its "affordances" constantly transforming because of that very movement—creating a path of flow through the array with its expansions forward and contractions back.

These early Darwinian observations of protozoa and their consistency with theories of a primary neuronal sentience offer an unexpected support for Reich's view of a common "is-like" or deep structure of all forms of consciousness as patterns of "convulsive" onflow, pulsation, and expansion/contraction. For Reich it is human self awareness that has the capacity to amplify that patterning into both a representational symbolic cognition, based on the resonance of these ur-forms with the similar dynamics of physical nature, and its presentational amplification into sexual and numinous ecstasy. On the grounds of observational parsimony, Reich offers an overview of a consciousness whose form is shared by all living creatures, and amplified as such as the inner form of human self-awareness. It is broadly consistent with the later Heidegger (1947/1998) on our human continuity with the simpler lifeworlds of all planetary creatures and our self-aware responsibility as the "shepherd" of a Being-as-such that is the core of the sacred. That continuity and responsibility would become central

to a future spirituality fully responsive to the widely anticipated ecological crises to come.

### **Self Awareness, Symbolic Cognition, and Higher States of Consciousness: A Reichian Perspective**

For Reich the fullness of embodied self awareness, unblocked by character and muscular rigidities, brings forward or amplifies the flow and pulsation of the primary is-like of all sentience in the form of “orgastic” or ecstatic states—extending from orgasm to a full unitive resonance with cosmic orgone. Yet the intensity of those energies, potential in human self awareness, can also create a division or splitting of consciousness against itself, so that the pressure created in those most open to the capacity for ecstasy and creative originality can also lead to the defensive “shrinking of the bioplasm” in schizophrenia and its anorgonic depletion of vital sense of being (Reich, 1949/1961).

Support for Reich’s view of self awareness as amplifying and bringing to direct awareness the basic background forms of all sentience also comes from early psychological studies of introspection, and their further intensification in meditative and altered states of consciousness (Hunt, 1986, 1995). Thus William James (1890, 1912/1971) on the “stream of consciousness” describes its background “fringe” of sensed “thatness” or beingness as the guiding but normally occluded context for the more specific “whatnesses” of self and world in everyday experience. This seems identical to Damasio’s (1999) “background feelings of life itself,” and on a more differentiated level to Gendlin (1962) on the non articulated “felt meanings” behind more focal awareness. To become directly aware of this background “thatness” is to experience it as “other”—imposed as if done by outside forces, positively as the true source of spontaneity in creativity (Nietzsche, 1886/1954) and meditation (Van Dusen, 1972), negatively in the hyper-reflexive “first rank” symptoms of prodromal schizophrenia (Sass, 1998). As that background fringe becomes more conscious as such, then for James one can begin to directly experience its “streaming” onflow, always ahead into the next moment, with its separable moments of an impalpable “transitive” flow and its more “substantive” aspects that James

(1909/1971) would later characterize, anticipating Reich, as the “pulses” or “drops” of felt sensation.

More explicit introspectionist studies, based on “avoiding the stimulus error” of missing the immediate “isness” of consciousness for its practical “is for”—the meditative side of a more negative “derealization”—created states of amplification that form a continuum with more intense and widely studied altered states of consciousness, such as spontaneous synesthesias and body image transformations (Hunt, 1986, 1995). Thus in Nafe’s (1924) study of pleasure/unpleasure in response to novel stimuli his introspectors described an expanding “bright pressure sensation” inside the body image—rising from midriff towards the head and sometimes extending outside and above felt bodily boundaries—with a corresponding “dark pressure” shrinking from periphery to center with unpleasure. Such parallels to Reich’s protozoan expansions and contractions are also commonly described in the body image hallucinations of schizophrenia (Angyal, 1936), and the more blissful synesthetic sensations of inner floating, streaming, and expansion in meditation associated with chakra/*lataif* activation (Hunt, 1995, 2003). These would be variations of Reich on “streaming” and Almaas (1986) on the self-aware realization of James’ “stream” as a metaphorically based embodiment of “living water” or “elixir.”

One can also find Reich’s basic forms of the “is-like” and their amplification in self-realization in the later Heidegger’s (1938/2012, 1942/2013) phenomenology of the multiple facets of Being-experience, considered here as 1) the noetic core of Otto’s numinous experience in unitive mysticism, and 2) its own amplification of Husserl’s (1905/1964) phenomenology of immediate consciousness. Thus Heidegger (1942/2013) discriminates an “inceptuality” or expansive “welling forth” of Being-experience, with its sense of wonder and gratitude for the intrinsic “it gives” of existence. Fully schematized, this aspect could be considered as the origin of the mysticisms of love and grace. This inceptuality merges into the sense of a dynamic “onflow” of Being—in its felt energy aspect as Heidegger’s “care”—unfolding ahead as the inner form of fascination and novelty.

This would become schematized as the energy/freedom mysticism of the later Reich, shamanism, and Taoism. That unfoldment or “carry forward” in turn opens into the sense of mystery in the intrinsic unknown of an all-creative open void of next and next. This third aspect of Heidegger’s Being-experience may then be formulated in the unitive mysticisms of knowledge, as Otto’s (1917/1958) “wholly other” that must remain an ineffable “negative theology,” not further specifiable.

The self aware realization of these ur-forms of sentience—fully consistent with Heidegger on aspects of Being-experience as the noetic core of the numinous—from a Reichean perspective are not thereby reducible to something primitive or “regressive,” since they are amplified through and as human symbolic cognition—thereby emerging as the felt core for all-inclusive metaphysical and ethically responsible understandings of both personhood and cosmos.

### **The Bi-Directionality of Cognitive Metaphor and the Unity/Dis-unity of Civilizations**

It is especially intriguing to find Reich anticipating aspects of the recent cognitive psychology of Lakoff and Johnson (1999) on the ubiquity of a common set of physical metaphors, equally necessary for both the expression of feeling and consciousness and for the representational sciences of the physical world. For Lakoff and Johnson these are the basic patterns of path, container/contained, force, balance/imbalance, center/periphery, and part/whole. Metaphorically derived from the basic properties of motile perception, these can be used as metaphoric mirrors/evocations of conscious feeling, or else abstracted as the scientific/mathematical concepts of science. Lakoff and Nunez (2000) suggest that mathematics, as itself an interior “language” of mind, can represent the laws of physics because both amplify, on a maximally abstract level, these same constants of form, force, and flow. Using the term “organ-sensations” for Lakoff’s structures of perception—inside and out—Reich offers a very similar insight:

The brain of the mathematician is not a differently organized instrument, it differs only insofar as

it is capable of expressing organ sensation in mathematical form. ... It is the living organism that orders, re-groups, its sensations before articulating them in mathematical formulas (Reich, 1949/1973, p. 95). Mathematics ... can only offer a description of objective nature because a unity of self and cosmos exists, ... and [they] obey the same laws. (Reich, 1999, p. 383–384)

While the metaphors organizing humanities and sciences are the same—and so bi-directional—the two intelligences are ultimately and intrinsically distinct (Hunt, 2009). While, on the one hand, the psychological categories of purpose and need structure and direct the sciences, and, on the other, the natural patterns/processes they discover offer more and more abstract metaphors to mirror consciousness and feeling, the intelligence of empathic, experiential understanding, despite these bi-directional metaphors of such interest to Lakoff *and* Reich, differs from the intelligence of causal explanation in fundamental intent (Gadamer, 1975/2000; Hunt, 2009). The one leads to levels of felt meaning in personhood and its potential spiritual development, the other to the manipulation, prediction, and ultimate commodification of physical things—or of animate beings so taken. Not surprisingly, although Reich’s organotic thinking would re-impose meaning over causation, he has his own understanding of this fundamental distinction in intention and use:

Science operates through the delimitation of the self from the cosmic orgone. Religion operates with the unity of self and the cosmos. ... Natural science therefore cannot attribute consciousness to the cosmos whereas religion is forced to do so. (Reich, 1999, p. 383)

The further implication for a consideration of culture, and any futural New Age, will be that while these intelligences are intrinsically distinct, they must cross over into each other on the basis of the common metaphoric structures available to each (Hunt, 2009). They will integrate and often collide (slavery and torture vs. ritual magic), but they cannot genuinely synthesize. To return to the

larger concerns of Toynbee (1957), this means that the great civilizations or “universal states” will, at the heights of their cultural achievements, give birth to systems of all inclusive meaning that *temporarily* integrate, within the temporal/historical limitations of their respective “ages,” their own versions of the presentational or “spiritual” and representational or “mechanistic” intelligences.

The eventual coming apart of such unitive world views will be inevitable in terms of changing economics, politics, and technologies. These become the periods of Weberian “disenchantment” and Sorokin’s (1957) eras of sensate desacralization. Thus successive ages of integration in the history of the West were found first in the cross mirroring of Greek mathematics and science and the spiritual ways of life in the Socratic philosophers. Then followed the medieval integration of Christianity and Aristotle, and later the shared metaphoricity of the new Renaissance science and occultism in figures such as Bruno—a hero of Reich’s. For Heidegger (1927/1962) it was the Cartesian split of subject and object, and resulting Enlightenment division of humanities and sciences, that inaugurated the “disenchanted” predominance of causation over meaning in the modern West—against which Nietzsche, Bergson, and Reich seek their renewed integrations.

Reich’s version of a potential New Age would re-integrate the core metaphoricities of life and consciousness back into the physical universe—to restore a mirrored resonance of consciousness and cosmos. It is Reich’s response to what he saw as the growing predominance of a “mechanism” now culminating in Harari’s (2015) vision of a coming replacement of the spontaneity of life with its artificial, quantitatively more efficient, simulations. Instead, Reich posits a kind of pan-biotism—with the basic forms of the living present as “seeds” or “potentials” through all of physical nature (see also Lanza, 2009). His position here is close to the holistic biologist Hans Jonas (1996) who holds that consciousness and life cannot ultimately be inconsistent with the physical universe from which they have emerged, however difficult that is to conceive epistemologically, as the collision of our two most fundamental, socio-empathic and thing

intelligences (see Hunt, 2001, 2009). Accordingly, for Jonas, the organizing “seeds” or “templates” later to emerge as living sentience must be latent and potential *in some form* even in the aftermath of the “big bang” of scientific creation:

This means that right from the beginning matter is subjectivity in its latent form, the possibility of eventual inwardness ... even if aeons are required for the actualizing of this potential. (Jonas, 1996, p. 173)

Looking back “down” from the system complexity of self aware conscious life one could locate such seeds in the quantum indeterminacy and spontaneity of an energy simultaneously wave and particle,<sup>4</sup> and, with Reich, and James on consciousness as “stream,” in the principles of fluid streaming—in the water and wind of Thoreau (Hunt, 1995)—in short, in all that is life-like. This would become Reich’s version of a New Age “religion of the future” for an emerging “universal state” that might preserve and reconstitute what traditional spiritualities have understood as our full humanity “at home” in its physical cosmos.

#### **Unfinished Implications in the Later Reich**

Even the most speculative aspects of Reich, his metaphysics of a cosmic orgone and views on extra-terrestrial intelligence, have their own significant carry-forward.

#### **Orgone as Fundament and/or Emergent**

What kind of science and philosophy of science was Reich doing? Reich (1942/1961) admits to a long standing lack of interest in philosophy which does show in his not working out the relation between the two ostensible levels in his final system: the first is a speculative version of a “path of descent” spontaneously reminiscent of mystical Neo-Platonism, with orgone as the fundament of all cosmological creation. The second is a “path of ascent,” also part of Neo-Platonism but carrying forward into contemporary systems theories of complexity evolution (Nagel, 2012).

Reich’s “path of descent” from Orgone as universal fundament is a kind of pan-biotism, with its own version of Aristotle’s “unmoved mover” or One—a massless, incorporeal quintessence of

all being, whose essence is a living creative force, while the “superimposition” of its streamings would coalesce into the atomic structure of matter (Reich, 1951/1973).

Here it does seem that Reich and Plotinus underwent a similar contemplative realization. For Plotinus the inner being of the created cosmos is termed “Life.”

Life is total presence, since it is a simple, infinite force which diffuses itself in dynamic continuity. Plotinus seizes Life from within, as pure movement which is everywhere and unceasing. It is “already there,” prior to all the particular forms it engenders, and it does not cease in them. (Hadot, 1993, p. 46)

Although he does not appear to have read at all in such sources, this could have been written by Reich.

The second level of Reich’s system is a developmental “path of ascent,” from biological evolution to human self-realization, and broadly in line with more recent understandings of levels of system complexity and their progressive self-organization (Nagel, 2012; Scott, 1995; Sperry, 1991). These are contemporary versions of the sciences of synthesis posited by Leibniz (1951) and Whitehead (1929)—where preliminary “seeds” or “bare monads” of human consciousness are located “on the way up” at simpler levels of living and nonliving nature. Thus Reich begins from the outwardly life-like energies and form constants of fluid dynamics and movement and then traces an emergence of sentient protozoan life and its metazoan development into the human capacity for self-awareness of these sentient forms and of their outward echo in physical nature. This side of Reich’s orgone, and his later awareness of the equilibrium between life and its planetary ecology, places him closer to the Gaia hypothesis of an emergent system complexity of a life-like ecology (as in Lovelock, 2009). Here orgone is a systems emergent as well as the creative fundament of all Being.

In terms of the fuller potential of human self awareness, Reich would be saying that the life-like orgone based universe has become “alive”

through the emergence of living forms, and that it then *becomes* “self-aware” of its unitive and all-creative Being through *our* empathic intuition. Accordingly the all-one of the unitive mysticisms is both true by definition and our human projective (and accurate) creation. It is the latter that makes Reichian spirituality “naturalistic” and “sensate,” since, as far as we can know so far, the universe depends on humanity for its self-aware realization as alive-Being—as what numinous experience sees.

Reich (1999, p. 382) alludes to something more like a metaphysical creationism, akin to Plotinus, when he says that *if* pure orgone could be *shown* to be conscious, *that* would then be God—and then leaves the question as rightly unanswerable. Instead, at his most careful, his bions and weather systems remained life-like, and the practical upshot of his theory is a version of systems emergence. Whitehead and Leibniz can be read in both directions, but are generally understood today in terms of emergent complexity theories (Nagel, 2012).

#### **A Planetary Consciousness:**

##### **Reich, Jung, and UFOs**

It is not accidental that the widespread public interest in the UFO phenomenon of the 1950s would attract the interest of both the later Reich and Jung. Both saw in it a potential global spiritual significance, in the context of the disaster of World War II, the new anxieties of an atomic age, and intuitions of an ecological and population crisis to come.

Jung, in his *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies* (1959), saw in these widespread sightings the beginning of a compensatory mythology of godlike beings from “celestial” heights, come to save humanity from our loss of traditional beliefs, “bleak shallow rationalism,” and the “incalculable dangers of the hydrogen bomb” (pp. 626, 630)—all still of course with us. Reich’s version, in his *Contact with Space* (1957), and coming in the midst of his “hellish” dark night, is more literal—simultaneously delusional in his galactic warfare and yet of continuing relevance in its prescient concern with ecological crisis. From his 1956 journals:

*Our planet is dying.* Our forests are dying and decaying from brittleness at a rapid rate. Desert development mars our lives with drought ... with wells drying and water levels sinking, with frequent tornadoes and unusual storms, forest fires from dryness, ravaging floods, and billions of dollars damage done by severely disturbed weather conditions. ... [And this] planetary emergency connected with the problems of visitors from outer space. (Reich, 2012, pp. 215–216)

Jung's view of the UFO phenomenon as an incipient new religious movement has proved the more immediately prescient. He saw "flying saucers" as celestial mandala images of the absent wholeness of Self, the latter attested by the feelings of bleakness, coldness, inhumanness, and aloneness accompanying many sightings, also a significant element in Reich's "emotional plague" and DOR atmospheric "deadness." Jung's more social-psychological understanding has been borne out by subsequent developments of UFO experiences in the direction of a spontaneous neo-shamanism, with their overlap into out-of-body states, encounters with spiritual guides, dream encounters, and, as with shamanic initiation, individuals selected from childhood for these visitations (Ring, 1989; Hopkins, 1987). Hints of post-traumatic features also emerge with bizarre sexual molestations and visions of hybrid breeding (Mack, 1994)—certainly also reflected in Reich's (1957) own late speculation that he himself might be such a hybrid "spaceman" (p. 1).

There is now a new reality context for the possibility first raised by the earlier UFO era of a contrastive planetary sense of identity for a future humanity, coming from two more recent developments: First, there is the popular impact of photographs of Earth from space stations, and second the attempts such as SETI (search for extraterrestrial intelligence) to detect any possible extraterrestrial signals or communications. Both begin to meet social-psychological criteria for the development of collective identity (Hornsey, 2008), which has always involved the sense of a group whose sense of inward cohesion is based on their

boundary with a contrastive "other." It is just such a contrastive boundary that has already emerged in astronaut viewings of a humanly shared, aesthetically beautiful "whole Earth," fragile in its sheer contrast with the coldness, isolation, and hostility to life of outer space. Similarly there would be an even more explicit us vs. them contrast that would emerge as the consequence of our receiving unambiguous signals from an extra-terrestrial intelligence.

Significantly these two levels of a collective planetary identity correspond to the two levels of personal self realization for both Almaas (2004) and Maslow (1962): First, there is what Almaas terms "personal essence" or the "pearl," corresponding to the synthesis of inner strength and empathic contactfulness of Maslow's self-actualization and Reich's vitalization/orgonotic potency. Second, there is Almaas' more impersonal level of "essential identity" or the "point," corresponding to Maslow on one's sense of identity becoming Being itself.

Almaas (2004) has already suggested that the widespread distribution of wall posters of the earth seen from space will encourage the beginning of a "global pearl." There can be the sense in looking at those pictures: "That's us, that's all of us at once and as one." This collective version of personal essence is even more intensified in the life-changing experiences of the astronauts themselves (Yaden et al., 2016), who out of the isolation and vulnerability of space describe experiences of awe and ecstasy at the exquisite beauty of an earth with no trace of national boundaries—and are possessed by a compassionate, loving sense of "universal brotherhood" and "connectedness of all peoples."

Reich did not need to see our planet from space in order to embody his own version of a "global pearl"—and this even before the Oranur crisis, DOR, and UFOs. From the late 1940s

*I am a citizen of this planet.* (Reich, 1948/1973, p. 242)

I am your physician, and since you inhabit this planet, I am a planetary physician; I am neither a German, nor a Jew, nor a Christian, nor an Italian; I am a citizen of the earth. (Reich, 1948/1974, p. 78)

Meanwhile the planetary desertification he associated with the bleakness and deadness of atmospheric DOR attest to the personal and global deletion of vitalization he sought to somehow heal.

By contrast, an eventual SETI success would offer the potential for a collective planetary version of Almaas' "point"—the sense of identity as a shared human beingness. It seems significant in this regard that Almaas finds that experiences of the "point" are often mediated by metaphors of a "radiant point of light" or "brilliant star" (Almaas, 1996), while Jung (2009) described his first experiences of Self—his version of Almaas' "point"—as showing a "star-like nature ... that simply is" and as a "stellar path ... one and the same for all people" (pp. 349, 356). It would follow that once such a SETI signal had been detected, we would identify "them" and they "us" chiefly by our respective stars—a collective version for the image of one's individual "star" of beingness.

If and when there was unambiguous word of such a detection of another intelligence, essentially overnight we would think of ourselves forever differently—with the contrastive sharing of the felt singularity of our identity as human (see Hunt, 2010). There could then emerge a collective sense of awe and wonder at Being itself. Given that experiences of awe increase a sense of communal identity with others (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007), the context of discovery would make that identity "planetary." The morning after such an announcement all people on earth would begin to look at each other differently—in Reich's terms as "citizens of the planet." This would be especially intensified by the likelihood that such a signal detection might be all humanity would ever know of that us-defining other existence. We would be left only with the fact of it, and potentially little or nothing more—given the vast distances and times involved. That might be just as well given that the defensive "hole" or meta-pathological inversion of Almaas' (1996) "point" can create a reactive narcissism and paranoia—well illustrated in multiple science fiction scenarios, and already in Reich's potential UFO warfare and "spaceman" identity. With nothing empirical to feed that, however, the longer potential would be for the singularity of human beingness as collective identity that both Jung and Reich already foresaw.

**Wilhelm Reich as Transpersonal Psychologist (Part 2)**

Thus for Jung the UFO phenomenon already betokened a planetary Self:

Man ... is on this planet a unique phenomenon which he can't compare with anything else. The possibility of ... self knowledge would arise ... by an encounter with a creature of similar structure but different origin ... inhabiting other stars. (Jung, 1959/1964, p. 269)

For Reich, based on his UFO encounters:

The future seemed to harbor a new type of man and woman—God seemed to become earthly again. (Reich, 1957, pp. 202–203)

And even earlier, from his 1942 journals:

The human animal will bring the plasma function to its highest stage of development ... the orgone will enable us to visit distant stars, and to contact other beings. It will transform man ... in such a way that questions of passport or race will no longer arise. ... Love will be the only religion. (Reich, 1999, p. 167)

Here human beings become a maximum point of creative thrust for all of Being.

One might not want to dismiss too readily these attempts by Reich and Jung to speak for the entire planet as merely grandiose presumption. This was also the era where they, with such as Toynbee, Heidegger, Weil, and Krishnamurti, may well have been uniquely positioned to see first and farthest ahead for all of us.

### **Conclusions**

1 ) Reich's life and work was a deeply resonant response to major movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—psychoanalytic, Marxist-socialist, sexual and gender liberation, and culminating in an original transpersonal psychology. This he saw as anticipating a planetary wide New Age spirituality, one similarly envisioned in overlapping ways by Nietzsche, Bergson, Jung, Toynbee, Teilhard de Chardin, Heidegger, and Simone Weil. Reich's development of his naturalistic version of a this-worldly mysticism was both energized and negatively impacted by deep personal tragedy and struggle, culminating in a perhaps inevitable "dark night of the soul" and

*International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 37



the otherwise avoidable martyrdom of his final imprisonment.

There is a deep division within Reich's later work, in the tension between his original version of a sensate spirituality, based on the vitalization of embodied presence, and the orgone physics of accumulator research that he saw as its proof—a support which its quixotic, often *ad hoc* urgency could not truly offer. From the perspective of his “religion for the children of the future” the spiritual significance of his bion, accumulator, and cloudbuster research was in the suffering it caused him. The persecution that Reich's physical researches brought down upon him took him to the edge of madness, and periodically beyond, yet that also energized his larger intuition of a new spirituality. With Simone Weil (1947/2002), it may be only in the depths of personal affliction that such grace as he was able to receive becomes manifest.

2) Reich's transpersonal psychology of a this-worldly mysticism shows multiple dimensions similar to what other key figures of his time anticipated for a New Age spirituality to come:

*The Sacredness of Sentient Life:* In the face of the progressive mechanization/commodification that Reich foresaw, and did not hesitate to diagnose as “schizoid”—a machine-identification now extended to “artificial intelligence” and its quantitative “computational” understanding of consciousness—any global spirituality of the future would need to follow Reich's lead in re-sacralizing all forms of sentient life. Conscious life becomes unique and irreducible, an emergent expression of a *sui generis* spontaneity and freedom. The source of our sense of the sacred, a numinous awe and wonder that confers a collective sense of intrinsic purpose and meaning, would rest on the human self-aware amplification and symbolization of the basic forms and structure of that living consciousness.

*The Functional Integration of Science and Religion:* Given the seeming inevitability of the materialist/technological orientation of an emerging global civilization, a new this-worldly spirituality would have to be consistent with that worldview. Just as early Christianity had to accept a cross-translation with Graeco-Roman philosophy for its continuing institutionalization, a New Age mysticism will of

necessity come to resonate with the sciences of brain and universe. In a more immediate way this is already obvious in contemporary neuroscience research on psychedelic drugs, mindfulness meditation, and spontaneous numinous/ecstatic experiences. While Reich's own version of an orgone physics seems not sustainable as such, the larger question will be whether that “science” of spirituality ends up as itself mechanistic, reductionistic, and technologically manipulated, or whether, as suggested above with Reich, the better attuned sciences of synthesis—holistic-organismic and self-organizing system approaches—might prevail.

*Planetary Identity:* Whatever the near future of current ethnic and national regionalisms, understandably reactive against the pressures of globalization, the ubiquitous economic structures of capitalism and its expanding digital technologies, even if hopefully softened by a competing egalitarianism, will continue to create a common form of life across the planet. While regional neo-shamanisms might indeed help to re-sanctify the natural ecologies specific to different regions—as Thoreau did for New England woods and Heidegger for Rhine Valley—a globally emergent New Age spirituality would also foster a planetary identity for a single humanity and its shared ecology of life and environment. That futural identity was central for both Reich and Jung—and bound up with their fascination with the larger implications of the UFO phenomenon. Any positive SETI reception would both fulfill those shared intimations—creating its own template for the spiritual realization of a shared identity of planetary Being-ness.

*An Intrinsic Relation Between Sexuality and Spirituality:* The prophetic monotheisms of Western civilization created an opposition between sexuality and spirituality, while the more experientially oriented mystical traditions of shamanism, Tantrism, and Taoism saw instead a dynamic continuity. A continuing world wide shift to the individualizing values of capitalism would continue to erode communal and family traditions, leaving, as Reich foresaw, “sexual revolution” and “sexual freedom” as a major source of personal spontaneity and felt vitality. What he did not foresee, but is consistent with both shamanic tradition and modern research

on creativity and openness to experience, is that it would lead him so directly into his own this-worldly spirituality of vitalization and energy.

*A Necessary Relation between Mysticism and Psychosis:* Both religious tradition and contemporary research on spontaneous ecstasy and peak experience see a direct relation between periods of deep personal suffering/purgation and spiritual illumination. Traditional psychoanalytic views of the numinous as a direct expression of an “oceanic” narcissism are now better understood in the context of research showing an enhancement of communal and altruistic values resulting from experiences of awe (Shiota et al., 2007)—thus making numinous experience the potential natural cure for the inner isolation and social alienation of extreme personal crisis. A New Age spirituality would need to accept as intrinsic, and not merely devalue or reduce, a potential reversible gestalt between mystical experience and psychosis—already clear to William James, Jung, and certainly Reich. In the seminal words of Anton Boisen (1936/1952):

Religious experience as well as mental disorder may involve severe emotional upheaval, and ... are alike attempts at reorganization. The difference lies in the outcome. Where the attempt is successful and some degree of victory is won, it is commonly recognized as religious experience. Where it is unsuccessful or indeterminate, it is commonly spoken of as “insanity.” In those we recognize as religious experience, the individual is relieved of his sense of isolation and is brought into harmony with that which is supreme in his hierarchy of loyalties. ... In most of those cases which we speak of as “mental illness” no such synthesis is achieved. (p. viii)

Acknowledging Reich’s “some degree of victory,” spiritual transformations of the deepest moral value and cultural impact will often only emerge in the face of the kind of madness to which he at least periodically succumbed in his final years. He knew and freely acknowledged the risks he ran.<sup>5</sup>

*The Essentialization of Traditional World Religions with Special Reference to Jesus:* Inevitable

syncretisms across religious traditions in a truly global New Age spirituality would require the sort of essentialization and indeed fruitful simplifications of the traditional world religions attempted by Weil and Teilhard de Chardin for Christianity and Krishnamurti for Indian meditative teachings. The role already played by a secularized Christianity in the spread of capitalism, and the likelihood for Weber and Troeltsch of a more mystical orientation for a future spirituality, will encourage newer mystical versions of the historical Jesus, already reflected in the life, sexuality, and ecstasy affirming Dionysian Jesus jointly envisioned by Nietzsche and Reich. Here the Incarnation of the Christ figure becomes the essential attribute of all life.

3) Thoreau ends *Walden* with the apocryphal story of the “beautiful bugs” that emerged more or less simultaneously, over a wide New England area, burrowing their way out of sixty-year old apple tree table tops and cabinets:

Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, ... buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society ... heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man ... may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society’s most trivial and hard sealed furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer at last! ... Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star. (Thoreau, 1854/1982, pp. 467–468).

This image of Thoreau’s, thirty years prior to Nietzsche’s similarly conceived *Zarathustra*, captures the independent synchronicity of the multiple “winged beings”—among them Wilhelm Reich—who in the crisis years from the 1930s through the 1950s burrowed out and up with their shared envisionings of what a futural human collectivity would need, and so might become.

The notion here is that those who are original and inspired enough to first crest major new heights, will, in contrast to those with their more specific concerns who follow, also see ahead with greatest clarity and depth.

## Notes

1. There is some indication that this feminine shamanic pattern in Reich's own development, and perhaps also the cross gender identifications that Jung (1928/1960) found intrinsic in spiritual development, might have occasioned some personal anxiety for Reich. His dislike of working with homosexual clients and trainees, so puzzling to some at the time (Sharaf, 1983), may have reflected some such misunderstanding of his own experience. An inner "feminine" identification would have been intolerable to his "despotic" father, and would also have reminded him of Freud's (1922/1959) clinical link between unconscious homosexual fantasy and paranoia. Reich would also have been well aware of the case of Schreber, where both psychotic patient and Freud (1911/1959) interpreted something very like Reich's inner body streaming as an hallucinatory homosexual assault. Given Reich's fears for both his own sanity, and experiences of being so judged, it seems likely that the cross gender aspects of a spontaneous shamanic development might have felt threatening.
2. The lack of emphasis on this spiritual realization aspect of "streaming" experience in the more standard bio-energetic therapy derived from Reich (Lowen, 1975) partly reflects Reich's openly acknowledged need once in the United States to train the numerous psychotherapists drawn to his de-armoring techniques, but disappointingly for him not to his "cosmic orgone," primarily in order to fund his Maine institute (Reich, 1999; Sharaf, 1983). Many of these trainees, in an era preceding Maslow on self-actualization, generally thought in more traditionally psychiatric and concretely psychosexual terms.
3. Long standing debates about proto-sentience in plants (Hunt, 1995) and recent research on a molecular based "spiking" in Prokaryotid bacteria (Prindle et al., 2015; Lee, Prindle, Liu, & Suel, 2017) might seem to complicate this picture of a motile protozoan emergence of sentience (see Lyon, 2015). However, and unlike

directly motile plants such as mimosa which do depolarize, what has now been identified as depolarized signalling in all plants and trees, related especially to root growth, tissue damage, and photosynthesis (Baluska, 2006; Volkov & Ranatunga, 2006), has a regular periodicity and slowness supporting at best a more diffuse sentience than the navigational specificity of protozoa. Similarly, bacterial spiking, which spreads across bacterial bio-film surfaces, seems to be part of a metabolic process that expels toxins outward to protect the interior cells. Both lack the comparative separation in space and time of organism-environment, and incipient separation of subject and object, that would require a proprio-sentience of immediate self-location within an environmental array "affording" multiple settings for distinct needs and threats to survival.

Meanwhile, current attempts to locate a proto-sentience in the quantum processes of spontaneity and indeterminacy that might operate within neuronal microtubules (Hammeroff, 1994; Craddock, Hameroff, Ayoub, Klobukowski, & Tuszyński, 2015) may go too far "inside" for a core sentience that with Reich and the early Darwinians will always show "outwardly" into the lifeworld of behavior (see Hunt, 2001). Microtubules transport proteins throughout all cells, and are the layered supports for the outer membrane or cytoskeleton that depolarizes in neurons and protozoa. It may well be that neuronal action potentials, like some other biological functions (Lambert et al., 2013), depend on a system "downward control" and/or upward "leveraging" of quantum processes, but that will be equally true for all cell functions, not just sentience. The quantum model is separated by its own "explanatory gap" from the complex protozoan sensitivities and spontaneities it would hope to explain.

4. Approaches to the "explanation" of consciousness in terms of neuronally located quantum indeterminacy, spontaneity, and complementarity (Penrose, 1997; Hameroff, 1994) may actually illustrate this metaphoric "bi-directionality" of the two intelligences,

rather than the “causal” hypothesis claimed—and exciting some of the hopes for a New Age synthesis of consciousness and matter (Jung, 1955/1960; Meier, 2001). Instead, these approaches may rather reflect the metaphoric use of physical microprocesses that were in part originally inspired by the metaphoric use of “is-like” properties of consciousness. Thus Bohr (1934) suggested that he was led to his initial conceptual formulations of his quantum mathematical equations on the model of his earlier reading of James on the indeterminism created by self-aware introspective observation and the complementarity of the transitive and substantive phases of the “resulting” consciousness.

Two more recent examples of this perhaps intrinsic metaphoric bi-directionality reflect independent versions in physics of Reich’s cosmological speculations. On the one hand, there is the recent suggestion that the precursor of spacetime just before the Big Bang would have had the hyper-condensed properties of a fluid—a “cold, dark, and wet” expanding into the “big boil” (Cartwright, 2018)—echoing here something of Reich’s intuition of the fluid streaming origin of cosmos. On the other hand, there is Penrose’s (1997) curious “twistor” hypothesis: that the first points of post Big Bang spacetime would be created where curving rays of light first met and coalesced—very close to Reich’s notion of primal material particles emerging where two spirals of his liquid-like orgone streams “superimpose” (Reich, 1957/1973). Neither psychology nor physics may be quite as done with Thales as one might have supposed.

5. Just as scientific papers briefly declare any vested interests, so a life-history analysis should perhaps acknowledge any vested countertransference. In this case that requires some greater length. Early on fascinated by Reich, I met his son Peter by accident while a graduate student visiting Orgonon, at a point where Peter as a young man just out of the army was beginning to form his adult view of his father’s life and work. A few years later he would

publish his account of growing up at Orgonon, *A Book of Dreams* (1973), where he movingly describes his own enthusiastic boyhood participation in cloudbusting and repelling UFOs, his father’s despair and crying in his son’s arms over his impending imprisonment, and devastating grief at his death. The effect on me of that book, along with our previous conversation, was deeply impactful—mirroring my own devastating guilt over the early death of my similarly very charismatic, and similarly very split father, and my own attempts to cope with the deeply ambivalent memories of that intense relationship.

There is something to be said for not having a charismatic father. Because of the intense love they inspire, you become, as Shaw (2014) describes in his *Traumatizing Narcissism*, more the other’s object than your own subject—and it takes the long time Peter describes to realize that it was not just to your privilege and good fortune. As elevating as it is to be within the golden circle, it becomes as terrifying when the circle becomes all black, and the early death of such a divided magnificence leaves the permanent sense of having fallen short. Any objectivity takes years of sorting out—these parts marvelous, those parts deeply wrong, and the two halves permanent in their refusal to go together.

Orgonon today, and I have visited twice since, still sits atop its beautiful multi-acre Maine hillside. The bottom floor of the main building, the “observatory,” has become the museum for all Reich’s accumulator and orgone physics research. Upstairs is his office, exactly as he left it for jail, favorite coat that one sees in the photographs, hanging in the closet, briefcase still under his desk, and huge library—his late life expressionist paintings hanging up throughout.

Both floors are equally fascinating in their own ways—but also very much like the division between Reich’s incipient transpersonal psychology and his physical research. And very much like the division in my own father, they do not cohere. Thus perhaps follows my own attempt herein to balance and rebalance what I

see as the halves of Reich's work and person—to sort out to some degree what can and should go forward toward the planetary spirituality he foresaw, and what needs to remain more in a rear view mirror.

To his immense credit Peter tells the truth about what he experienced—in all its complexity. He writes the book and walks away to live a private life at some remove from what has understandably enough also continued as something of a Reich cult—and he is still resented by some for this very gesture of sanity and self respect. I myself am full of admiration, and given the length and possible excess of this present work, I may not have done quite as well.

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### About the Author

Harry T. Hunt, PhD, is professor emeritus in psychology at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada (hhunt@brocku.ca), and received his PhD from Brandeis University. He is the author of *The Multiplicity of Dreams* (1989), *On the Nature of Consciousness* (1995), and *Lives in Spirit* (2003). He has published empirical studies on lucid dreaming, dream bizarreness, meditative states, creativity and metaphor, imaginative absorption, and transpersonal experiences in childhood, and theoretical papers on the cognitive psychology of mystical states, synesthesia, and the conceptual foundations of psychology.

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