

THE HUMAN BODY IN SOCIAL THEORY: REICH, FOUCAULT AND THE REPRESSIVE HYPOTHESIS*

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1. Are human bodies human?

A recurrent issue in both philosophy and the human sciences has been the possibility of identifying distinctively human characteristics — such as the capacities for language, purposive action and conscious experience; sociality, historicity and cultural diversity; and so on. Some of these proposed differentiations have taken the relevant contrasts to be between humans and the ‘physical’ or ‘material’ world; others, between humans and the ‘biological’ or ‘organic’ world. But what has been accepted in nearly all such proposals is that it is not human *bodies* that are distinctive of humans. Rather, it has typically been assumed that the bodily features of humans are precisely what is *non*-distinctive about them. Correspondingly, those who have denied the existence, or at least the significance, of distinctively human characteristics have typically supported their position by emphasising the essentially bodily (either physical/material, or biological/organic) character of human beings.

Both the general issue of human distinctiveness, and the shared assumption of the human body’s non-distinctiveness, have had important implications for social theory, and it is with these that this paper is primarily concerned. Here the possibly relevant differences between the human and non-human worlds have usually been taken as holding between humans and the (rest of) the organic, or biological world, especially that of (other) animal species. (In at least many areas of (human) psychology, by contrast, the possibly relevant differences have been taken as holding between humans and the physical or material world.) Hence, the question of whether the *bodily* characteristics of humans have a legitimate place in the object-domain of social theory has typically been identified with the question of whether the *biological* characteristics of humans should have such a place. That they should not be

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thus included has been maintained by those who insist that social theory should restrict itself to what is distinctively human. Conversely, that they should be thus included has been maintained by those who believe either that there is nothing distinctive about humans, or that social theory should be concerned with both the distinctive *and* non-distinctive features of the human world.

But the assumption shared by these otherwise conflicting views of social theory — that human bodies are non-distinctive and, more specifically, belong to the biological world — is mistaken. To show the many respects in which this is so, and why, would require an extremely complex set of (broadly) philosophical arguments which I shall not attempt here. Instead I shall draw attention to some important ways in which the work of two particular social theorists, namely Wilhelm Reich and Michel Foucault, can be seen to challenge that assumption. Both of them, I shall argue, are concerned to identify various social processes involved in the ‘construction’ (i.e. the actual shaping or forming) of human bodies; and hence, at least implicitly, to demonstrate in this respect the distinctively ‘human’ character of human bodies, by removing them from the category of exclusively biological entities.¹

In other words, both Reich and Foucault can be understood as rejecting the view that human bodies belong to the object-domain of social theory only to the extent that biological entities belong there. More positively, they can be seen to contribute to what is, I believe, the important theoretical project of understanding the various complex ‘mediations’ that obtain between biological and social processes. For the conduct of this project must, I would argue, recognise that human bodies are themselves, in the very character of their development and consequent patterns of activity, a central ‘site’ or ‘location’ for these mediations. That is, the (admittedly problematic) relationships *between* biological and social processes are not to be understood as occurring between ‘the bodily’ and ‘the social’, but rather as internal to the human body itself.

Whatever the merits of these general claims about human bodies, however, it may well seem highly implausible to link the work of Reich and Foucault in this way. For, as normally interpreted by both their respective critics and admirers, the two supposedly represent utterly incompatible theoretical stand points: for instance, ‘biological essentialism’ *versus* ‘discursive constructionism’. But it will be a further aim of this paper to question this orthodox contra-positioning of the two.

I shall begin by presenting what is an apparently strong case for this orthodox view, in the form of a schematic account of Foucault’s critique of ‘the repressive hypothesis’ in Volume I of *The History of Sexuality*, and of its seeming applicability to Reich’s account of ‘sexual repression’. But I shall then propose certain interpretations (and at times, reconstructions) of their work, which should serve to undermine this orthodox contraposition by indicating the overall compatibility of their respective

insights concerning the social construction of human bodies. In doing so, however, I shall also suggest that, despite these shared insights, there can be found in each of them a residual (quasi-biological) ‘naturalism’ about human bodies, especially in their articulation of critical ideals. Further, and partly on this basis, I will suggest that, instead of regarding Reich and Foucault as entirely opposed with respect to ‘the repressive hypothesis’, the two can in some ways be seen as proposing different variants upon a single, more generally specified, theory of ‘repression’.

2. ‘The repressive hypothesis’: Foucault *contra* Reich?

In the opening sections of *The History of Sexuality* (Vol. I; henceforth *HS*), Foucault sketches an ingenious critique of what he terms ‘the repressive hypothesis’: very roughly, that in the course of European history, and especially since the seventeenth century, there has been an increasing repression and confinement of (natural) human sexuality. Thus, according to its proponents, says Foucault,

At the beginning of the seventeenth century a certain frankness (about sexuality) was still common. . . . Sexual practices had little need of secrecy. . . . It was a time of direct gestures, shameless discourse, and open transgressions, when anatomies were shown and intermingled at will, and knowing children hung about amid the laughter of adults: it was a period when bodies ‘made a display of themselves’.

But twilight soon fell on this bright day, followed by the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the curious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. (*HS*, p. 3)

By emphasising in this initial depiction of the hypothesis its supposed implication of increasing silence and secrecy about sexuality, Foucault is immediately able to present an apparent difficulty facing its advocates. For, he claims, it was precisely during the hypothesised major period of repression that there emerged ‘a veritable explosion’ of discourses about sexuality; in, for example, medical, psychiatric and educational theories, and the practices that were both informed and presupposed by these discourses: the investigation and classification of deviant sexualities; the sexual diagnosis of mental and physical illnesses; the concern with childhood masturbation; and so on. Never, in effect, had there been so noisy a silence, so public a secret, as this ‘repressed’ sexuality.

Yet it would be a relatively simple matter for an advocate of the repressive hypothesis to deal with this apparent paradox. After all, if it is assumed that sexuality is a powerful human drive seen by its enemies as a danger to moral and political order, one would surely expect them to display great vigilance, and to arm themselves with every item of theoretical and practical equipment they could

muster in their self-appointed role as repressive legislators. In other words, the silence and secrecy whose absence is presented by Foucault as a problem for the repressive hypothesis is no problem at all: if anything, this absence strengthens the support for that hypothesis.

But although Foucault's rhetoric at times seems designed to obscure this obvious rejoinder, it is not one that need unduly concern him. For his critique of the repressive hypothesis does not essentially depend upon contesting its supposed implications of silence and secrecy.² It depends rather upon arguing that its advocates necessarily accept a number of fundamentally mistaken assumptions about the character of power, truth, and sexuality; and that when these are rejected and replaced by others, the 'veritable explosion' of discourses about sexuality takes on a quite different theoretical and political significance. In particular, it emerges that the repressive hypothesis should itself be seen to form part of the discursive armoury of 'modern' power.³

What are these supposedly mistaken assumptions? First, there is what he terms a 'negative' conception of power, according to which the exercise of power typically involves prohibition, limitation, restriction, removal, and such like. 'Negative' power is thus thought of as operating upon something that exists prior to, and independently of, the exercise of such power; and its exercise involves various forms of limitation of the pre-existing 'object'. The concept of repression, says Foucault, assumes this (mistaken) view of power. Second, advocates of the repressive hypothesis assume that 'truth' is essentially liberating: they accept an Enlightenment conception of knowledge as something that can free one both from error and illusion, and from the patterns of domination and subordination that depend upon these. The repressive hypothesis is thus itself conceived as emancipatory knowledge or truth. Third, there is the assumption that sexuality is some kind of instinctual force or drive which lies at the root of much, or even all, human experience and activity, and which can express itself more or less directly in a great variety of (often necessarily disguised) forms. These varying forms may well be socio-historically specific — including, of course, those that result from (historically specific) patterns of repression. But the drive which is thus repressed is itself a-historical, and in some sense 'natural'.

That assumptions at least reasonably similar to these are in fact (and quite likely inevitably) made by proponents of the repressive hypothesis is a relatively uncontentious claim. Certainly their presence is identifiable in the work of one such proponent whom Foucault seems to have in mind, namely Wilhelm Reich, especially in his so-called 'Sex-Pol' writings of around 1930, such as 'Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis', *The Sexual Revolution*, and 'The Imposition of Sexual Morality'. Consider, for example, the following (characteristically grandiose) account of human history provided by Reich in the last mentioned of these:

From earliest gentile [clan based] society to the present capitalist state the distinctive phases of societal development have always exhibited two interacting processes. The first process, spanning from the stage of primitive economic communism to the capitalist state, has to do with the development of the instruments of production, with the expansion and increase of production, and with the correspondingly awakened human needs. Ultimately this process leads to a concentration of the ownership of production in the hands of a dominant social group, the capitalists. On the other hand, another process leads from natural sexual freedom, and from the gentile [clan-based] family based upon consanguinity, to the ideology of extra-marital asceticism and permanent monogamous marriage. It moves along the lines of a continuous confinement, repression, and distortion of genital sexuality. ('The Imposition of Sexual Morality', p. 226)

Further, according to Reich it is this repression of 'genital sexuality', of the 'natural' form in which instinctual sexual energy is expressed, that lies at the root of neurosis. For Reich was one of several writers who have attempted to combine (some version of) psychoanalytic theory with (some version of) Marxist theory, so as to produce an overall account of human history which, amongst other things, relates the development of sexual repression to that of capitalism — thereby constructing (some version of) 'the repressive hypothesis'.⁴ In addition, as a theorist and practitioner of psychoanalysis he was committed to the emancipatory value not only of the truth of this repressive hypothesis and of the political practices based upon it, but also of a therapeutic practice in which the general truths represented in psychoanalytic theory come to be recognised by patients in the painful recovery of their long and deeply repressed pasts.

In Reich, then, one seems to have an exemplary advocate of the repressive hypothesis, and of the particular assumptions about power, truth and sexuality which Foucault is concerned to challenge. Against these assumptions Foucault makes the following claims. It is a central feature of modern European societies (i.e. roughly since the late eighteenth century) that power becomes increasingly 'positive' or 'productive' in character, by contrast with its earlier, predominantly 'negative' forms.⁵ Modern power operates through the construction of 'new' capacities and modes of activity, rather than through the limitation of pre-existing ones. This productivity of modern power is achieved by, amongst other things, a vast array of more or less institutionalised practices, which are typically informed by various theoretical discourses, especially those of the 'human sciences' — including, for example, psychoanalysis and the 'discourse(s) of sexuality'. Such discourses represent themselves as aspiring to, and at times achieving, the status of 'truth', of systematically established and rigorously validated knowledge. Yet whilst these discursively informed practices (or 'discursive practices') legitimate themselves at least partly by reference to the epistemological status of their respective discourses, the situation is, in crucial respects, rather the reverse: namely, that these discourses

actually presuppose their respective practices, and therefore equally belong to the weaponry, tactics and strategy of modern power.⁶

Thus, advocates of the repressive hypothesis are to be seen not only as making false assumptions about power and truth, but also as engaging in a discourse of sexuality which is intrinsically tied to practices, such as psychoanalysis itself, that are exemplary instances of modern power. In psychoanalytic theory, 'sexuality' is conceptualised in such a way that it is only through what Foucault views as the quasi-confessional nature of psychoanalytic therapy that patients can recognise this 'truth' about themselves. An instinctual force, yet equipped with an indefinite variety of possible disguises, it resists discovery by almost every means. Only through the insightful application of psychoanalytic discourse by the analyst can these disguises be penetrated, and freedom through knowledge be gained.

In an interview around the time of publication of *HS*, Foucault is reported as making the following remark, which perhaps encapsulates as well as any other his opposition to the repressive hypothesis: 'Sexuality' is far more a positive product of power, than power was ever a repression of sexuality' ('Truth and Power', p. 120). Much later in this paper, I shall draw attention to some possible ambiguities in this claim. But for the moment it can be taken to indicate the apparently fundamental opposition between Foucault and advocates of the repressive hypothesis such as Reich, who regard sexuality as a biologically grounded drive that has been subjected to various socio-historically specific forms of negative power. For Foucault, by contrast, 'sexuality' is itself what is socio-historically specific, and is in some sense the product of discursive practices characteristic of positive, modern power.

Given this systematic opposition between Foucault and Reich with respect to the repressive hypothesis, it may then seem implausible to suggest that the two can be seen as adopting mutually compatible, indeed potentially complementary, accounts of the human body and its place in social theory — especially if, as is commonly assumed, there is some very close relationship between the human body and sexuality. But this is the suggestion for which I shall try to argue, and in doing so I shall also, at least implicitly, be querying the ways in which that relationship between the body and sexuality is often conceptualised.

I shall proceed as follows. In the next two sections (3 and 4), I shall give an account of Reich's views about the human body and argue that, far from being a 'biological essentialist' or 'reductionist', his work provides important resources for a theory of the social construction of bodies. In particular, I shall show that there is a good deal more to his views of the body than the theory of instinctual sexual energy for which he is best known, and that this can quite easily be abandoned without loss.

In section 5, turning to Foucault, I shall note briefly his account in *Discipline and Punish* of the construction of ‘disciplined bodies’ as an important aspect of modern power. I shall then propose a possible interpretation of certain elements in *HS*, according to which one outcome of the discursive practices of sexuality is the construction of ‘sexualised bodies’; and that this should, or at least can, be understood as just as ‘real’ or ‘literal’ a construction as that of disciplined bodies, and not as a (merely) ‘conceptual’ construction in discourses.

Interpreted in this way, Foucault’s social theory of the human body is compatible with, and indeed potentially complementary to, the (partly reconstructed) theory discernible in Reich. But I shall also suggest, in sections 4 and 6, that the two share a residual (though eliminable) ‘naturalism’ about the human body, and that this partly undermines the extent of their apparent opposition with respect to the repressive hypothesis, especially if, in addition, the legitimacy of Foucault’s contrast between negative and positive power is questioned. Nonetheless, it must be emphasised that I am not attempting to argue that ‘properly understood, there is no real disagreement between Foucault and Reich about the repressive hypothesis’. At the very least, their respective views of ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’ are quite irreconcilable, and I shall not address the issues raised by this. For my main aim is to draw attention to the ways in which Reich and Foucault can contribute to a more adequate conception of the human body in social theory and philosophy.

3. The Trout Man: character-analytic vegetotherapy at work

Reich’s account of the human body can best be understood by examining the theory and practice of what he termed ‘character-analytic vegetotherapy’. (As Reich later acknowledged, this rather unwieldy phrase has the unfortunate effect of making the English reader think of vegetables. But the term ‘vegetotherapy’ derives in fact from the ‘vegetative nervous system’, now more commonly termed the ‘autonomic’ system, which controls the operation of the glands and internal bodily organs.) The main features of this form of (quasi-) psychoanalytic therapy were presented in Reich’s two main works on psychoanalytic theory and practice: *The Function of the Orgasm* (1927; henceforth *FO*), and *Character Analysis* (1934; henceforth *CA*).⁷

Some initial grasp of what is involved in character-analytic vegetotherapy can be achieved by considering briefly one of the case histories in *FO*, which I shall call, with due deference to Freud, ‘The Trout Man’. Reich’s account goes like this.

The patient was a 27-year-old male alcoholic, with an unhappy marriage and a general sense of listless superficiality in his social contacts. Always polite, friendly, and unaggressive, he had an awkward, forcedly jaunty walk, an expressionless face, a small tight mouth, and a general air of

submission, 'as if he were continually on his guard' (*FO*, p. 278). Reich says that he was initially faced with the decision of whether to 'first consider his psychic reserve or his very striking facial expression' (p. 279); and opting for the latter, he persistently described this expression to the patient, who eventually responded with twitchings of the mouth that built up until 'his lips began to protrude and retract rhythmically and to hold the protruded position for several seconds . . . his face took on the unmistakable expression of an infant' (p. 279). This was followed by a tearless crying, uttering sounds 'like the outbreak of a long-suppressed, painful sob' (pp. 279-80). Reich hypothesised that the patient's constricted mouth was a 'muscular defence' against this infantile crying.

Some weeks later, following a similar initial sequence, the patient's mouth 'became distorted, the musculature of his jaws became stiff as a board, and he grit his teeth', sat up shaking with anger, and 'raised his fist as if he were going to strike a blow, without, however, following through. . . . The whole action dissolved into a whimpering kind of weeping', expressing the 'impotent rage' often experienced by children (p. 281). This episode evoked previously long-buried memories of the patient's early relationship with his brother, the aggressive feelings towards whom had been curbed through fear of parental displeasure.

In a subsequent session, the patient began talking of the joys of trout-fishing. He gave a lengthy and detailed description of this activity with just one significant omission — the moment at which the trout bites into the hook. One month later, as Reich continued to work on the patient's muscular defences, a strange set of bodily movements emerged. Spontaneously, the patient said that he felt like a fish. 'His mouth,' says Reich, 'was spasmodically protruded, rigid, and distorted. His body jerked from the shoulders to the legs. His back was stiff as a board' (p. 287); and, 'with each jerk of his body, the patient for a time thrust his arms forward, as if embracing someone' (p. 288). Discussing this episode, the patient recognised how he himself had represented the trout in his previous story; and he connected this to his relationship with his mother, whom he saw as having neglected and disappointed him, often unexpectedly punishing him when he had hoped for something from her. Reich comments: 'His caution became understandable now. He did not trust anyone; he did not wish to be caught' (p. 288).

The main thesis that underlies this (perhaps) seemingly bizarre therapeutic practice is that the patient's body somehow contains and expresses their emotionally problematic life history: that, as Reich himself puts it, '*every muscular rigidity contains the history and the meaning of its origin*' (*FO*, p. 269). In order both to understand and to elaborate this thesis, one needs to explore its basis in three important areas of Reich's theoretical work: his concept of character analysis, his theory of sexual energy and orgasmic potency, and his account of 'the physiology of repression'.

The starting point for the first of these was Reich's dissatisfaction with orthodox psychoanalytic technique. He was struck by the ability of his patients to produce plentiful material in the form of dreams, memories, associations, and so on; to accept the interpretations offered; and yet to remain quite unmoved and unaffected by the therapeutic process. This, he believed, was due to the patient's resistance to the analysis, and he decided that identifying and overcoming this resistance must become the primary therapeutic task. Resistance, he believed, was rooted in the patient's *character*, 'the person's specific mode of existence', 'an expression of the person's entire past' (CA, p. 53); and its nature was indicated not so much by the *content* of the material presented, but rather by the *manner* of its presentation. In particular, Reich emphasised the importance of such features as tone of voice, facial expression, hand-clasp, 'quality of silences', posture, and bearing; and he would often proceed, therapeutically, by drawing the patient's attention to these 'characteristic' forms of behaviour, and to how they represented attitudes which kept the analyst at bay.

Having initially introduced the concept of character in response to the problem of resistance, Reich soon went on to employ it more generally in his account of the neuroses. He rejected the orthodox distinction between *symptom*-neuroses and *character*-neuroses, according to which the unconscious conflicts and defences that typically led to the formation of neurotic symptoms might in *some* cases appear instead in the form of character traits or personality structure. Against this Reich claimed that 'the symptom neurosis is *always* rooted in a neurotic character', which 'is formed, at least in its principal features, by the time the Oedipal stage comes to a close'. The symptom neurosis is merely that special case in which 'the neurotic character *also* produces symptoms, has become, so to speak, concentrated in them' (CA, p. 50, my italics). The neurotic character, he maintained, is itself a compact defence-mechanism, serving as what he termed — initially, in a metaphorical sense — an *armour*:

It is as if the affective personality armoured itself, as if the hard shell it develops were intended to deflect and weaken the blows of the outer world as well as the clamouring of the inner needs . . . the ego has become less flexible and more rigid; and . . . the ability to regulate the energy economy depends upon the extent of the armouring. (CA, p. 374)

This energy economy was, for Reich, an economy of sexual energy. Unimpressed by Freud's radical revision of his earlier theory of instincts, involving the introduction of the death instinct in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and strongly opposed to its apparent political implications in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Reich maintained that this theoretical shift by Freud led to 'a complete liquidation of the psychoanalytic theory of neurosis':

Until this point, a neurosis was looked upon as the result of a conflict between sexual demand and *fear* of punishment. Now it was said that a neurosis was a conflict between sexual demand and *demand* for punishment. (*FO*, p. 112; my italics)

For Reich, the instincts were exclusively sexual; instinctual energy was sexual energy; and neurosis resulted from the repression of instinctual impulses, and hence from the blocking of sexual energy. Further, it was only through genital sexuality that satisfactory discharge of this energy could be achieved. Thus, the severity of psychic illness was related to the severity of genital disturbance, and its cure required, and in some sense consisted in, establishing the capacity for full sexual gratification, or what he called ‘orgastic potency’, defined as: ‘the capacity to surrender to the flow of biological energy, free of any inhibitions; the capacity to discharge completely the dammed-up sexual excitation through involuntary, pleasurable convulsions of the body’ (*FO*, p. 90) — a process which Reich described, together with various pathological deviations from it, in loving detail.

In talking about the instincts, Freud had himself distinguished between their (as yet unknown) somatic *sources*; their *aims*; and their highly variable *objects*.⁸ Reich believed it important to identify the first of these, and recently published work by neurophysiologists on the operations of what was then called the ‘vegetative nervous system’ convinced him that this could be done. The vegetative system controls the operation of the internal bodily organs and glands, including the heart, blood vessels, digestive tract, genitals, and so on.⁹ It is divided into two ‘branches’, the parasympathetic and sympathetic, whose respective activation has antithetical effects upon these: for example, decreasing v. increasing the heart-beat rate, and expanding v. contracting the blood vessels. Reich maintained that parasympathetic activity corresponded to sexual excitation and pleasure, whilst sympathetic activity corresponded to anxiety; and that this anxiety itself resulted from the repression of sexual pleasure, the failure to discharge sexual energy. Further — and with each step here, he departed increasingly from orthodox (both then and now) scientific views of the autonomic system — he claimed that the respective activation of each branch of the autonomic system was itself somehow produced by the flow of ‘sexual energy’, a quasi-electrical force that was, in his later work, to be reconceptualised as cosmic, orgone energy.¹⁰

What, though, happens to the anxiety supposedly produced by the repression of sexual impulses? Reich’s answer was that it becomes ‘bound’ in the form of hypertonic rigidities in the skeletal musculature, and hence, as he put it, ‘*the spasm of the musculature is the somatic side of the process of repression, and the basis of its continued preservation*’ (*FO*, p. 271). These muscular rigidities, the organism’s way of dealing with the unpleasant anxiety resulting from the blocking of sexual energy, are to be understood as the bodily constituents of the character armour that Reich had identified in his analysis of resistance. Psychic defences correspond to muscular defences, and character rigidity to

bodily rigidity. Thus, the initially metaphorical concept of character 'armour' had now acquired a far more *literal* sense.

But Reich did not talk of bodily defences only in generalised, quantitative terms, with 'degrees of rigidification' corresponding to 'degrees of repression'. His descriptions of character armour also involved far more specific, differentiated accounts of what he called 'the physiology of repression'. This has already been seen, to some extent, in the case history of 'The Trout Man'. Elsewhere Reich tries, for example, to identify particular bodily processes through which children may defend themselves against emotionally problematic situations. Thus, he describes how they may learn to suppress or control the expression of feelings made dangerous through anticipated parental responses, by holding or reducing their breath; and how this pattern may lead to more permanent, physiologically grounded blocks upon complete exhalation, involving abdominal tension, prevention of the head falling back, and a raising and tightening of the shoulders. He suggests also how certain facial and vocal characteristics may be generated by the inhibition of crying: there is

... a mask-like facial expression. The chin is thrust forward and looks broad; the neck just below the chin has a lifeless appearance ... the floor of the mouth is tense. Such patients often suffer from nausea. Their voices are usually low, monotonous, or 'thin'. This attitude can also be tested on oneself. Imagine that you are suppressing an impulse to cry. The muscles of the floor of the mouth become very tense, the entire musculature of the head will be put in a condition of continued tension, the chin will be thrust forward, and the mouth will be tight. (FO, p. 273)

There is nothing obviously sexual about the feelings being controlled in these ways, and even when Reich does talk more directly about bodily controls over sexual feelings, his descriptions are (at least at their best) in terms not of generalised rigidity, but of specific patterns of immobilisation and postural fixity. He focuses, for example, on the formation of what he terms 'the dead pelvis' (FO, chapter 8, section 5), involving its inability to move independently of the thighs and upper abdomen, and often associated with a sense of 'emptiness' or 'weakness' in the genital area. This he presents as part of a more general pattern of the body's being 'held back', with the back arched, the shoulders pulled back, the abdomen and chest arched forward, and the pelvis withdrawn - the whole syndrome being a way of controlling problematic sexual excitation; and he connects this to what he regarded as the sexually suppressive nature of the typical military attitude or bearing: 'The neck has to be rigid, the head stretched forward; the eyes have to stare rigidly straight ahead; the chin and mouth have to have a 'manly' expression; the chest has to be thrust out' (FO, p. 323).

4. Reich without sexual energy

Most commentators on Reich, whether sympathetic or hostile, have assumed that what he says about human bodies, their muscular ‘armouring’, and the origins of this in childhood experiences, stands or falls with his theory of instinctual sexual energy. As a result of this assumption, those who — in my view quite rightly — find much that is objectionable about his sexual energy model, tend automatically to reject also the other elements in his account of the human body. But this is mistaken. Reich’s theory of sexual energy is quite independent of the rest of this account, and hence the rejection of the former does not entail the rejection of the latter.¹¹

That this is so is supported by the following considerations. Although Reich tries to provide a theoretical explanation of muscular rigidities by reference to their supposed function in binding the anxiety caused by undischarged sexual excitation in the autonomic system, none of the descriptions he provides of the origins of specific muscular formations actually depend upon this theoretical claim. This is most obvious in those cases of problematic feelings that have nothing apparently ‘sexual’ about them; for example, his account of the bodily processes involved in the suppression of crying. But the same is also true in those cases where the problematic feelings are of a specifically sexual kind. For Reich’s descriptions of the bodily defences involved in the repression of such feelings do not entail that the feelings are themselves the result of sexual energy ‘flowing’ through the autonomic system; nor that these muscular formations are a response to the postulated ‘overloading’ of the sympathetic branch of that system supposedly caused by undischarged energy accumulations.¹²

I shall not attempt here to articulate what I regard as the failings of Reich’s theory of sexual energy, since my main concern is to note that his actual descriptions of what he calls ‘the physiology of repression’, and of the ways in which the muscular structure of bodies may partly thereby be formed, do not depend upon this theory. My suspicion is that the widespread tendency on the part of Reich’s critics (and admirers) not to see this is due to their assumption that to be concerned with human *bodies* is to be concerned with human *biology*, in the sense of what is supposedly innate, instinctual, or suchlike; and hence that if instinctual sexual energy, a ‘biological force’, is rejected, so too must the rest of Reich’s account of human bodies.¹³ But this, I am suggesting, is precisely to miss the overall theoretical significance of his work: the recognition that human bodies, far from belonging exclusively to the ‘biological’ (as distinct from the ‘social’) realm, are themselves a major site or location for the interactions between biological and social processes: that they are, as it were, ‘bio-socially’ formed or constructed.

Once this is recognised, a considerable number of significant theoretical possibilities are opened up. For instance, it could be the case that the historical reproduction of specific structures of social relationships involves, amongst other things, the ‘bio-social’ reproduction of appropriately

constructed human bodies: of bodies, that is, which are 'equipped' to enter into those relationships. Hence one might expect there to be bodily differences corresponding to different structures of social relationships, as distinct from there being more or less identical, biologically reproduced, a-social bodies which then enter into a variety of socio-historically differentiated structures.¹⁴

As an example of this general theoretical possibility it could, I think, plausibly be argued that the acquisition and (historical) reproduction of socio-historically specific *gender* differences typically involves the gender-differentiation of male and female bodies. That is, assuming the standard (though not unproblematic) distinction between biologically determined 'sex' (male v. female) and socially determined 'gender' (masculine v. feminine), specific forms of masculinity and femininity will involve the construction of masculine and feminine *bodies*: the development of characteristic differences of bodily structure, patterns of movement, and so on including, I would argue, related differences in forms of experience and perception. There may well be, in other words, an *embodiment* of gender. More specifically, to the extent that there are gender differences with respect to 'sexuality', these may themselves be connected with characteristic bodily differences acquired through the operation of differentiated social processes upon male and female bodies.¹⁵

Whether or not this is actually so, the important point is to recognise its theoretical intelligibility, and this requires one to reject the normal assumption that any account of bodily differences between men and women is *ipso facto* concerned with their biological differences. For this is to rule out the possibility of *gendered bodies*, of socially constructed bodily differentiation. Further, it must be emphasised that the concept of 'social construction' I am employing here is to be understood in a fairly straightforward, 'literal' sense. In particular, I do not mean by this some kind of *conceptual* 'construction', involving the socially determined ascription of 'meanings' to male and female bodies, their social 'interpretation' as gendered. No doubt, this *also* occurs, and has some significance. But it is entirely distinct from the 'real' construction of bodies with which I am concerned, and to the understanding of which, I have been arguing, Reich's work can be seen to contribute.

In the next section of this paper, I shall try to show how Foucault's work can likewise be interpreted as contributing to this. But before leaving Reich, there is one further issue about his account of human bodies to be addressed. This is what I referred to earlier as his 'residual "naturalism"'. Despite what I have claimed to be his positive insights about the bio-social character of human bodies, there is a recurrent tendency in Reich's work to lapse into naturalistic, biologicistic language, especially where he is attempting to articulate and apply critical norms or values. In particular, frequent appeals are made to the ideal of 'natural' bodies, with their 'natural' sexuality, which turns out to consist in a rather closely specified form of heterosexual genitality.

There are, I believe, two different, though connected, senses of this naturalistic vocabulary employed by Reich. In the first, and most obviously unacceptable, the 'natural' is at least implicitly defined as that which is *non-social*; and hence, for example, 'natural sexuality' is that which is exclusively biological in its origins. Yet it should already be clear that Reich's own account of the human body makes this conception of 'the natural' quite unacceptable. For, if a 'natural' body is one whose formation involves no social processes, then there simply are not, and could not be, any such natural bodies; and 'naturalism' as an ideal is therefore absurd.

The source of Reich's error here is, I think, fairly clear: a tendency to identify the category of 'the social' with that of 'the repressive', and hence to identify 'the non-repressive' with 'the non-social' and 'the natural'. It is the first of these identifications which is primarily at fault; for unless the concept of repression is to be given an almost unlimited sense (and thereby rendered almost meaningless), what is repressive cannot be taken to include all that is social. However, once this fault is noted, one can also understand the second sense in which Reich uses this naturalistic vocabulary: namely, such that 'the natural' is whatever results from processes marked by the *absence* of repression. In this latter sense, what is natural is not identified with what is non-social, but only with what is not brought about by *repressive* social processes. 'Naturalism', in this sense, becomes the ideal of non-repressed bodies.

Yet this latter version of Reich's 'naturalism' is also highly problematic, despite avoiding the absurdities of the former version. The central difficulty is this. Even if the concept of (social) repression is reasonably clearly defined (and Reich hardly achieves this), there is every reason to expect that the category of the *non-repressive* is extremely heterogeneous, and that within this heterogeneity, there will be a good number of normatively relevant differentiations to be made. In other words, the normative ideal of 'natural' bodies is at best a negative one, which leaves open a vast array of possible forms of non-repressive bodily life, about which additional normative questions may arise that have nothing to do with 'repression'.¹⁶ But Reich seems not to recognise this. Instead he talks as if what is 'natural' in the sense of non-repressed represents a *single, determinate* ideal; and hence, in particular, maintains that there is a single mode of 'natural' sexuality, namely genital heterosexuality, whose ideal-ness is supposedly (but mistakenly) grounded solely in the absence of repressive social determinants in its development.

Nonetheless, neither of these two problematic forms of naturalism are entailed by the account of the human body I have claimed to be present in Reich's work, and hence they, along with the model of sexual energy, can be removed without loss. And it is this partly reconstructed version of Reich's position which, I shall now argue, is in many respects both compatible with, and complementary to,

the conception of human bodies to be found in at least some parts of Foucault's work.

5. Disciplined bodies and sexualised bodies

As noted in section 2, one of Foucault's main objections to the repressive hypothesis is its reliance upon a negative conception of power as prohibition or limitation. Against this he maintains that since the eighteenth century power has become increasingly positive or productive, involving the careful construction of new capacities rather than the repression or removal of pre-existing ones. Hence, for example, 'power over life' comes to consist not so much in the threat of death as in the management of life itself, and this management takes as one of its central concerns the human body:

'... its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase in its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls' (*HS*, p. 139).

In order to produce these docile and useful bodies, says Foucault,

... a real and effective 'incorporation' of power was necessary, in the sense that power had to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behaviour. Hence the significance of methods like school discipline, which succeeded in making children's bodies the object of highly complex systems of manipulation and conditioning. ('Truth and Power', p. 125)

A striking example that Foucault uses to illustrate this thesis in *Discipline and Punish* (henceforth *DP*) is that of military training. In the course of the eighteenth century, he says, a major transformation took place in the nature of the military body. Previously, the physical characteristics already acquired by a man marked him out as suited to this profession — the breadth of his shoulders, the strength of his hands, the thickness of his thighs. But by the end of that century,

... the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculating constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has 'got rid of the peasant', and given him 'the air of the soldier'. (*DP*, p. 135)

To illustrate this transformation, he quotes from various military training manuals which specify, for example, the precise details of the marching step, or how recruits shall become accustomed to

... holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright, without bending the back, to sticking out the belly, throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders... . Likewise, they will be taught never to fix their eyes on the ground, but to look straight at those they pass... to remain motionless until the order is given, without moving the head, the hands, or the feet. (*DP*, pp. 135-6)

Military training, that is, came to involve the construction of military bodies — of bodies which are controlled not by external threat or coercion, but by their acquired, internalised modes of automatised operation. And Foucault claims that similar processes of training and regulation of human bodies emerged during this same period in a wide range of specific institutional locations: in schools, factories, prisons, and so on. The overall outcome of these disciplinary practices were bodies that were both useful and docile, both productive and subjected: bodies that had, amongst other things, been enabled to provide the labour-power for capitalist enterprises.

Whether or not any of this is actually true (and the ‘evidence’ provided by Foucault is far from conclusive),¹⁷ the sense in which power is here being claimed to be positive or productive in relation to bodies seems fairly straightforward. This is not to deny that there are problems with what often appears to be, in Foucault’s work, a dubious reification of ‘power’ itself, but only to say that the specific processes of bodily construction being described, and the idea of ‘control through the acquisition of bodily capacities’, are reasonably intelligible once one accepts the possibility of socially constructed bodies. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the interpretation I am adopting here of *Discipline and Punish* is by no means the only possible one. In particular, it may be argued that *DP* should not be read in this simple-minded, ‘realist’ manner, but rather — and in this respect consistently with many of Foucault’s other, especially earlier, works — as essentially concerned with various (modern) *discourses*, including those of ‘military training’, ‘punishment’, and so on.

These exegetical issues cannot be pursued here; but, briefly put, my position is this. I believe that the interpretation of *DP* I am adopting is at least defensible, as an interpretation. But if I were wrong about this it would not greatly concern me. This is because my more general philosophical commitment to realism, as against most forms of discursive conceptual constructionism/conventionalism, is such that ultimately I would only be interested in those elements of Foucault’s work that were open to a realist (re-)’interpretation’, even if this is strictly (i.e. exegetically) speaking a *mis*-interpretation of the relevant texts.¹⁸

The preceding remarks were addressed to the problems of interpreting *DP*, but they are equally applicable to what will be the final stages of this paper, which mainly concern Volume I of *The History of Sexuality* and closely associated writings. For what I will now suggest is that one important

theme in *HS*, namely ‘the sexualisation of bodies’, is to be understood so that bodies are being said to become ‘sexualised’ in a sense closely analogous to that in which they are said in *DP* to become ‘militarised’, ‘disciplined’, and so on: that is, that a ‘real transformation’ in the character of human bodies is being claimed to have taken place, thereby displaying another facet of the productivity of modern power.

That Foucault is claiming, or can be read as claiming, something along these lines is supported by the following textual considerations. First, there are several passages in which he talks of the various practices supposedly aimed at investigating a sexuality that exists independently of them, as *themselves* involving sustained and subtle forms of sexual excitement and incitement. For example, he says that ‘the power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, dramatizing troubled moments’; and that it ‘implied a physical proximity and an interplay of intense sensations’ (*HS*, p. 44).

Second, Foucault emphasises that his concern is not primarily, or at least exclusively, with identifying the development of sexualised ‘interpretations’ or ‘conceptualisations’ of the human body, with the ‘meanings’ that came to be ascribed to it. Rather, he says,

... the purpose of the present study is in fact to show how deployments of power are directly connected to the body — to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures... . Hence I do not envisage a ‘history of mentalities’ that would take account of bodies only through the manner in which they have been perceived and given meaning and value; but a ‘history of bodies’ and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested. (*HS*, pp. 151-2)

In other words, and employing the distinction I made earlier between ‘real’ and ‘conceptual’ construction, Foucault can be taken here to be declaring his concern with the former, rather than the latter — though, as will shortly be seen, there is an important connection between the two, the crucial mediation being performed by discursive practices, and in particular the discursive practices of ‘sexuality’.

Finally, in the interview already referred to, discussing *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault says this: in the pedagogic and medical manuals of the eighteenth century,

... children’s sex is spoken of constantly and in every possible context. One might argue [in line with the repressive hypothesis] that the purpose of these discourses was precisely to prevent children from having a sexuality. But their *effect* was to din it into parents’ heads that

their children's sex constituted a fundamental problem ... and to din it into children's heads that their relationship with their own body and their own sex was to be a fundamental problem as far as *they* were concerned; and this had the consequence of sexually exciting the bodies of children while at the same time fixing the parental gaze and vigilance on the peril of infantile sexuality. The result was a sexualizing of the infantile body, a sexualizing of the bodily relationship between parent and child, a sexualizing of the familial domain. 'Sexuality' is far more a positive product of power than power was ever a repression of sexuality. ('Truth and Power', p. 120)

I will now elaborate the character of the thesis here being ascribed to Foucault, and its relationship to his views about power, truth, and sexuality noted earlier (section 2), by considering how the last sentence in the passage just quoted may best be interpreted. There are, I suggest, three distinguishable, mutually consistent 'layers' or 'levels' of meaning that can be identified.

First, one may interpret this sentence as expressing the claim that the concept, and more generally the discourse(s), of sexuality, are to be understood as a positive product of (modern) power; and that it is a mistake to think of this concept as referring to an a-historical entity that has been subjected to the repressive effects of negative power. Second, one may add to this initial level of interpretation by taking Foucault's use of the term 'sexuality' as including not only the concept and/or discourse(s) of sexuality, but also the discursive practices which are informed and presupposed by these: medical, pedagogic, psychiatric, and so on.

The third level of interpretation can be arrived at by pursuing the following line of thought. In *Discipline and Punish* (according to my reading of this) Foucault is concerned with the actual production or construction of disciplined bodies, regarding these as the effects or outcomes of various (discursively informed) practices such as military training and school discipline. What, then, corresponds to these bodily outcomes in the case of the discursive practices of sexuality? The answer would surely be: sexualised bodies. Hence Foucault can be taken to be claiming, in this sentence, that amongst the products of positive power are human bodies which are 'equipped' with the characteristic features of (modern) sexuality. 'Sexuality', that is, does not refer to an a-historical drive with the various characteristics ascribed to it in the modern discourse(s) of sexuality. Rather, sexuality is not only historically specific, and of an at least partly somatic nature: it is also a product of those very practices which present themselves, through their self-informing discourses, as directed at something that exists a-historically and independently of them.

Whether this claim is actually true is, of course, another matter, and one which does not concern me here — though I think it unlikely that the discursive practices of sexuality are the major social

determinants of whatever is distinctive about modern, embodied, sexuality. What is important here is the theoretical intelligibility of the claim, and this, I believe, is quite well grounded in the more general view of human bodies and their susceptibility to processes of (real) social construction which I have been advocating, and ascribing to both Foucault and Reich. Their positions are, then, in this respect mutually compatible and potentially complementary. Compatible, of course, not with respect to the actual truth or falsity of at least some of their specific, substantive claims — especially, perhaps, those concerning sexuality — but rather in their shared rejection of exclusively biologicistic, a-social conceptions of the human body. Further, it should be noted that ‘even’ in the case of sexuality, their apparent substantive disagreement is significantly reduced if one accepts the following points: first, that in rejecting Reich’s model of instinctual sexual energy, one is not thereby committed to rejecting any kind of ‘biological’ component in human sexuality; and second, that Foucault’s view of the historicity of ‘modern’ sexuality does not commit one (and is probably not intended by him to commit one) to regarding *every* feature of this sexuality as historically specific.

6. Foucault’s ‘repressive hypothesis’?

In section 2 of this paper, I outlined an apparently strong case for the orthodox contra-positioning of Reich and Foucault with respect to ‘the repressive hypothesis’. To the extent that this opposition might reasonably be expected to affect their respective conceptions of the human body, what I have so far argued about the latter may be seen partly — but only partly — to undermine the contra-positioning of the two. I shall now try to take this ‘undermining’ process a little further, by suggesting that in certain respects Foucault *too* can be seen to endorse a ‘repressive hypothesis’, which mirrors Reich’s in an unfortunate manner. Nonetheless, as noted earlier, I am not proposing a ‘complete reconciliation’ of the two, above all because of their radical differences about the relationships between truth, power, and discourses.

There are two main steps to be taken here, each of which will be sketched only very briefly. First, I suggest that there can be found in Foucault, as in Reich, a ‘residual naturalism’ about the human body. Second, I doubt that Foucault’s contrast between positive and negative power can do the theoretical work required of it.

Whilst Reich’s naturalism (in both its versions) is most evident in his normative judgements, it also occurs in his historical claims about the development of sexual repression, specifically in his descriptions of ‘early, pre-repressive’ societies, where natural bodies and their sexuality supposedly flourished (see, e.g. the quotation from Reich in section 2 above). Of course, the historical claim that ‘once upon a time there were natural bodies’ is not required by his normative naturalism — as such the latter is equally compatible, for example, with a more ‘optimistic’, ‘progressivist’ account of the history of human bodies. Nonetheless, the making of this historical claim does require commitment to

the theoretical-conceptual assumptions of naturalism which, I argued in section 4, are highly problematic (though also eliminable, ‘without loss’ to the rest of his account).

Now, according to Foucault (according to me), sexualised and disciplined bodies are amongst the outcomes of modern power. So one may reasonably ask of Foucault the question, ‘What were human bodies like *before* this— in, as it were, pre-modern times?’. And one answer which he occasionally seems to give is, in effect, that they were ‘natural’. Consider, for example, the following passage, from a lecture given in the early 1970s:

It is false to say ... [as does Marx] that the concrete existence of man is labour. For the life and time of man are *not by nature* labour, *but* pleasure, restlessness, merry-making, rest, needs, accidents, desires, violent acts, robberies, etc... . And this quite explosive, momentary and discontinuous *energy* must be transformed by capital into labour-power, something which implies compulsion... (‘Power and Norms’, p. 62; my italics)

Furthermore, it is apparently this same natural body, with its ‘discontinuous energy’, that is invoked in *The History of Sexuality* as Foucault’s alternative to the normative conception of sexual liberation associated with ‘the repressive hypothesis’. Thus:

It is the agency of sex that we must break away from if we aim — through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality — to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. The rallying point for the counter attack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures. (*HS*, p. 157)

Or, as he put it in a later interview, ‘... one should aim instead at a desexualization, at a general economy of pleasure not based on sexual norms’ (‘The History of Sexuality’, p. 191).

In other words, Foucault at times has his *own* ‘repressive hypothesis’ which, incidentally, has a somewhat similar historical dating to the one he opposes. Once upon a time there were natural bodies; then they became ‘repressed’ through discipline and sexuality; and now we have to overturn this repression and regain our natural bodily condition. It’s a similar story to Reich’s with (merely) a different specification of the ‘natural’ characteristics of bodies, and it is open to similar objections. I shall not spell these out here. But they could, for example, be developed by considering the significance of the fact that the pre-militarised bodies of the eighteenth-century armies were themselves ‘already’ socio-historically formed, albeit through processes that did not, at least in Foucault’s view, display the characteristics of modern power.

The second main step can be introduced by responding to a possible objection to the first: namely, that what I have called ‘Foucault’s (version of the) repressive hypothesis’ is quite wrongly so called, since he rejects the exclusively negative conception of power typically assumed by its advocates. But I doubt that this objection can be adequately sustained, for the following reasons.

First, to the extent that there *is* a reasonably clear distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ power, it seems implausible to claim that Reich — or, indeed, most other advocates of a/the repressive hypothesis — conceives of repression in exclusively ‘negative’ terms. What, after all, could be a more ‘positive’ product of power than a Reichianly armoured body? For, although Reich does not approve of this muscular apparatus, it could hardly be said *merely* to limit or reduce one’s capacities — it also makes possible many ‘new’ patterns of movement, experience, and such like. And similar points could be made about the ‘positive’ character of the ‘repressive’ processes and outcomes that were the concern of other advocates of ‘the repressive hypothesis’: for example, the ‘authoritarian personality’. Second, it is far from obvious that Foucault’s distinction *is* a reasonably clear one; or, at least, that his own examples of modern power *are* distinctively ‘positive’. After all, he himself talks frequently of the ‘subjugation’ of bodies, of the ‘controls’ imposed upon them, of their being rendered ‘docile’; and also, of their (‘natural’?) capacities for ‘resistance’ to such exercises of power over them. These terms seem surely to belong to the vocabulary of negative, repressive power.

Notes

This article started life in some papers written in 1982 whilst a visiting fellow at the Humanities Research Centre, Australia National University, and since presented in too many places to be mentioned. It was first published in *Radical Philosophy* 42 (Spring 1986). Amongst the numerous people who have helped with their comments and responses, I am especially grateful to Paul Connerton.

1 Other social theorists whose work has, I think, a similar significance include Norbert Elias, Marcel Mauss, and Margaret Mead (see Bibliography). Philosophically, the most important contribution is perhaps Merleau-Ponty’s in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

2 My account of Foucault omits consideration of how his quasi-Nietzschean ‘genealogy’ differs from other forms of ‘critique’. On this issue see Smart, especially Ch. 4.

3 Here, as throughout, I rely mainly on my own readings of *Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, and the essays collected in *Power/Knowledge*. But see also Dews, Dreyfus and Rabinow, and Smart.

4 On these various attempted ‘syntheses’ by Reich, Marcuse, Roheim, and others, see e.g. Robinson, Sedgwick, Poster, and Weeks.

5 Here I ignore the complexities surrounding Foucault’s (various) ‘periodisations’ of history, and adopt the rather loose concept of ‘modernity’.

6 This is a very simplified account of Foucault’s view of the relations between ‘discourses’ and ‘practices’, even restricting oneself to his 1970s writings. On this issue, see e.g. Dreyfus and Rabinow. Note, in particular, that I

do not mean by ‘discursive practice’, the practice of ‘discourse’ as distinct from other, non-discursive practices.

7 Note that the work cited in the Bibliography, *The Function of the Orgasm*, from which the quotations that follow are taken, is not a translation of the 1927 *Die Funktion des Orgasmus* but a quite distinct work of intellectual autobiography published (in translation) in 1942. The passages I quote from *FO* are restricted to those which, as far as I can judge, accurately reflect Reich’s theoretical position in the late 1920s. Similar remarks apply to my quotations from the third, 1949 edition of *CA*, in relation to the first, 1933/4 edition.

8 The metapsychology of Freud’s instinct theories has been variously interpreted. My view on this is presented in Chapter 4 of *The Politics of Social Theory*, which includes some relevant bibliographical material.

9 On the autonomic nervous system, and its relation to the ‘voluntary’ system controlling the skeletal musculature, see any standard work on the human nervous system, such as Noback and Demarest, upon which I have relied at various points in what follows.

10 On Reich’s later work, see e.g. Boadella, Rycroft, and Sharaf. From my standpoint, there is a crucial theoretical ‘break’ around 1934-5, with his proclaimed experimental discovery of ‘bions’, to be followed by ‘orgone energy’, the construction and sale of ‘orgone accumulators’, and his eventual death in prison in 1957.

11 Sympathetic commentators include Boadella, and Sharaf. His most sophisticated critic is perhaps Mitchell. All three tend to assume what I am rejecting here; whilst Rycroft only partly avoids it, since he ties vegetotherapy to ‘the orgasm reflex’. By far the best and most discriminating brief account of Reich’s work is the article by Edwards.

12 There is, in any case, a flaw in Reich’s neurophysiology here: he assumes a probably non-existent ‘linkage’ between the autonomic and voluntary subsystems (see note 9 above; and Rycroft, Ch. 5).

13 Here, as throughout, I ignore the complexities in the conceptualisation of ‘the biological’, ‘the innate’, ‘the instinctual’, etc: on this, see e.g. Reynolds, *passim*. On some general problems with energy models, in psychoanalysis, see e.g. my discussion in *The Politics of Social Theory*, Ch. 4.

14 Unfortunately, Reich’s own main attempt to use his theory of character formation in relation to historically specific social structures, viz. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, hardly engages with the bodily aspects of character armouring.

15 Two interesting accounts of gendered bodily differences are Connell, and Young. Examples of the normal tendency to identify bodily with biological differences are Nicholson, Ch. 2, and Reynolds, Part III.

16 For anthropological material on significant bodily differences that do not obviously map on to the ‘repressive v. non-repressive’ dichotomy, see e.g. Mead, Part Two. Another fruitful area to consider would be the differences between various contemporary dance techniques — Graham, Laban, Cunningham, etc.

17 An obvious problem is Foucault’s almost exclusive reliance on the dicta of ‘the disciplinarians’ as distinct from ‘the disciplined’ — though of course this is only a problem for a realist reading of *DP*. For an excellent discussion of the corresponding problems with Foucault’s earlier work on the history of ‘madness’, see Sedgwick, ch. 5.

18 The so-called ‘British Foucauldians’, such as Heath, and Weeks, seem often to endorse the kind of discursive-constructionist ‘reading’ of Foucault which I am here opposing. Dreyfus and Rabinow argue that there was a major shift away from this in Foucault’s work in the 1970s.

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