

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REICHIAN TRADITION: A VIEW OF THE SEXUAL BODY

The only branch of psychoanalytic theory that has developed a coherent sense of the sexual body is that descended from Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957). Even though Reich was expelled from the International Psychoanalytical Association in 1934, and despite the decline of his reputation in later years, his work continues to hold interest for thinkers in various disciplines and in several countries. I have already highlighted (in "Psychoanalysis as the Key Discipline") Prescott's cross-cultural analysis of the connection between physical affection and non-violent adult behavior (Prescott, 1979); this connection may be regarded as a major confirmation of Reich's theories. A recent issue of the respected French journal, *l'Arc* (Dadoun, 1983), devoted to Reich is one instance of the live interest in his thought, and one that is by no means confined to his generally acclaimed psychoanalytic work of the period 1919-1934. Without exaggerating the force of the Reichian movement today, it still can be said that his work is attracting far more interest than any of the other dissidents who split off from Freud, such as Adler, Rank, Stekel, Ferenzi, Horney, or Fromm. Jung's work also is being carried on vigorously, but it has the unique advantage of having its roots in an independent early analytic theory shaped by Jung even prior to his association, 1906-1912, with Freud; it also has an easier time in gaining acceptance in many quarters due to its affinities with traditional religious symbolism and, as I have argued in Chapter Two, because of Jung's disposition to avoid detailed considerations of sexual problems.

The survival of Reichian theory and therapy is thus remarkable, given the poor record of other dissident Freudian therapies; it is all but astonishing in view of the near demise of all therapeutic work in Reichian modes for several years after his death in an American prison in 1957, accompanied by the burning of all ten of his published books, in stock at the Orgone Institute Press. The bookburning took place while Reich's case was still on appeal (Greenfield, 1974, pp. 241-254).

It is worth recalling that this humiliating debacle for the Reichians was brought on in part by direct actions of the psychoanalytic mainstream therapists. Thus, an article in a magazine (Brady, 1947) which attacked Reich, and irresponsibly at that (see Greenfield, 1974, pp. 58-59), was given the unusual honor of being reprinted in the *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* (Brady, 1948). Later when Reich was convicted of violating a U.S. court injunction in 1956, the Secretary of the American Psychoanalytic Association, Dr. Richard L. Frank, wrote a congratulatory letter to the Food and Drug Administration, noting that the analysts in this official organization had not had any success in controlling Reich (Greenfield, 1974, p. 152). As Greenfield points out, Reich was not even a member of the group that wished to control him. Reich in fact had not been a member of any of the official psychoanalytic associations since 1934, when he was expelled from the International Association (Greenfield, 1974, pp. 32-33).

Dr. Frank's letter is an indication of a felt threat. But what caused the threat? One probable cause is that Reich's Orgone theory claimed to provide an improved and empirically confirmable revision of the theory of the libido, the sexual body energy. Orgone, in other words, is a concept of sexual energy in a unified somatic and mental framework. The theory remains open to disconfirmation to this day, and continues to gain corroborations of its various aspects in research performed over the past several decades. The reader here may consult Boadella (1973) for an overall review, while Seiler (1982) and Blasband (1984) offer examples of recent confirmatory studies. As a careful reviewer of a recent biography of Reich (Sharaf, 1983) has found, there is no apparent ground for dismissing the Orgone theory or any of Reich's other theories in his later years (1934-1957) as "madness" (Kendrick, 1983).

Unfortunately, most present day adherents of psychoanalytic theory would very likely agree with the estimate of Richard Wollheim (1971), who regards the prospect of subsuming "all instinctual energy" under the heading of "libido or sexuality" as a disaster. Wollheim believes that Freud almost did just that, in 1914, but that he averted disaster by postulating "another group of instincts over and against sexuality" (Wollheim, pp. 114-115). It must be said that Reich did indeed take "libido or sexuality" to its full conclusions, refining libido theory and confirming its workings in a range of contexts. But is it necessarily a theoretical disaster to take this path? Wollheim, a professional philosopher, reasons as follows: were all instinctual energy to be

regarded as being in some basic sense sexual, then "this would have meant that the pathogenic role of sexuality would be unsubstantiated" (p. 115). It would appear that Wollheim has offered a non-sequitur. Frustrations or blockages of a natural sexual energy development could be postulated in order to account for the pathology of sex, as indeed Reich (and originally Freud) did. A unitary energy approach, in other words, is not necessarily unable to account for conflict. Indeed a unitary energy concept such as libido (and later Orgone) is better able to account for intrapsychic conflict than a theory that would build on presumably opposed dual instincts of libido and aggression, for the latter theoretical choice automatically creates conflict, as a function of its own theoretical premises, and would not enable the researcher to expect anything else but division. It is interesting in this regard to find that Jacques Lacan, whose revision of Freud is the most thoroughly insistent on the inherent conflictive status of the human psyche, allows that sexual, orgasmic pleasure, or "jouissance," is a positive unifying factor (E. Ragland-Sullivan, personal communication, May 28, 1984) when it does occur. But Lacan, whose work I will consider in a later chapter, seems to have no theoretical room for such unification, so unremitting is his distinction between the ostensible self, the "I," and the sub-self, the "moi." Beginning with that distinction, any connections with "jouissance" are necessarily subordinate notions.

On the other hand, the assumption of one instinctual, sexual energy would challenge researchers to a full exploration of the concept of the sexual body. Such an approach would entail the further postulation of a human organism highly susceptible to sexual pathogenic development, and it would also lead to a critique of culture insofar as culture has encouraged or even demanded the development of libido be subjected to repression. Moreover, as I have argued in the last chapter, Freud's eventual recourse to another instinct, the aggressive, has come up against objections that are much more difficult to overcome either in theory or in empirical corroboration than anything suggested by his libido theory, and at the same time has badly occluded his work on the sexual etiology of the neuroses.

The survival of Reichian theory and therapy into the present day is a result in part of its responsiveness to the essential need within the heritage of psychoanalysis (despite such claims as Wollheim's), for a continuously revised vision of the sexual body in Freud's original, multiple sense. Reichian theory and its own branches, such as Alexander Lowen's bioenergetic therapy (Lowen, 1965, 1967, 1970, 1975) probably constitutes the only thinking going on today that regularly considers adult as well as infantile sexuality, both in their connections and in their differences, and with attention to psychological meaning as well as bodily detail.

A relatively simple example is the discussion by the Reichian therapist Elsworth Baker, of feelings of genital anxiety on the part of some mothers, in connection with nursing (Baker, 1952). The topic of genital anxiety is consid-

ered, by Baker, in the context of his discussion of uterine contractions during breast feeding. Baker provides an excellent example of thinking that is well-centered on the sexual body: it involves the adult body, it refers to the specific bodily site where the anxiety is felt, and it locates the origin of the disposition toward anxiety in earlier sex-negative experience that has become "anchored" (not merely "introjected") in the adult woman's body. Moreover it raises an unresolved question about adult female enjoyment of sexual feelings concerning an infant, just as it considers the infant's reciprocal but not identical sexual gratification—most notable in the so-called oral orgasm—of this same contact. The unresolved question is, what place does such contact have in human life? Why is it important, or is it? Now the fact of uterine contractions has become fairly known, especially since writers within the feminist movement of the 1970's spoke of it, and the fact of infant's sexual gratification at the breast has been part of the psychological literature since Freud (1905b). It is barely possible to fit the event of a mother's genital anxiety during nursing into a few other theories, such as the Winnicottian concept of the "good enough mother" who facilitates infant development. However, in Winnicott and other non-Reichian theories, the event Baker discussed in 1952 is little mentioned. Nursing is all too likely to be regarded within most psychoanalytic theory today as a function of "nurturance," an abstraction which should have vital bodily referents but which in practice seldom does. Bowlby's approach takes the problem to be one of maternal-infant "attachment," but this metaphor as Bowlby (1984, pp. 34-35) develops it, has little if anything sexual or bodily about it.

For Reichian theory, precisely because it does continue to explore the meanings of the sexual body, the problem of the mother's genital anxiety is both noted and evaluated for treatment; it is not something to be encouraged as part of a generalized incest barrier. Latter-day Freudian theory would tend to concentrate on the infant's relation to "the breast." Since the infant is considered in such theory to be unable to imagine the actual, entire body of the mother as a separate organism, the woman becomes reduced to a body part, a fantasy in the infant's mind of a breast. Reichian theory would lead to the opposite assumption: that there can be genuine contact between infant and mother, not contact controlled by inaccurate fantasies of each others' bodies. Furthermore, because Reichian theory assumes that sexual energy movements are intrinsically present, mother and infant are regarded as two mind-body energy systems in one mode of human superimposition. The energy interchange can be qualitatively changed through anxiety, not merely "blocked" in a quantitative sense. Nursing can be a bad experience. As a recent Reichian therapist, Robert A. Dew has pointed out, "Armored chests cannot take or give pleasure in nursing, nor can armored pelves allow or enjoy the uterine contractions that attend it" (Dew, 1978, p. 230). Similarly, the training therapist, Robert Lewis, M.D., whose work is within one of the major

offshoots of Reichian psychology, namely the Bioenergetics movement founded by Alexander Lowen, argues that a parent "out of contact with its own self . . . is out of touch with the infant, *even when the parent is touching and holding it*" (Lewis, 1976, p. 22). A very similar distinction between breastfeeding as such and affectively charged nursing is made by Jean and Paul Ritter (1959, pp. 58, 243), Reichians whose work I shall turn to shortly.

I have introduced the above findings with Reichian origin not in order to assert their empirical validity, but to show the complexity and pertinence of Reichian thought for the perspective of the sexual body. Reich founded an approach that also offers clarification of more simple findings, even some that contain a high valuation of the human body. Where Prescott, for example, must describe the one great variable of physical affection on the basis of empirically reported ethnography concerning skin contact, Reich could have a finer distinction between contact in which affection is actually felt and that in which it is either blocked or even contradicted. The distinction is made in terms of his differentiation between armored and unarmored character. Prescott, suggestive as are his findings based on the Textor compilation of the Human Relations Area Files, has no room for the possibility that a great deal of touching in modern industrial civilization may be significantly more armored than touch has been in many of the preliterate societies represented in those files. Nor could a theory based entirely on the factor of direct, skin-to-skin contact allow for the superimposition of energies in two bodies which are proximate but not necessarily touching.

It is a misfortune for modern psychological theory that Reich, because he took libido and its repression seriously in the context of finding a natural function for the adult orgasm, could be written off (if one did not actually read him) as advocating orgasm on all occasions. In other words, he could be presented as a hapless, naive theoretical victim of the "hydraulic" or "hydrodynamic" theory of sexual drive, in the early Freud, when in fact Reich developed a contextual theory of couples relations, which was a far cry from one-dimensional sexual "freedom." Thus, he argued that in the case of a couple powerfully attracted to each other sexually, but hampered by the woman's containment within her "good family" life, that is, within the authoritarian sexuality of her parental household, it probably would be better not to consummate a relationship at all (Reich, 1968, pp. 154-155). Baker, in expounding this contextual sense of sexual life in Reich's views a decade after Reich's death, states plainly that one of the greatest problems with couples is in getting them to realize that sexual intercourse should be had only when really desired; no unhealthy "stasis" of psychic/bodily orgone energy is going to occur because of a mere delay. Stasis, in the adult, Baker says, probably takes as much as a year of abstinence to develop (Baker, 1967, pp. 84, 104).

With the abusive labelling of the later Reich as a madman, a whole group of research beginnings, research workers, and their later developments into the

present day have been lost to interdisciplinary thought. The psychoanalytic profession has been trying to forget Reich, in some cases entirely. A flagrant example is the volume on psychoanalytic approaches to the discipline of "psychosomatics" by the distinguished German psychoanalyst, Günter Ammon (Ammon, 1979). Ammon's book opens with a 120-page exposition of "the" psychoanalytic theory of psychosomatic illnesses, but does not mention Reich, whose work on the relation of mind and body is one of the major origins of "the" theory. In fact Reich is nowhere mentioned in Ammon's book, even though it dips back into earlier psychoanalytic theory to draw on one of Reich's adversaries, Franz Alexander.

It is impossible that Ammon is unaware of the importance of even the early Reich in the psychoanalytic study of mind-body relations. But Ammon is writing within the terms of a legend which has been propagated, namely that Reich worked in isolation, and that with his death interest in his work declined. Actually, Reich had at least 15 M.D. co-workers with him in his work at Rangeley, Maine, in the 1950's, and some of their students and students' students now comprise a working core of about 30 medically qualified psychiatric specialists, affiliated with the College of Orgonomy, an organization that has recently raised two million dollars for a permanent location to be constructed in Princeton, New Jersey. Reichian theory and therapy centering on infancy and on children had made a good beginning by the time of Reich's death. Meyerowitz (1982, pp. 43-48) lists some 70 published items in this field by Reich and co-workers for the period 1942-1956—but that line of interest has by no means dropped out of the Reichian tradition since 1957.

Reich's essays on children, most of which have been unavailable in English either because they had not been translated or because they had been destroyed and not reprinted after his conviction, have now been republished under the title *Children of the Future: On the Prevention of Sexual Pathology* (Reich, 1983). As Crist (1984) points out, Reich not only had a profound sense of the importance of maternal-infant contact; he also realized that the day to day problems of infant health must not be wished away under a new ideal of "perfect" care. The advantage of the relatively unarmored parent is not in avoiding "the many big and small problems which will turn up and must be handled skillfully," Reich claimed; the advantage is that the relatively unarmored parent will "sense the trouble," and in some cases, be able to alleviate it (Reich, 1983, p. 112). However, "In most cases the trouble will remain untouchable due to lack of knowledge" (*ibid.*). We simply do not know enough as yet about healthy "orgonotic" contact to be able to claim more than this, and there is no point in promising mothers that they can avoid the difficulties in caring for their infants which are bound to occur.

Such advice contrasts with that of Winnicott, who wrote a popular book directed largely at mothers of newborn infants, in which he did indeed idealize the mother's role (Winnicott, 1964). Badinter (1981, pp. 273-274) has ana-

lyzed Winnicott's description of the "good enough mother," and found that it actually denotes a woman absolutely devoted to her infant. Badinter charges that Winnicott has attempted to brainwash women to believe that the troubles they encounter in caring for their neonates are not real problems at all. This sentence among others by Winnicott, directed to the ideal mother of his theory, is given as evidence: "Enjoy being annoyed with the baby when cries and yells prevent acceptance of the milk that you long to be generous with" (Winnicott, 1964, p. 26). Although Klaus and Kennell (1982, p. 91) credit Winnicott with a good sense of the need for mother-infant contact just after the baby has been born, it should be noted that Winnicott places value not on the development of contact, but on the "person" and on knowledge. Thus Winnicott advised the mother: "I think the most important thing is that you easily feel that your baby is worth getting to know as a person, and worth getting to know at the earliest possible moment" (Winnicott, 1964, p. 20). These traditional emphases of Winnicott's have proven to be more acceptable in the literature of child care than has the language of Reich and the Organomists, who tend to be overlooked.

A Reichian Experiment in Family Life

The American Organomists are not the only Reichians unknown to current research. In England, independent followers of Reich who had never worked with him have carried therapy and research projects which deserve to be known. One outstanding example is the work of Jean and Paul Ritter, whose book *The Free Family: A Creative Experiment in Self-Regulation for Children*, was published in 1959.

The Ritters set out to raise their seven children in conditions of "self-regulation," from childbirth on through the school years. According to Boadella (1973, p. 220), the Reichian concept of self-regulation was first formulated by Tage Philipson, M.D., a Danish psychiatrist who worked with Reich from 1933 to 1939. It is also a principle implicit in some (but not all) of the teachings of Maria Montessori, as Ritter notes (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, pp. 235-237). Although I am not concerned with the complete "credits" for the concept of self-regulation, what I hope to have indicated in recounting some of the origins of the concept is that there has been a Reichian tradition, rather than a one-person doctrine. Self-regulation, a central Reichian concept, was adopted into Reich's theories subsequent to its formulation by Philipson, and it undoubtedly had sources in intellectual history prior to that formulation.

In Boadella's summary, "self-regulation" involves a commitment to the infant's and then the child's natural sense of what his or her needs are, and a trust that these needs can be fulfilled at the pace and scale that the infant or child determines.

It was essential that the child's own organic rhythms of functioning were respected and allowed to develop naturally. From this there developed an entire methodology of bringing up babies in such a way that their natural rhythms could best be preserved. In such functions as breast-feeding it was vital to allow the baby to regulate the length and frequency of feeds. Similarly, in such functions as elimination, sleep, play, washing, and dressing the most important aim for the child's education was to preserve and protect the child's own natural sense of bodily pleasure in his own functions, which was the foundation of his ability to give himself to any activity wholeheartedly and with real commitment. . . . If the child's fundamental needs are gratified he will much more easily accept the inevitable frustrations and accommodations involved in the process of living, than the child who has lost this basic rhythm and has learnt to suppress his natural feelings. (Boadella, 1983, p. 220)

The references in this passage to the value of commitment and the inevitability of frustration in life itself are not only indications of the Ritters' no-nonsense approach to the free family; they also mark the distinction between freedom and license which is often overlooked. Even Nietzsche, it seems, finally did not fully grasp this difference. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche arrives at the position that because any worthwhile freedom requires discipline, there is therefore a "moral imperative of nature" which is "Thou shalt obey someone, and for a long time; else thou wilt perish and lose the last respect for yourself" (Nietzsche, quoted in Kaufmann, 1960, p. 216). This imperative effectively closes the door to self-regulation in children. Obedience to another is substituted for the self-development of adequate discipline to carry out creative work.

The Free Family is the Ritters' account of how they followed self-regulation, and of how its further practical and theoretical components emerged (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, p. 75), as they raised their children in England, 1948-1958. In a later edition, entitled *Free Family & Feedback* (1976), they give a follow up report, describing the maturation (by almost any standards a very healthy one) of their children into young adults. The follow-up material is copious, adding over 100 pages to the original book.

In their extended application of "self-regulation" to their own lives, the Ritters show awareness of the multiple contexts in which self regulation itself is subject to adjustment. They recognize, for example, that the principle cannot be extended ideologically into all the social contacts that their children will have. Nor do they advise parents to force themselves into practicing the method if it goes deeply against their own grain. Yet through all the diversity of *The Free Family*, the Ritters maintain a practical commitment to self-regulation as "the law of energy in the behavior of organisms" (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, p. 264). All in all, *The Free Family* was—and is—an achievement in the sophisticated application of a basic Reichian approach to the sexual body within family life. Although the full book must be read, I will now describe five key aspects of this approach, illustrating its relevance for current issues in research and theory. There seems to be no awareness of the Ritters'

work in any of the psychological fields, nor in psychoanalytic literature, although well over 100,000 copies of the book have been sold, in various editions and languages, since 1959 (Ritter and Ritter, 1978, p. 28).

(1) The Ritters give a detailed description of natural childbirth in terms of self-regulation. They arrive at the recommendation, for example, that when contractions during childbirth seem to be pulling the infant back up into the uterus, there should be no hasty recourse to "holding" the infant "tensely where it is"; such contractions are part of a natural rhythm that will resume of its own accord, leading to a healthy birth. "Relaxation is the aim until the next involuntary contraction makes itself felt. . ." (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, p. 56). Relaxation, in fact, is of greater basic importance than exercise, contrary to what most guidebooks advise. In terms of the present study, the value of a non-armored bodily state is affirmed by the Ritters in a complex analogy between the sexual body in childbirth and the sexual body in sex. In both of these bodies, tense holding is taken as deleterious, and in both, the body and the mind are involved as a unified organism. In both, the reality of body organs is considered directly; there is no retreat to an abstract "embodiment" as in phenomenological philosophy (Poole, 1978). Jean Ritter did not have an easy time obtaining good natural childbirth conditions in England in the late 1940's and early 1950's. The failures and shortcomings of her first few births are described in detail, with attention to a number of variables such as the infant's post-delivery state of contentment, its early expressions of insecurity and security, and effects of a particularly unwholesome hospital birth on one of the Ritter girls as much as four years later (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, p. 94). The possibility of such long-term effects is not even considered in a recent "randomised" study of the Leboyer method versus hospital delivery (Nelson et al., 1980).

The Ritters also take childbirth as part of an overall process that is inherently related to the parent's sexual life, a factor which would hardly be regarded as a function of "natural childbirth" even by most of its advocates today. Within Jean Ritter's Reichian framework, however, it is possible for her to observe that one of her pregnancies had "a far more healthy and genital character," than the earlier pregnancies. This genital health "showed itself" [a phrase not to be taken as meaning "was equivalent to"] "in the strong desire for, and enjoyment of, intercourse up to one or two days before birth, with, in contrast to earlier pregnancies, no disturbance to orgasms due to my physical state" (1959, p. 52).

The Ritters provide numerous details of the comparative study of birth and its aftereffects upon one of their children who had to have hospital delivery. This part of their study did not occur by design, but they take intelligent note of an event that allows them to test the hypothesis that the sexual body will be significantly affected, and in a manner that can be characterized as harmful, by certain hospital practices—a hypothesis which has since been made well

known by Leboyer as a kind of assault on the newborn.

(2) The Ritters show in practice how to differentiate, at many levels of interaction between parent and child (and between siblings) the notion of "freedom" through self-regulation, as opposed to license, the crippling encouragement of allowing children to walk all over you (1959, pp. 27, 143-149). They show that self-regulation means, in Reichian terms, not the ego-controls of an abstract "self," but the expression of the needs of a sexual body organism under its own control. Obvious applications of the principle are clearly described in the sexual freedom of these children. Such freedom is taken to be crucial while not at all regarded as a self-contained entity nor as the only thing of importance. Play, for example, is a capacity connected with sexuality: its qualities and its meanings would be quite different in a family of authoritarian regulation. (The contrast with Winnicott's concept of play is obvious.) The very capacity for play might be badly diminished in such a family, were it a rigid enough one. But the sexual body is never reduced, in the Ritter's description, to an "animal" entity that is unconnected with the human mind.

The Ritters (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, p. 89) note a significant agreement between their own theory of self-regulation regarding the child's choice of what to eat, with such psychoanalytic writers as Anna Freud and Edith Buxbaum (1951), and with non-psychoanalytic experts such as Gesell (1952). As Ritter points out, this area of agreement had no effect in provoking further thought on the general benefits of the self-regulation principle amongst either the psychoanalytic writers or the others cited. Perhaps self-regulation of food intake is felt to be a relatively innocuous affirmation, but the same cannot be said of sexuality. The psychoanalytic resistance toward allowing sexuality its due is also shown in the Ritters' analysis of the work of Margaret Ribble. In *The Rights of Infants* (Ribble, 1943), Ribble had produced one of the first liberalized psychoanalytic views of infancy and childhood, but in a later work, *The Personality of the Young Child* (Ribble, 1956), the same author advocated authoritarian "guidance" for sexuality as well as for aggression, and actually reinvented the masturbation taboo. Ribble advises parents to gently "distract" the young child from its own genital play, while pretending not to be hostile (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, pp. 102-107). It is an indication of cultural lag regarding the sexual body that Ribble, in her second edition of her volume on infants' rights (Ribble, 1965), showed no awareness of the Ritters' criticisms; one of the few alterations she made was to *increase* her emphasis on alerting parents to recognize the "early erotic impulses in the baby" and to divert these, "when excessive," into "appropriate play activities" (Ribble, 1965, p.v).

(3) While the Ritters base their family life on affection and assume that love is the core of emotional life for their children and themselves, they also deal with hate, recognizing both its easy formation in the frustrated needs to children, and the need to have safe expressions of destructive urges within the

context of the family (such as in childrens' aggressive drawings). The consideration of hate by the Ritters demonstrates their awareness of human complexity within their liberating aim. Their concern for the safe, unrepressed expression of hatred, within an *approving* family context, has great implications for the preventive avoidance of a bodily anchored sadistic or self-destructive sexuality (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, pp. 20, 24, 183-188, 215-216). The Ritters thus offer a living demonstration that the acceptance of the sexual body in family life does not entail the belief that since the human being is basically good (able to handle self-regulation), therefore every emotion is of a benign nature.

(4) The Ritters provide brief, trenchant critiques of alternative approaches to childbearing, citing the available literature of the English psychoanalytic school descending from Melanie Klein, and the work of Piaget. Commenting (p. 164) on Piaget's *The Origins of Intelligence in the Child* (1952), they note that in 400 pages, emotions are not mentioned. In contrast, they argue that the intellectual development of their children is also their emotional development. Emotion, considered in the Reichian sense of energy contact between one's perceptions and feelings, is taken to be essential to the growth of the mind. At the same time, emotion is inherently a bodily process. The Ritters, in anticipation of a great deal of research regarding "infant competency" during the past decade, notice that the pace of development in their children (as well as in children of some like-minded friends of theirs) significantly exceeds that given by Arnold Gesell in his *Infant Development* (1952). They attribute this acceleration not to their own lack of shortcomings and personal problems (these they acknowledge openly), but to the intellectual enablement that comes from unrepressed emotional expression under self-regulation (p. 173). Their approach thus goes contrary to current theories which emphasize the cognitive alone, and is irreconcilable with the position maintained by the anti-psychoanalytic child psychologist Jerome Kagan, that cognitive development is virtually unaffected by most of the negative emotional contexts which infants and children undergo (Kagan, 1984). This is an area in dispute, not to be clarified without further research. It is worth noting, however, that the Ritters were seeking for a quality of cognitive development, a non-authoritarian thought process that avoids the "security" of certainty (Dewey, 1929b). Any testing of cognitive development which fails to distinguish "open" from "closed" mental attitudes (Adorno et al., 1950; Rokeach, 1960) is not a test of what the Ritters reported.

(5) The concept of "rhythm" in self-regulation is given empirical substantiation. Especially noteworthy here is Jean Ritter's careful record of self-regulated feeding patterns determined by her nursing babies, as she fed them according to their demands. Two charts are provided, one showing an hour-by-hour basis, the "self-regulated breast feeds for the first month of Erica's life," while a second chart gives similar information for the "second

month of Penny's life." Each chart shows that such rhythms of feeding are orderly and manageable for a mother without, however, exhibiting uniform "clock" regularities. Certain of the variations are attributed to extraneous variables; thus, the choice of one of the girl infants to nurse continuously for 70 minutes during one session (her usual time was about 10 minutes) is speculatively connected with that infant's experience of particularly inhumane birth in the hospital. Contrast between infants' self-regulated rhythms of nursing and the rigid feeding schedule very popular in the 1950's is shown in graphs (1959, pp. 60-63). These records of breast feeding rhythms have led Dr. Eva Reich, Reich's daughter, to maintain that Jean Ritter is the first person to study self-regulation at the breast (E. Reich, 1980).

The loss, in effect, of the Ritters' data to psychologists, although it is published in an easily available form, is illustrated by the omission of any reference (to my knowledge) to *The Free Family* in the professional literature. There is no mention of the Ritters, for example, in *Psychobiology of the Human Newborn* (Stratton, 1982b). Peter Stratton's collection is one of the finest I have seen in the field of neonatal research, and its editor makes it clear that he does value (not merely study) the newborn. However, there is a total absence in this work of any perspective like that of the sexual body. Even the editor's own richly detailed survey, "Rhythmic Functions in the Newborn" (pp. 116-119), contains no study of rhythms in breast feeding and lacks the concept of self-regulation on the part of the infant, although both crying and sucking are discussed. Stratton takes as one of his main objects the formulation of a precise notion of "rhythm" itself, but the issue of self-regulation versus imposed scheduling of feeding, as a crux in the attitudes taken by culture to the sexual body, is not visible in the forest of research proposals and methodological cautions. So little is known with scientific reliability about how rhythms function in the infant that it is far too early, Stratton feels, to engage in "elaborate speculation about the more esoteric implications" (1982b, p. 142). There is so little "speculation" in his book, in fact, that the issues of the sexual body do not even get raised. The Ritters' "creative experiment" (though it contains some supporting observations based on other families) cannot count as a controlled study, to be sure, but this hardly explains why it is not even consulted for its research suggestions. Although Stratton's interest in the definition of rhythm is well warranted, it is difficult to credit his statement that a lack of such a concept has been a major obstacle to the progress of research thus far (p. 141).

From a Reichian perspective it would seem that the concept of rhythm is too closely associated with the natural biology of the sexual body, and hence would be taken, almost automatically, as an embarrassment to hard-headed laboratory research. In this respect, it is significant that Stratton's own case for the presence of a basic rhythmic pattern in the infant, of periods of relaxation alternating with pendulum swings of steady energy expenditure, is virtually

asexual. His article on "Newborn Individuality" has a section on cognitive processes but none on emotional ones; presumably these are incorporated under such headings as "Soothability" and "Irritability" (Stratton, 1982b, pp. 221-261). But such omissions cannot be blamed entirely on Stratton, since most of what he has assembled in this essay summarizes work in the field by all investigators. Stratton's entire edited collection of research reviews on the newborn, in fact, has very few references of any kind to sexuality in any of the 15 contributions.

Thus research moves backwards, away from the sexual body, away from the body itself, and toward some pure, nonexistent mind. Emotions, taken by the Ritters as essential, are not considered by Stratton in the rhythmic functions of the newborn. He assumes that "differential emotional response" is largely "irrelevant" in very early life (pp. 124-125).

The Reichian journal *Energy and Character: The Journal of Bioenergetic Research* in recent years has published much from the Leboyer movement in birth practices. (Leboyer cited Reich as one of his own inspirations, along with Freud and Otto Rank, who gave us the hypothesis of the birth trauma.) Leboyer confirms many of the findings of the Ritters, who in their "creative experiment" in child-rearing had to rely on such earlier pioneers of natural childbirth as Grantley Dick-Read (Dick-Read, 1942, 1947, 1955). Leboyer's findings, especially if considered within a Reichian context, continue to bring out realities of the sexual body that seem to be lost to researchers such as Stratton within the formal laboratory disciplines of experimental psychology. According to Leboyer, it is precisely Stratton's "subject," the "newborn," during the first four or five minutes of life, whose heart structure is changing radically: the heart ventricles alter as the umbilical oxygen supply is phased out, and the lungs begin to function (Leboyer, 1975, pp. 17-18). Stratton, who knows that the heart is quintessentially rhythmic, and who provides precise counts of the heartbeat cycles in the fetal life before birth and in the neonate later (1982b, pp. 126-127) does not pause to consider the possibly traumatic adjustment to air in the first moments; elsewhere he makes light of Leboyer's accomplishment (p. 7). To think in Leboyer's fashion, it is necessary to think of the heart within the body as a whole, rather than as a rhythm in itself, and as part of a feeling human being. Dr. Michel Odent, an obstetrician who has carried on Leboyer's work and developed it further, has promoted the practice of giving birth in a squatting position, partly because such a position encourages emotional expression by the mother. Odent also speaks of the newborn's need to obtain "early expression of the rooting reflex," with explicit denotation of "expression" as an emotional behavior. "The free expression of the emotions," Dr. Odent says, in an excellent Reichian formulation, "is on a par with the freedom of the body" (Odent, 1980, p. 13). Odent, very like the Ritters more than a quarter of a century ago (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, p. 30), and like Reich before them, recognizes and values the

profound energy interaction of mother and fetus during the birth process itself.

Few psychologists or psychoanalysts realize that Reich shifted his interests in his last few years to the problems of infancy and childbearing. Most of the articles he wrote about this appeared in journals which were burned on government order. Reich's attention to the adult sexual body is better known; in other parts of this study I make reference to its importance in the light of current theory and research—or the lack of such—on the adult sexual body. In this section, I have deliberately emphasized the 1959 book of the Ritters partly to correct the impression that Reich was concerned only with orgasm and orgone. My broader purpose, however, has been to demonstrate that the Reichian tradition, by virtue of its intelligent adherence to a theory of bodily, sexual energy, contains insights into the vast field of problems that psychoanalysis, as well as the more scientifically "mainstream" disciplines, continues to face concerning the sexual body. The following excerpt is typical of the Ritters' thinking:

To hold a baby feelingly is to allow a warm flow of love to give pleasure to the infant as well as the adult. This flow of love is not a metaphor but concrete reality. If a child is held in an unrelaxed way, so that neither the soft feelings of love nor the flow are present, the difference in its reactions become, over a long period of time, very obvious. (Ritter and Ritter, 1959, pp. 91-92)

Presumably, this statement is at best nonsense to most of the responsible scientific investigators of infancy. Such terms as "warm flow" and "to hold . . . feelingly" would seem an embarrassment to the designer of experiments in human behavior. The Ritters' reference in this passage to love is also an essential research omission in current non-Reichian thought. For example, the extensive recent study on the lives of "American couples" (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983) contains practically nothing about love, although love (or the lack of it) would probably have been prominently mentioned as one of the main things in life by every one of the couples studied in depth. But from the perspective of the sexual body, love—not only sexual love but the sexual aspects of any love—would be an essential area for creative investigation. The terms "warm flow," "to hold . . . feelingly," and "love" are neither meaningless nor empirically insignificant.

But the Ritters also refer to other "obvious" results, at the end of the quotation just given; these bring out still further dimensions of the sexual body. One result for the Ritters concerned the inculcation in the infant of a desire for symbiotic union with the mother, such as psychoanalytic theory has come to regard as normal. In contrast, the Ritters' children, much to the surprise of some visitors, frequently "have wriggled to get out of our arms and indicate that they don't want to be carried any more, because they have had enough of it" (p. 92). This is an early indication, in the literature on child

research, that the dangers of over-protection or excessive contact are spontaneously kept under control and rendered negligible, *if* self-regulation is practiced. The contemporary distinguished infant/maternal care researcher Terry B. Brazelton seems quite unaware of this possibility (as do most other researchers such as Kagan), when he comments that maternal-neonate contact after birth may interfere with infant autonomy (comment given in Klaus and Kennell, 1976, p. 57).

The overall contribution of the Ritters to human knowledge of self-regulation in a family, with the sexual body assumed throughout as the essential variable, is important. It is as yet unknown in the disciplines. The basic Reichian idea that it takes self-regulated parents who accept their own sexuality and practice it, to make self-regulation in the family work, is invaluable. In recent years, there has been a reasonable call from feminist theorists such as Dinnerstein (1976) and Chodorow (1978) for shared parenting. This proposal has received wide agreement. It took several years of discussion before other feminists began to point out that it would do no good to expose children to the care of fathers if those fathers had a consciousness incompatible with giving loving attention to their children (Breines and Gordon, 1983). T. Berry Brazelton, whose popularity in the area of infant and child care is becoming as marked as that once held by Dr. Spock, has similarly failed to see that his own recommendation for parents to be "empowered" to develop their own expertise in child-rearing (Collins, 1984) is subject to the degree of psychosexual health in those parents. In terms of the Reichian tradition, if the parents are armored, empowering them will only increase their powers of domination over children. The Ritters not only knew that, they showed how self-regulation could be practiced and understood. Their experiment is especially timely now, inasmuch as the "failures" of many of the American experiments in family structure of the 1960's are now popularly regarded as evidence that self-regulation does not work. The Ritters took care to make self-regulation possible.

What the Ritters did could not have been done perhaps by the generation of the 60's in the U.S., where adult sexual mores changed in rapid, confusing fashion, sometimes in the direction of self-regulation and other times in tune with the willful "liberation" of the day; in either event the role of the children was secondary. The Ritters could show how self-regulation worked as well as it did with children because their own marriage was vital, and lucky enough to stay so. Their life experiment stands as a fine example of the Reichian tradition in practice. With their work and the continuing work of others in different disciplines (incidentally, Paul Ritter is an urban planner and industrial designer who has brought his Reichian insights into those fields; see Ritter, 1963, 1966) the potential input of Reich will continue to be available for use among all researchers interested in the problems the Ritters have taken up. While committed Reichians may continue to keep a low profile, as in the

Journal of Orgonomy, there is good reason for anyone who undertakes to deepen knowledge of the sexual body to mine the rich ores of Reich, and of those who have followed in his wake (cf. Boadella, 1976).