

My Recent Trip to Finland

I arrived in Helsinki the evening of June 3rd and was met at the airport by Jan Pesonen (Jani from now on), one of the organizers for my work, and the person who, along with his partner Jutta, put me up for all but one of my nights in Finland.

On Wednesday the 4th I met with Stergios Tsiormpatzis, the organizer for the weekend conference on Orgonomy, and Leena Rouhiainen, the person responsible for arranging my lecture at the University of the Arts. At this meeting I worked with Leena on an article she is writing about Reich and Merleau-Ponty.

Thursday was devoted to tourism led by Jani with David Silver from NYC and his traveling companion. Jani then took the three of us to his cabin on an island in the Finnish archipelago, where we spent Thursday night—I slept in a tent on his deck after a traditional wood-fired Finnish sauna.

The first event of the weekend conference occurred on Friday evening, when I MC-ed a free “Introduction to the World of Wilhelm Reich.” This evening included films on Reich, a recording of Reich’s “The Source of the Human ‘No’,” a newly released recording by Peter Reich (sent previously), two popular songs derived from Peter Reich’s book, with an improvisational dance by Leena from the University of the Arts to one of them, Patti Smith’s “Birdland.” I shared images by William Steig from both Reich’s *Listen, Little Man!* and Steig’s own *Agony in the Kindergarten*. I also read two passages from *The Murder of Christ* and one from *Further Problems of Work Democracy*. (See the first of the two PDFs accompanying this narrative for further details. These two pamphlets, designed and developed by Stergios, were distributed throughout the week.)

The conference began Saturday morning before a small but enthusiastic and well-informed audience; mostly from Finland, people also attended from Germany (a young woman who is studying to be a midwife and who attended the Conference in Rome, which is where I met her and the two organizers, Stergios and Jani), Austria (my dear friend, Dr. Tina Lindemann, who gave a public lecture on Monday, worked with patients during the week, and then a weekend training, after I left) and England (including a woman from Greece currently living in London). My first talk, “From Psychoanalysis to Vegetotherapy to Orgone Therapy,” covered the development of Reich’s form of therapy, with an emphasis on what I see as the differences between this therapy as practiced in the US and in Europe. Also on the program was Peter Jones from England, who presented on “Orgonomic Midwifery and Childbirth Support,” and the organizer, Stergios, who gave a talk entitled “From Wilhelm to Eva: A Gentle Approach to Orgone Therapy.” Stergios’ talk included a demonstration of Eva Reich’s butterfly massage.

On the second day of the conference I spoke about “The Importance of Reich’s Social and Political Thought”; Peter Jones spoke about the “Prevention of Armoring,” and demonstrated his work on a volunteer baby, the infant of one of Stergios’ patients. Jani then presented a segment of the film, *Room for Happiness*, showing two therapists working with patients. This began a further discussion on differing modes of therapy. The day ended with participants and presenters

eating Chinese food. (The second PDF has information relevant to the weekend conference; it also includes a document I put together which shows that more of Reich's writings were devoted to the social and political than to the medical and scientific.)

I was free on Monday to explore Helsinki, attended a concert, and took the ferry to the Fortress Island, a popular tourist destination. Other tourist activities during my stay included the Contemporary Art Museum (great exhibit by Alfredo Jaar), the Finnish National Art Museum, and a small exhibit in the City Hall, a concert of vocal music, etc. (Helsinki is a beautiful city, easy to get around, with lots to see and do, and the weather during my stay was mostly gorgeous.)

Tuesday I spoke at the University of the Arts on "The Body Politic: The Intersection of Wilhelm Reich's Social and Political Vision, Body Psychotherapy, and the Arts." I very much enjoyed sharing Reich's ideas with historians of both dance and theater, and I appreciated the wine and nibbles reception afterwards, where I met academics who had connections with both NYU and Rutgers, my two alma maters.

My work concluded on Wednesday, with a lecture/demonstration for therapists, therapists in training and two osteopaths, entitled "Body-Mind in Therapy: A Workshop for Psychotherapists and Practitioners." The first part of the evening was devoted to a talk, focusing again on my sense of the differences between Reich's orgone therapy and other therapies derived from but also different from his work. The second part of the evening began with my having a therapeutic session where I "treated" myself. I rather quickly got to heavy discharge in the form of tears. Having emphasized that I am not trained as an orgone therapist (though I have been a 'consumer' of this therapy for many years), I offered to 'counsel' some folks, using the techniques I had mastered many years ago in Re-evaluation Counseling aka Co-Counseling. (Though quite different from orgone therapy, this form of counseling shares with it a strong emphasis on emotional release.) The two people I worked with pretty quickly got to heavy discharge. The three hours had flown by, and with the alarm set to go off in the building at ten, we hurried to leave. As I packed up I heard Jani say, "We must have Philip back next year." We'll see.

After that workshop I returned with Stergios to his home in the countryside, where I spent the night and the following day in good conversation, a walk in the woods, and wonderful home cooking by Stergios. I returned to the States the following day.

Overall, I think the trip was quite successful, but I also think that my solo trips to Europe are behind me, and the next time I go we will figure out a way for Wendy to accompany me.

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