

## **The Wilhelm Reich Story**

Early twentieth century. A large, agricultural estate at the farthest outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, close to the Russian border. Precocious Willy Reich and his younger brother, Robert, enjoy a sheltered, isolated life as the beloved sons of a prosperous, domineering farmer and his beautiful, tender wife. Though Jewish, Reich's class-conscious father forbids his sons from playing with the Ukrainian-speaking peasant children or the Yiddish-speaking Jewish children of the people he supervises. Since language indicates status, the Reichs speak German. Lonely, Willy turns his attention to biology. Ever curious in natural science -especially in sexual matters- Willy leads his brother into the barn where they observe animals mating. Fascinated, Willy thinks it's wonderful; Robert feels disgusted. With equal curiosity, Willy spies on his mother copulating with his tutor throughout the course of their affair. Tormented over love for his mother and fear of his stern father, Willy informs his father of the affair. Using Willy as his witness, the jealous father confronts the mother with adultery. Ashamed and unable to tolerate the constant physical and emotional abuse from her unforgiving husband, Willy's mother commits suicide by taking poison. Wracked with grief and loneliness, Willy's father deliberately contracts pneumonia by fishing while standing in a pond in cold weather. His self-induced illness worsens into tuberculosis, and Willy's father dies, forcing sixteen year-old Willy to drop out of the Gymnasium to manage the estate. The insurance company declares the father's death a suicide and denies benefits to the boys, contributing to their economic hardship. The guilt-ridden young Willy assumes a heavy burden of responsibility for killing off both his parents. In an attempt to atone for his betrayal, Willy resolves to understand how life works, to get to the truth about life itself.

World War One breaks out. There is fighting back and forth between the Austrian soldiers and the Russians. With the estate about to be overrun by Cossack soldiers, Willy and his brother are forced to flee for their lives. Cossacks on the hillsides shoot at their speeding horse-drawn carriage as they make their escape. Willy settles Robert in the home of relatives, and, though he has not yet completed his secondary school studies, he volunteers for the Austrian army. After some training, he is made a corporal in charge of a platoon of sixty men, most of whom are much older than he. Attracted at first to the romance and glory of war, Willy eventually comes to see it as an inhuman machine in service to a senseless purpose. After serving for four years at the front, the last as a lieutenant in charge of a battalion, he requests a furlough to continue his studies.

At the war's end, the collapse of the Austrian empire creates legal chaos. His native land annexed by Romania, all of Willy's lands and possessions are unrecoverable. Now twenty-one and concerned only with material survival, a pragmatic Wilhelm Reich enrolls as a law student at the University in Vienna, because it's the quickest way to make a good living. He soon realizes that it's not for him, though, so he switches to medicine.

Penniless, Willy and his brother Robert share an unheated room with another medical student, often eating at the home of their hard-hearted and miserly uncle. But food is scarce, and they are treated like unwanted beggars, being given scraps only after their uncle's own children are fed. Since he cannot afford coal, Willy studies every day at a small cafe where an iron stove burns. For two years, Willy and his brother eat oatmeal with dried fruit, day in and day out. After Willy passes his examinations in physics, chemistry, and biology with top honors, he supports himself and his brother by tutoring other medical students. Though he is lonely and sex-starved, Willy resists the attempts by his relatives to marry him off to unattractive, rich, Jewish girls who are intellectually inferior. Instead, he pursues idealized relationships with several attractive medical student colleagues, who reject him for one reason or another, his lack of money being a main concern.

Although he is initially unimpressed with his first exposure to Freudian concepts and the peculiar, unnatural way sex is discussed in the student-run discussions on sex, Willy soon becomes the leader of the sexology seminar. His work in the seminar comes to the attention of Sigmund Freud, who invites him to a meeting. Willy is impressed with Freud's straightforwardness and naturalness; he becomes a devoted disciple. On the basis of a brilliant paper he delivers to Freud's Viennese Psychoanalytic Society, Willy is admitted to full membership while still an undergraduate, a rare honor. As part of his training, he analyzes patients with psychological problems. During the course of treating one pretty, well-built, eighteen-year-old patient (Annie Pink), Willy falls in love with her. Following the completion of her therapy, they court each other, timidly at first, then with unrestrained passion. Late one night, Annie's parents catch Willy and her making love in her room. They confront Willy and force him to marry her. Although they have no immediate plans to marry, the young lovers happily oblige. During the summer of 1922, they set up house in a rented apartment in Vienna, just as Willy graduates as a doctor of medicine.

Dr. Reich's rise in the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society is meteoric. While continuing to analyze patients, Reich regularly contributes several papers to its journal, one entitled "On the Energetics of Drives," which lays the foundation of a ubiquitous life energy and Reich's orgasm theory. Reich longs to be analyzed by Freud himself. Freud nearly makes an exception to his rule of not analyzing co-workers, due to the young analyst's brilliance, but ultimately he decides not to break this rule. Feeling rejected, Reich is shunted into analysis with one of the other clinicians. As a sign of his respect for Reich's talent and drive, Freud assigns Reich to a job as his first clinical assistant at Freud's Psychoanalytic Polyclinic in Vienna, a position which, for the first time, brings Reich in touch with working class people and their problems. Now interested in the *social* etiology of neurosis, Reich studies Marx and gets actively involved in the Viennese socialist movement. Reich writes several articles that attempt to reconcile Marx's ideas of the family as a

formal unit that is dependent on continuous changing socio-economic conditions with Freud's concepts of the dynamic psychology of individual development within the nuclear, patriarchal family unit. These papers lead many of his colleagues to suspect Reich of displaying unacceptable radical tendencies. Opposition to Reich begins.

Annie completes her own medical studies and becomes a practicing analyst. Reich's brother, Robert, dies of tuberculosis, and a year later, Reich himself contracts TB and spends several months at a sanitarium to recuperate. By 1928, Willy and Annie Reich have two daughters, Eva and Lore. Reich is promoted to Director of the Seminar for Psychoanalytic Therapy at Freud's clinic, then Vice Director of the Clinic, now functioning as Freud's right hand man.

On his return from the sanitarium, Reich becomes more active in the political work of the socialist party. He marches and takes part in demonstrations, though these activities subject him to danger and often bring him into conflict with the police and their violent countermeasures. He preaches for the need for sexual hygiene clinics for the people, so that they can be educated on sex in general and on birth control in particular. Under the auspices of the socialist party, Reich, along with some supportive colleagues, sets up such clinics and provides sex counseling to parents and adolescents, while also giving lectures to the general public on sex and related matters. As Reich continues to evolve his theories linking sex with politics, tensions with his colleagues, even with his wife, begin to grow. Detractors spread rumors that Reich is mentally unstable; supporters are attracted to his intensity and unusually high energy.

In the midst of growing controversy, Reich proceeds undaunted to break new ground. He publishes *The Function of the Orgasm*, which delineates a theory of mental and physical health that is based on the existence and flow through the body of an actual biological energy which Reich calls "orgone." In championing Freud's original concept of libidinal energy, Reich shows that the

repression of an individual's natural, biological energy, leads, in every case, to physical or mental disease of one sort or another. While Freud says that libido is merely a metaphorical construct he had employed to communicate his philosophy, Reich maintains that this biological energy is much more than a conceptual construct – it has an actual physical reality. Other analysts attack Reich's attempts to evolve Freud's early ideas on the pleasure principle, themselves preferring to "adjust" their patients in accordance to the social realities of the day.

At the Viennese sex hygiene clinics, Reich delivers a paper that is unacceptably critical of the World League for Sex Reform. This incurs the wrath of the socialist party leadership, who accuse Reich of using the sex hygiene clinics as a forum for communist propaganda. Terminated by the socialists, and under siege from his psychoanalytic colleagues, Reich decides to move to Berlin to undergo analysis with Dr. Sandor Rado. Before he moves, though, he makes a visit to Russia to investigate their experimental nurseries and child-care centers, as well as Russia's reportedly liberal sexual laws. He gives lectures on child rearing that are well received, but he finds that the Russians lack basic understanding in handling sexuality among children and adolescents. Worse, the sexual paradise which the Bolshevik propaganda had boasted about is being steadily eroded by Stalin and his repressive edicts. Under Stalin's directives, the social reforms of the past decade are being undermined, and even moderately progressive legislation is being repealed in favor of harsh laws, such as making homosexuality a criminal offense.

In 1930, Reich moves to Berlin and undergoes a short-lived analysis, because Dr. Rado soon emigrates to the United States. Reich becomes intensely involved with the German communist party, and he presents a detailed plan to the central committee to start a sex-political mass movement. Reich's platform calls for better housing; abolition of all laws against abortion, homosexuality, and birth regulation; free birth control counseling; sex education on a mass scale; nurseries and sex-counseling facilities at all large factories and businesses; reform of marriage laws; and home leave for prisoners. As a result of his proposal, the communists

set up sex hygiene clinics in the large industrial cities of western Germany, where Reich often gives lectures on sexual politics and on political psychology. Attired as a mountain climber, with a knapsack full of medical supplies, Reich actively participates in marches and demonstrations, despite the danger and assaults by the police.

Reich's devotion to the communist cause is so extreme that he insists on sending his two daughters to a communist children's center. Annie protests; Reich threatens separation; she acquiesces. The power of his personality is impossible to withstand. She complains that only absolutes are possible for him. Things are either black or white; people are either for him, or against him. Her disaffection with their marriage grows.

The communist party leadership, too, become disaffected with Reich's emphasis on sex, claiming that it is diverting the people's attention from the class struggle. They withdraw his books from its bookstores and brand him a counter-revolutionary. Joining them in opposing Reich's publications are the Nazis. Reich's writings on *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, and *The Invasion of Compulsory Morality*, along with his other books and sex-political essays, are removed from public consumption.

Immediately after the Nazis take power in 1933, they begin rounding up the opposition. Using the Reichstag fire as a pretext, the Nazis arrest over 1,500 leftist intellectuals, including many of Reich's personal friends. They make a public display of burning books they don't want people to read. Included in the burning pile are the books and articles of Wilhelm Reich. Reich learns that he is on the Nazi's list of undesirables; the Gestapo have been authorized to find him and shoot him on sight. Fearing for his life, he checks in at a hotel under a different name. Hearing that the Nazis have been to his home twice, Reich abandons his lucrative practice in Berlin and flees to Vienna, disguised as a tourist on a skiing holiday. Annie, unable and unwilling to support Reich's commitment to sex-political work any longer, soon dissolves their marriage, taking the children with

her. Still subjected to increasing criticism by his psychoanalytic colleagues due to various personality and philosophical differences, Reich finds himself unwelcome. Although his manuscript for *Character Analysis* is finished, the director of the International Psychoanalytic Press reneges on the contract to publish the book because of the worsening political situation and Reich's reputation as a radical. Though he is almost penniless, Reich borrows money and publishes the book himself. *Character Analysis* presents Reich's concept of body armoring and the ways neuroses manifest themselves in the musculature of a human being as defenses against the streaming of life energy throughout the body.

Although the Viennese psychoanalysts are hostile to Reich, a group of analysts and trainees in Denmark urge him to join them there. Freud refuses to write a letter in support of Reich's Danish work permit, and the International Psychoanalytic Association refuses to certify any training which Reich might give in Denmark. Nonetheless, Reich goes to Denmark in May 1933. Elsa Lindenburg, a dancer with the Berlin State Opera and a member of the same communist cell to which Reich had been assigned, joins him there. They live together as man and wife in an open marriage arrangement.

In Denmark, Reich teaches, gives training classes, and does therapy while he completes the manuscript for *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, which describes the body language—the way of looking, of standing, of speaking—certain character types have, as well as the reasons for their propensity to be attracted to, and dominated by, authoritarian personalities like Adolf Hitler. Immediately after its publication in August 1933, the communists, in their fervent desire to signify their official condemnation of his psychologizing of politics, expel Reich from their organization. To them, he is a "counter-revolutionary" for having pointed out that communism in Germany has already lost out to fascism; they prefer to see Hitler's victories merely as a temporary setback in their ongoing struggle. To Reich, an orphan without a home, the expulsion is very painful. It signifies the end of his affiliation with a revolutionary social organization that would be

able to take advantage of his sex-political ideas. To avoid further ostracism, Reich goes to England, where he visits Ernest Jones, president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, to lobby against also being expelled from the Association – an action which Reich says he has heard is being contemplated. Reich considers moving to London, but Jones discourages him, since England is still too puritanical to accept the concept of an open marriage arrangement, and neither Reich nor Elsa feel the need for a piece of paper to sanctify their love.

Due to the support and encouragement of his Danish students, Reich in September 1933 settles in Malmö, Sweden, which is close to Copenhagen. Besides continuing his own research and training his students, he gives therapy to A. S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill, an experimental school where children are reared in an atmosphere of freedom and happiness, unlike traditional schools where children are compelled to attend classes they're not interested in. By August 1934, Reich receives notice from the International Psychoanalytic Association that he has been expelled from their organization. Not only are his fellow analysts disturbed by Reich's continued work on his energetically based, sex-economic views (which they perceive as a major threat to the now conventional Freudian orientation in favor of the reality principle), but they are desperate to avert the hostility of the Nazis. By canceling Reich's union card, they hope to dissociate themselves from any taint of supporting his radical social ideas. One of the analysts, Otto Fenischel, turns especially vicious; he promulgates rumors that Reich had been institutionalized and is presently insane, a slander which is to plague Reich throughout the rest of his life.

Unable to extend his visa in Sweden, Reich is forced to move again, this time to Oslo, Norway. Elsa soon joins him. No longer bound by allegiance to any organization or political party, Reich realizes that it is time for the child that is the intellectual offspring of Freud's psychoanalysis and Marx's political sociology to strike out on its own. Summoning incredible strength and energy, Reich spends the next three years building up his own independent organization from the ground up, with loyal, dedicated

followers. Through the support of a few, courageous colleagues, the laboratory facilities of the University of Oslo are made available to him. At last he is able to pursue his scientific research without crisis or disruption. To test his speculative beliefs that pleasure and anxiety constitute antithetical reactions in a human body, Reich conducts experiments in bio-electricity on couples in the act of making love. This leads to the publication of *The Biological Foundations of Pleasure and Anxiety*. He founds the Institute for Sex-Economic Bio-research, where, he gives seminars in psychotherapy; he starts a journal to publish his experimental findings; and he does research in biogenesis which leads to the discovery of elemental building blocks of life that Reich calls "bions." These mobile, pulsating forms of microscopic matter exhibit properties of life, even though they arise from inorganic material. He publishes *The Sexual Revolution*, which provides a scathing critique of traditional sexuality and a clear affirmation of the healthy genital impulses of children, adolescents, and adults. He's in love with Elsa, and she with him. It's a busy, productive, fulfilling time.

But it doesn't last. Although Reich deliberately maintains a low profile and avoids doing anything which might jeopardize his standing with the Norwegian government, the press learn about Reich's work in biogenesis and sensationalize it in a series of articles. "God Reich Creates Life," cries the *National Enquirer*-type papers of the day. In late 1937, a virulent newspaper campaign attacking Reich starts up. His enemies consist of people who ordinarily not only have nothing in common, but who are fundamentally opposed to each other. A Nazi sympathizer attacks Reich's work on the bions as rubbish and nonsense, while a Nazi critic accuses Reich's bio-electrical experiments as pornographic. Although they might differ in their political leanings to the left or the right, they are opposed to Reich in their core self. Reich even knows why they are opposed to him: It's due to their armoring, their inability to feel. But they won't listen to him. Soon the Norwegian Psychiatric Society joins in the attack, criticizing Reich for his emphasis on the centrality of sex in the development of neurosis, as well as condemning him for championing the rights of children and adolescents to a free development of

their sexual feelings. Reich counters by pointing out that anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, in his book, *The Sexual Life of Savages*, found that neurosis was unknown among matriarchal societies where the love life of children was free and uninhibited.

Providing rational responses in an irrational environment does him no good, though. When Reich publishes *The Bion Experiments*, all hell breaks loose. It's open season on the infamous sex doctor who claims to have found life among ordinary sand crystals. Spontaneous biogenesis? A universal life energy? Nonsense, say his critics, many of whom are authorities in their own fields. In over a hundred articles and letters, the press attacks Reich as a quack, as a Jewish pornographer, and as a mad scientist. Editors toss aside articles and letters supporting Reich; they publish only the sensational, critical stories. Not wanting to lower himself to the level of name-calling, Reich refuses to join the controversy. He asks only that people investigate the experiments he had done and decide for themselves what the truth is. But no one takes him up on his challenge. Caught in the midst of a feeding frenzy, they all would rather persist in the irrational attack on his character.

Though he remains publicly aloof, Reich cannot help but take out his anger among those closest to him, especially Elsa. The newspaper smear campaign continues unabated for a solid year; it destroys any chance for Reich to stay in Norway. Realizing that there is no longer any place in Europe where he can continue his work in peace, Reich accepts an invitation from the New School for Social Research in New York City for a position as an assistant professor of medical psychology. By the end of the newspaper campaign, Reich's relationship with Elsa deteriorates so badly that she decides not to go with him to America. On August 19, 1939 Reich sets sail for the United States. Two weeks later, the Nazis invade Poland. World War Two begins.

In New York, Reich quickly gets busy. He lectures on the biological aspects of character formation at the New School, treats patients, trains prospective therapists to do his

innovative, body-oriented psychotherapy, and reassembles his laboratory to continue the experimental work on bions he had begun in Norway. His ideas, his enthusiasm, and his zest for life draws people to him. Students and professionals meet regularly at his home in Forest Hills for seminars. To be complete, all he needs is a female companion. In October, he is introduced to Ilse Ollendorff, an office worker; on Christmas Day, Reich marries her and employs her as his laboratory assistant. Eager to make a clean break with his European past, he is no longer "Willy" to his associates; he is now "Dr. Reich."

Reich's experiments with the bions lead him to discover the existence of a hitherto unknown energy. After studying its properties, he concludes that *this* is the libidinal energy that Freud had postulated so long ago, this is the primordial energy of life itself, the energy that is involved not only in sexuality, but in all other life processes. He finds further that this energy exists both within living organisms in varying degrees of intensity, as well as in the atmosphere. In 1940, Reich constructs a device to accumulate this energy. It's a six-sided box big enough for a human to sit in, and it's constructed of alternating layers of organic materials (to attract the energy) and metallic materials (to radiate the energy toward the center of the box). Reich finds that a living organism inside the box absorbs this energy through the skin and through breathing, and that it has a healthy effect on the blood and body tissue. Since it has measurable effects on an organism and it evolved along a process that directly evolves from his original research on the orgasm, Reich calls this energy "orgone."

Hoping to secure the support of a great mainstream scientist for his apparently momentous discovery, he visits Albert Einstein and presents his findings. Though initially intrigued, Einstein writes off Reich's discovery after the most cursory of examinations. The device is worthless, he says; the effects Reich got are merely subjective. Ilse consoles Reich by telling him that Einstein is too absorbed in his work on atomic energy to be tempted to follow an altogether new line of research. Like Freud did earlier, another leading thinker rejects Reich's work as too

radical and refuses to support him. To Einstein, Reich was an inconsequential eccentric.

Reich is deeply disappointed by Einstein's rejection, but he pushes on regardless. He has unshakable faith in himself and his methods. Throughout the early and mid-forties Reich tests his orgone accumulators on human beings and finds that it has a remarkable ability to reduce and eliminate cancer tumors, heal burns, alleviate arthritic pains, relieve heart pains, and, in general, to charge up the body's natural immune system against disease. Use of the accumulator also reduces or eliminates the patients' reliance on prescription drugs. Knowing of the world's need for a cancer cure (as well his own personal need for recognition), Reich concentrates on researching the cancer problem. He eventually discovers that cancer is a psychosomatic disease caused by the putrefaction of body cells which are starved for life energy due to chronic sexual stasis and body armoring which prevents the healthy flow and discharge of emotional energy. Essentially, Reich says, cancer patients are shrinking and prematurely dying at the cellular level. He develops a blood test to diagnose cancer from the examination of cells in the body's secretions {12 years before classical cancer research developed an effective sputum test, and 15 years before cervical smear tests!}. He publishes *The Cancer Biopathy* to document his laboratory work and the path he took in the discovery of orgone energy, as well as to describe the etiology, prevention, and treatment of cancer.

Although Reich maintains a clinical practice in New York, he and Ilse move their base of operations to Rangeley, Maine, where Reich buys land and establishes Orgonon, a laboratory and research center devoted to the study of orgone energy. Several devoted followers accompany him and work in the lab, mostly medical doctors, psychiatrists, scientists from various disciplines, and assorted oddball types, who are attracted to his innovative ideas. Reich and Ilse have a son, Peter. While the move to Orgonon gives Reich the solitude and tranquillity he needs to do his work, it also insulates him from the scientific mainstream. Daughter Eva, now a medical doctor, joins her father and helps him in his work.

Besides doing research in orgone energy, Reich presents seminars and symposia on the techniques of natural childbirth and healthy childrearing. He attacks the traditional childcare practices of modern hospitals who separate child from mother immediately after birth. He discusses schizophrenia from the perspective of a life energy vantage point. He decries the tendency in modern science toward fragmentation and "mechanistic thinking," pointing out that, in nature, all things are in constant interrelationship, and that living things cannot be studied apart from the larger energy forces of the universe.

By 1947 Reich's work with cancer patients comes to attention of a muckracking journalist (Mildred Brady) who visits Reich under false pretenses and then publishes two damaging articles about him. Her first assault, entitled "The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy" is published in *Harper's Magazine*. A few weeks later, "The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich" appears in *The New Republic*, a liberal periodical which, in a review of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* published at about the same time, condemns Reich for confusing liberals by leading them away from the political struggle. Brady's articles are deftly written combinations of truths, half-truths, and downright lies which distort Reich's work and slander his character. Brady implies that Reich is running some kind of a sex racket, and that the orgone accumulators are fraudulent and ineffective. A chain reaction starts, and soon other newspapers and professional journals are publishing similar articles attacking Reich, relying on Brady's statements as if they were facts. Other medical and psychiatric organizations join the chorus, including the famous Meninger Clinic, which reprints a Brady article in full, as if it were a scientific paper. Within two months, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is alerted to the "Reich problem" and sends an agent, Charles Wood, to investigate.

Unable to understand the chain of thought Reich followed in developing his work, agent Wood arrives at Orgonon with his mind already made up. He tells the groundskeeper that Reich's accumulator is fake and that Reich may likely go to jail for fooling the public. He's here to investigate this sexy racket

mixed up with a strange box that is supposed to cure cancer. Reich greets FDA agent Wood cordially and takes him to the site where the accumulators are constructed. Wood meets Clista Templeton, the daughter of the man Reich hired to construct the accumulators. After her father's death, Clista took over the job. Agent Wood falls in love with Clista, marries her three months later, and she becomes his chief spy in Orgonon, providing him with crucial information for the FDA's investigation. Based on agent Wood's preliminary investigation, his boss, R. M. Wharton, concludes that a fraud of the first magnitude is being perpetrated and the FDA must now take careful steps to capture and bring to justice this wily Dr. Reich. With the help of his new wife, agent Wood zealously proceeds to gather all the necessary information to put Reich permanently out of business.

In between the assaults and raids by the FDA and the ongoing smear campaign in the American press, Reich continues on with his work as best he can, teaching, training, writing, doing research on the new science he calls "orgonomy." He publishes *Listen, Little Man*, a forceful, and often belligerent, diatribe about the emotional armoring of the average person. He suffers several blackouts due to coughing spasms brought on by his excessive smoking habit. With the guidance of his attorney, Peter Mills, he incorporates the Wilhelm Reich Foundation. He publishes *Ether, God, and Devil* which describes his method of functional thinking and reveals the logical process that led him to discover orgone energy. He develops and demonstrates a motor which runs on no known power other than orgone energy, but the engineer who assisted him mysteriously disappears with it. And he publishes *Cosmic Superimposition*, which presents an understanding of how man is rooted in nature, and by mere thinking, how we can come to know what nature is, and how it works.

Preoccupied that the Korean War could lead to a global nuclear conflict, Reich decides to find out if orgone energy, which has properties antithetical to atomic energy, can somehow be used as an antidote to nuclear radiation. He acquires some radioactive isotopes from the Atomic Energy Commission and places them inside an accumulator, thinking that the accumulator will

neutralize the effects of the atomic radiation. What he finds startles him. After only five hours in the accumulator, the needles on the Geiger-Muller counters jam at their highest readings, indicating energy is being radiated faster than the meters can measure. The air in the room containing the accumulator is highly charged and oppressive. Reich concludes that, instead of orgone energy neutralizing nuclear energy, nuclear energy is altering orgone energy into another form. Fascinated with the unexpected results, Reich decides to continue with the experiment, despite signs of radiation sickness from several co-workers. The longer the Oranur (ORGone ANti NUClear Research) experiment continues, the more people get sick. Soon the environment around Rangeley becomes bleak, still, listless. Ominous black clouds form. Animals are lethargic. The air feels suffocating. The sky loses its sparkle. He dubs this effect "DOR", for Deadly ORgone energy.

Enough is enough, says Reich, and he realizes he must correct this dangerous situation. He constructs a device with long metal pipes at one end that are connected to cables flowing into a deep well at the other. It resembles a tank turret and works like a lightning rod. He points the device at the deadly looking clouds and dissipates them, alleviating the oppression in the atmosphere. Over the next few years, Reich constructs more of these "cloud-busters" and he uses them to make rain for the farmers of Rangeley, Maine, as well as for experiments in weather modification and pollution control. During a series of rain-making experiments in the Arizona desert, Reich creates so much rain one day that airplanes are unable to land. On another occasion, Reich diverts hurricane Edna from hitting New York and Boston, causing a Boston radio announcer to remark about the miracle that saved New York and New England.

In 1953 Reich publishes *The Murder of Christ*, which, in blunt terms, discusses the Emotional Plague, Reich's term for the universal scourge that affects mankind, causing it to destroy truth and love whenever and wherever it appears. Meanwhile, as if to prove Reich's point, the FDA, aided and abetted by the American Psychoanalytic Association, moves ahead in its mission to nail

Reich to a cross of their own design. They harass Reich by every means possible, sending agents to Orgonon, openly and clandestinely, to acquire whatever information they can. Reich considers himself to be at war. Recalling his early days in the Austrian army, Reich begins packing a pistol. He has chains put up around the property to keep out the FDA investigators. With the Cold War in full swing and the spy game in full gear, Reich fears that the FDA agents may be Communist spies trying to steal his secrets. A fervent anti-Communist, Reich writes letters to President Eisenhower to keep him informed of his developments in cloud-busting and its potential for peaceful use of atomic energy; when Eisenhower gives a speech using a phrase Reich employed in one of his letters ("atoms for peace"), Reich interprets it as a coded message meaning that the President is aware of Reich's work and secretly supports it.

By 1954 the FDA figures it has its case together, so it issues a complaint for an injunction against Reich, charging that he has violated the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act by delivering misbranded and adulterated devices in interstate commerce and by making false and misleading claims. The complaint alleges that the orgone accumulators are part of an ingenious money-making scheme hatched by Reich and that they are incapable of having any therapeutic effect, since, in their view, "orgone energy does not exist." In the FDA complaint, nearly all of Reich's publications—including many of them written years before the orgone accumulator even existed—are described as "labeling" for the accumulator. In yet another interesting twist of fate, the complaint is signed by Peter Mills, Reich's former attorney, now a U.S. Attorney for the State of Maine.

At first, Reich is deeply offended and enraged by the complaint, considering how inaccurate and distorted it is. In a state of shock, he doesn't know how to respond. What galls him is that the complaint does not bother to mention any of the hard work Reich did synthesizing major concepts of Western intellectual history for the health and betterment of mankind; all it does is reduce him to a quack, a charlatan, and a swindler. Once he calms down, though, Reich considers his options. One, he can marshal

all his evidence in support of the efficacy of the accumulator and fight the injunction on factual, scientific grounds; two, he can succumb to the FDA's pressure, withdraw the orgone accumulator, and continue on with the other branches of his work; or three, he can fight the legality of the injunction on constitutional grounds.

Reich adamantly decides against the first option. While he knows he can substantiate his claims and he is fully prepared to demonstrate his findings to his scientific peers, he does not think a court of law is the proper venue to adjudicate matters of science. Legal technicalities might wave his evidence aside, or laymen might not be able to follow the logic of his science.

Reich rejects the second option, because it means denying the benefits of the accumulator to those patients who are already using it. It would also signify a tactical defeat in the face of the enemy, whom he thinks are forces of anti-life.

Rather than directly implement the third option, Reich elects not to appear in court to contest the injunction, but to write a letter to the judge explaining why it is inappropriate for him, as a natural scientist, to submit his scientific findings to a court of law. He declares that man-made laws cannot take precedence over natural laws of the universe, which he, in studying orgone energy, is engaged in and should not be interfered with. The judge interprets this naive response as a technical default and issues a sweeping injunction that not only orders that all accumulators rented or owned by Reich and those working in concert with him be destroyed, but it also requires that all labeling referring to orgone energy be likewise destroyed. Besides giving the FDA the license to burn Reich's books and journals, the injunction "perpetually enjoins and restrains Reich from making any statements or representations pertaining to the existence of orgone energy," a restriction that is not in accordance with the Constitution of the United States. Immediately after their victory, the FDA issues a press release and sends out thank you letters to those institutions, like the American Psychiatric Association, who have helped the government rein Reich in.

A group of medical orgonomists (doctors who practice Reichian therapy, using the orgone accumulators) protest the injunction, claiming that it interferes with their medical practice, as well as their freedom to publish and obtain scientific literature. Amazed that anyone would intervene on Reich's behalf, the judge allows the orgonomists to continue to use the accumulators because they are not named in the injunction. Due to a technicality, they are free to use the devices which Reich had developed, but he is forbidden. It is clear to Reich and to those around him that the intent of the injunction is, once and for all, to get Reich out of the picture. Under extreme pressure, Reich's mental health appears to deteriorate. More and more he sees himself as the victim of a Communist conspiracy that he thinks is designed to take control of his discoveries in cosmic energy through clever manipulations of the American legal system. Fearing homelessness once again, he takes his rage out on those nearest and dearest. Slowly, many of the people around Reich—including his wife—out of cowardice or enlightened self-interest, begin to slip away, leaving him to face the wrath of the government authorities alone.

Reich considers the injunction merely an unenforceable nuisance, and he chooses to give it only minimal compliance. Of much greater urgency in his mind is the need to reverse the DOR (deadly orgone energy) process in the world's atmosphere that is being triggered by the nuclear testing. In an experiment to reverse the desert-forming side effects of this DOR process, Reich packs up his cloudbuster and heads for the Arizona desert, with his eleven-year old son, Peter, and a few co-workers. There he brings rain to the desert and makes grass sprout in an area of Tucson where the local inhabitants swear grass had never grown before. By December 1954, the grass is twelve inches high.

While Reich is in Arizona, Dr. Michael Silvert, a psychiatrist whom Reich had put in charge of affairs at Orgonon, ships—at his own discretion—a large truckload of accumulators to New York City. Early in 1955 the FDA decides to check up on Reich to see what, if anything, Reich has been doing to comply with the terms of the injunction. After several cops-and-robbers attempts

to inspect Reich's property, the FDA learns that, in fact, very little is being done. Books are still being sold; orgone accumulators are still being transported across state lines; Reich is still conducting experiments in weather modification. They accuse Reich (and Silvert) of contempt, and, after jailing him, drag Reich into court to stand trial.

The only issue which the court cares to hear about now is whether or not Reich, who acts as his own attorney, had complied with the injunction. Reich's belated attempts to discuss the value of his scientific work are dismissed out of hand, as are his complaints that the injunction was unfair and unconstitutional. Reich is sentenced to two years in prison. His appeals, all the way to the Supreme Court, fail, and he is admitted to Danbury prison in Connecticut, where he is promptly diagnosed as paranoid and transferred to Lewisburg Penitentiary in Pennsylvania, where they have psychiatric facilities. (Silvert is sentenced to one year, and, shortly after completing his term, he commits suicide.) Although the American Civil Liberties Union protests, the FDA sends its agents to Orgonon and they systematically destroy all the orgone accumulators and burn Reich's books. Soon after, they burn the accumulators and books at Silvert's address in New York City.

While in prison, Reich sustains himself with the belief that he has been put there for protection from enemies who would kill him, if they could get to him. He sets up a pendulum in his cell and continues his experiments on negative gravity, and he resumes work on the formulas for the orgonomic equations that comprise a unifying functioning principle similar to the field theory Einstein had been working on most of his life. Convinced that President Eisenhower would intervene on his behalf, he applies for a presidential pardon. But none comes. His son, Peter, now thirteen, visits him. Reich tells him that he had lost his mother at Peter's age, that his father died from grief while he was only sixteen, and his life was over-turned by the turmoil of a world war, yet he still managed to accomplish great things. Even being imprisoned in America on the basis of an unconstitutional order was a kind of an honor. They cry together. Two days before his

parole hearing, on November 3rd, 1957, Reich is found dead in his cell. Heart failure, say the prison officials. His last manuscript, *Creation*, disappears.

On the grounds of Orgonon, Reich is buried in a simple tomb marked by a bust of his head that overlooks the lake, as his family and followers gather to pay their last respects. Reich's voice is heard reading an excerpt of his last will and testament which provides that his archives shall be sealed away and that its contents not be made public for fifty years, in the hopes that a different generation might be able to respond to his discoveries without resorting to judicial murder. He dedicates his work {as we dedicate this film} to "The Children of the Future."