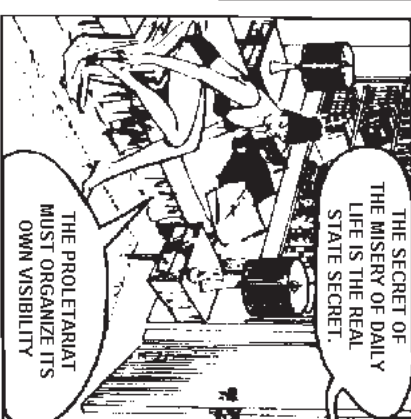
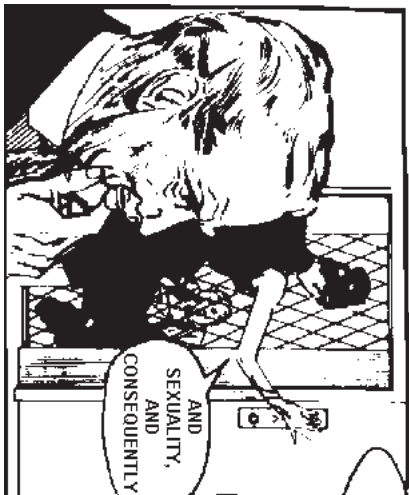


Reich, How to Use

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A **Hobgoblin Press** production
October 2003

In short, what I mean by idea is the third moment of publicité. And that's also what I mean by spirit.

It's both a material fact (the taking and destruction of the Bastille, material fact par excellence) and the contrary of a material fact, the suppression of this collective fact in favour of the immediateness of the individual. In a word, consciousness, the consciousness of that which makes itself. Etc.

Finally, I want to clarify the role that character plays for me, so that a too great importance is not given it through the reading of this article.

I take character in Reich's sense for a mere symptom, for the symptom of an effect which is still hidden, which still operates in the dark, and which can only operate in the dark, since awareness of it is inseparable from its destruction by the "people in arms." In my view, character is nothing but a symptom of the spectacle effect (which is itself only a particular form of the value effect).

On the other hand, inasmuch as it is a symptom, character can be an effective means of publicizing a secret misery, a misery still hidden. For the symptom, even if it is a symptom of an as yet unknown malady, cancer for example, is no less certainly a symptom of it, which at least lets the sick person know that he is sick and not in good health, which he might believe in the absence of the symptom.

But I think that to make character an independent entity, with its own history and its own rationale, is a misuse of the notion.

In any case I am developing all this in the *Encyclopédie des Apparences*, which should appear here at the end of the year. . . .

Discretion Is the Better Part of Value (Addendum to “Reich, How To Use”)

Here are some specifics on my Reich article. . . .

The 18th-century French author Marivaux wrote a play entitled “How Spirit Comes to Women.” (You can easily imagine how!) . . .

I want to draw your attention to a difficulty in translating this text into English. In French, *publicité* refers both to “advertising” and to “public welfare,” *res publica*, what belongs to the public. These two quite contrary senses make for a striking play on words, which I am developing in depth in my *Encyclopédie des Apparences*, but I don’t see how it can be rendered in English. . . .

Misery is in fact the sole real property of the unhappy public. In this sense misery is common, communal—but only secretly so, not publicly.

In contrast, commercial publicity speaks of something that does not belong to the public, but it speaks of it in a public manner.

Thus, *publicité* includes three moments:

a) It is the character of that which belongs to the public, of that which the public possesses, of public property. But, this public property may very well be nonpublic, secret, not revealed. This is the case with misery.

b) It is that which is known by the public, that which is done in its presence. But, this knowledge may very well concern something which does not belong to the public. This is precisely the case with commercial publicity (advertising) in particular and with the spectacle in general. Thus, in the spectacle, that which is public in the sense of “done in the presence of the public” is the totality of individuals and their relations. But this totality, even though it is composed of nothing other than themselves, does not belong to them. They are stripped of their own substance.

c) Finally, the third moment is the unity of the first two; the unity of that which belongs to the public and that which is known by the public. In a word, real *publicité* in the sense of 1789-1793. It is communism, community; the workers councils were a timid experience of this type of *publicité*. It is “practice which sees its own action.”

In a very Hegelian language, this third moment is the totality of individuals suppressing itself in favour of the immediateness of the individual. The totality then becomes the concrete substance of the individual and the individual becomes the substantial power of the totality which exists for itself, as person. (Heil Hegel!)

The French term *publicité* renders all that, including that grotesque perversion of *publicité*, advertising.

I also want to clarify what I mean by “idea” in the phrase “the idea of its suppression.” I have a very materialist conception of this term. What I mean, for example, is the taking of the Bastille by the people of Paris on 14 July 1789. That’s what I mean by idea. This very material “idea” comes to people the same way “spirit” does.

Jean-Pierre Voyer’s “Reich, mode d’emploi” was published as a pamphlet and a poster by Champ Libre (Paris, 1971) and was translated by Ken Knabb in 1973. The present version, reprinted from *Public Secrets*, supersedes the earlier translation.

Hobgoblin Press edition October 2003.

FOOTNOTES

“The thing contains in its second part, in a very condensed but relatively popular form, quite a few novelties that anticipate my book,⁽¹⁾ while at the same time necessarily barely touching on a number of other aspects. Do you think it’s a good idea to preview such subjects in this way?”

- Marx to Engels, 24 June 1865

1. The Notion of Character According to Reich

“To find love in Paris, one has to descend to the classes where the struggle with real needs and the absence of education and vanity have left more energy. To reveal a great unsatisfied desire is to reveal one’s inferiority, an impossibility in France, except for those beneath everything. . . Hence, the exaggerated praises of young women in the mouths of young men afraid of their hearts.”

- Stendhal, *On Love*

As a result of his practical and theoretical struggle against resistances in analysis, Reich came to conceive of character (character neurosis) as the very form of those resistances.⁽²⁾

In contrast to a symptom - which must be considered as a production and concentration of character and which is felt as a foreign body, giving rise to an awareness of illness - a character trait is organically embedded in the personality. Unawareness of the illness is a fundamental symptom of character neurosis. An explanation of this degradation of individuality cannot appear except within an attempt to communicate, in this case within the analytic technique itself. However unilateral this technique may be, it rapidly revealed character for what it is: a defence against communication, a failure of the faculty of encounter. This is the price paid for the primary function of character, the defence against anxiety.⁽³⁾ There’s no need to dwell on the origin of anxiety, on its causes and their permanence. Let us simply note the obvious fact that the particular form of one’s character is a pattern that takes shape before the tenth year.

The discretion of this arrangement explains why it is not recognized as a social plague, and thus why it is lastingly effective. This setup produces damaged individuals, as stripped as possible of intelligence, sociability and sexuality, and consequently truly isolated from one another; which is ideal for the optimum functioning of the automatic system of commodity circulation. The energy which the individual could use to recognize and be recognized is *harnessed* to his character, i.e. employed to neutralize itself.

In all societies in which modern conditions of production prevail the impossibility of living takes individually the form of death, madness or character. With the intrepid Dr. Reich, and against his horrified recuperators and vilifiers, we postulate the pathological nature of *all* character traits, i.e. of all chronicity in human behaviour. What is important to us is neither the individual structure of our character nor the explanation of its formation, but *the impossibility of applying it toward the creation of situations*. Character is thus not simply an unhealthy excrescence which could be treated separately, but at the same time an individual remedy in a globally ill society, a remedy that enables us to bear the illness while aggravating it. People are to a great extent accomplices in the reigning spectacle. *Character is the form of this complicity.*

1. The Institute of Contemporary Prehistory is presently preparing an *Encyclopedia of Appearances: A Phenomenology of the Absence of Spirit*.

2. *Character Analysis*, 1927-33 (Noonday, 1972).

3. The critical situation in which the magnitude of this price is fully revealed is love. It remains Reich’s merit to have shown that character defence against anxiety is paid for in this situation by an incapacity for tenderness, which he labels, unfortunately, “orgastic impotence.” At this level character is itself a symptom.

4. While Reich concluded in a very ambiguous manner that character is an obstacle to work, we contend that character is an obstacle to the *critique* of work.

5. Note that this last meaning, which makes for some fundamental plays on words in the original French text, is not present in the English word “publicity.” See the addendum, Discretion Is the Better Part of Value, in which the author elucidates this and some other aspects of his text. (Translator’s note.)

6. The reader will have recognized class consciousness here, and will therefore not confuse it with the spectacle of misery, which is the *advertising* version of the publicity of misery.

7. Alas! the opposition of the whole to individuals takes place only by *means* of parts of the whole. When the opposition of individuals to the totality becomes “total,” things become totally clear.

8. The worker has the same advantage over the rich as the slave over the master. The slave knows fear; the worker, a living commodity, knows value.

9. See *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, 1933-34 (Noonday, 1971) and *What Is Class Consciousness?* 1934 (in *Sex-Pol*, Vintage, 1972). In this latter small work Reich attains the height of Leninist naïveté. Despite his denials, he extols specialized historical knowledge to the extreme. There is even a curious foreshadowing of the Maoist conception of education as a spectacle of misery.

10. *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, 1929 (in *Sex-Pol*). *Mass Psychology* and *Dialectical Materialism* are both indelibly marred by a mechanistic conception of instincts.

11. According to the principle: “That which is not superseded rots; that which rots incites to supersession” (Vaneigem).

12. 1968 has provided us with abundant and most diverse data.

form of public misery, its effect ceases when the secrecy ceases. Its effect lies in its secrecy. Thus theory becomes increasingly identical to lived possibility (as opposed to probability, which is lived as doubt or indifference). Theory is *life* when everything is possible. It ceases to exist the moment it makes a mistake, and finds itself thrown back into boredom, into the spectacle effect. Real theory thus can't go wrong. It is a subject devoid of error. Nothing deceives it. The totality is its sole object. Theory knows misery as secretly public. It knows the secret publicity of misery. All hopes are permitted to it. Class struggle exists.

The spectacle is the absence of spirit. Character is the absence of theory.

The proletariat will be visible or it will be nothing. The proletariat *lives* in its own visibility. The organization of the proletariat is the organization of its visibility. The global practice of the proletariat will be its *permanent publicity* or nothing. Hitler, the Leninists and the Maoists understood this so well that they organized the visibility of the proletariat *by force*. A more ambitious capitalism wishes to realize the visibility of the *abolished* proletariat.

By itself, the visibility of misery is not the proletariat. Necessary but insufficient. The proletariat requires that the visibility of misery be public. The critique must be at once theory of publicity (of visibility) and publicity (visibility) of theory. Its aim must be *to ensure its own publicity*. It is when it's public that it doesn't go wrong. It is *not* the theory of publicity if it doesn't ensure its own publicity. Indeed, it is the height of absurdity for a theorist of publicity not to be able to ensure the publicity of his theory.

The proletariat is the finally realized unity of the theory of publicity and the publicity of theory.

We think these insights are superior to everything that a Lukács was able to say about class consciousness. They certainly have the advantage of brevity. As the ad men know, brevity is essential in publicity. ("Are you man enough for Granny Goose Potato Chips?" - one could not be briefer in contempt.) What they cannot imagine is that publicity will be even briefer at the moment of a Strasbourg of the factories. Visibility will flash like lightning, fire like a gun and rise like the sun, or it will not be.

For the moment our formulas may have only brevity in their favour. It may perhaps be necessary to introduce into them the concepts "Granny Goose" or "Potato Chips" in order for them to know their total clarity. A day will soon come when all the potato chips of the earth will no longer be able to smother the meeting of the theory of publicity and the publicity of theory.

We maintain that people can dissolve their character only by contesting the entire society (this is in opposition to Reich insofar as he envisages character analysis from a specialized point of view). On the other hand, since the function of character is to accommodate us to the state of things, its dissolution is a prerequisite to the total critique of society. We must destroy this vicious circle.

Total contestation begins with the critique in acts of wage labour,⁽⁴⁾ in accordance with a first principle beyond discussion: "Never work." The qualities of adventure absolutely essential for such an enterprise lie exclusively outside character. Character destroys those qualities. The problem of opposing the entire society is thus also the problem of dissolving character.

2. Its Application to the Spectacle Effect

"The truest and most important concepts of the era . . . are precisely marked by the organization around them of the greatest confusions and the worst misrepresentations. Vital concepts are simultaneously subject to the truest and the most false uses . . . because the struggle between critical reality and the apologetic spectacle leads to a struggle over words. . . . The truth of a concept is not revealed by an authoritarian purge, but by the coherence of its use in theory and in practical life."

- Internationale Situationniste #10 "Domenach versus Alienation"

Public: *pertaining to all the people.*

Publicité: *public notoriety; that which is done in the presence of the public; that which belongs to the public.*⁽⁵⁾

- Dictionnaire Larousse

The publicity of misery is inseparable from the *idea* of its suppression.⁽⁶⁾ This is how *spirit* comes to men and women. Misery is always misery of publicity. It is thus necessary to seek the reason for the persistence of misery in that which causes the misery of publicity.

Fetishism is the misery of publicity. It is the very form of social separation. Wherever there is opposition between individuals and the totality of their interrelations, this opposition takes the form of fetishism of the totality. Opposition between the whole and individuals takes place by *means* of parts of the whole which appear to be isolated, or which maintain illusory relations with the whole and with each other.⁽⁷⁾ Deceived consciousness is the fundamental moment of fetishism. With it, things become what they seem. The absence of consciousness takes the form of consciousness.

The fetishism of the commodity is concentrated in its value. It took Marx thousands of pages of *Capital* to get to the bottom of this fetish. It is the yoke of value that weighs down human brows, be they bourgeois, bureaucratic or proletarian. Value is the relation between two quantities. What is more bizarre than the fact that x pounds of carrots are worth y quarts of wine or even z minutes of hairdressing? Value is the exorbitant autonomy of the commodity. It is dangerous to steal, loot or burn. It's even more dangerous to never work! Value exerts itself implacably,⁽⁸⁾ while the deceived gaze only meets things and their prices.

In the nineteenth century, with the complete opposition between individual life and species

life (everyday life versus automatic commodity circulation), all hopes were allowed (those of Hegel, those of Marx). At that stage things were clear: everyday life was *nothing*, circulation was *everything*. The nothingness of everyday life was a *visible* moment of the all-encompassing circulation. Fetishism scarcely deceived anyone but the ruling class and its toadies. Several times the proletariat launched an assault on the totality, and the publicity of misery came very close to triumphing over the misery of publicity.

Today things have changed considerably. The modernization of the struggles of the oppressed, and above all their incompleteness, have brought about the rapid modernization of fetishism by the ruling class and its state since 1930. The rise of *scientific fetishism* was striking: Bolshevism, National Socialism and the New Deal appeared almost simultaneously. This modernization consisted essentially of *depriving* everyday life of what was left to it: its negativity, i.e. the publicity of its misery, the publicity of its nullity. The secret of the misery of everyday life is the real state secret. It is the keystone completing the edifice of separation, which is also the edifice of the state.

The spectacle - the scientific development of fetishism - is simply the private property of the means of publicity, the state monopoly of appearances. With it, only the circulation of commodities remains public. The spectacle is nothing but commodity circulation absorbing all available means of publicity, thus condemning misery to invisibility. The spectacle is the secret form of public misery, where value operates implacably while the deceived gaze only meets things and their use.

In the imperialist publicity of commodity circulation, value never appears. This is the spectacle of the invisibility of value. This “natural” invisibility constitutes the fundamentally spectacle tendency of circulation which the bourgeoisie has exploited in the scientific development of fetishism. As long as value does not become public in a different way, circulation is able to appear as a carnival of use (principally the use of money, needless to say). It is thus easy to understand the entrancement of the spectator confronted daily by value. This is the spectacle effect. It forestalls all ideas; everything seems accomplished. It forbids all recognition; the miserable being sees himself as alone in his misery. Money itself appears as the instrument of the abolition of value—the peak of inversion. As a result of all this, spirit does not come to men nor (what is even more regrettable) to women.

From his front row seat, Wilhelm Reich couldn't help being struck by the role played by character as anti-individual structure in the magnificent Nazi spectacle.⁽⁹⁾ He leaves the farcical question “Why do workers revolt?” to the psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, sociologists and other servants of the spectacle, in order to pose the fundamental question: “Why don't they revolt?”⁽¹⁰⁾ He attributes their submission to the crushing of the individual by character. This is hardly contestable. Necessary but insufficient. To say that this society hasn't got an intrinsically spectacle tendency would amount to saying that the spectacle is the creation of the ruling class alone. That would be giving them too much credit! We know that the ruling class is the chief victim of its own illusions. It follows the trend.

We have already demonstrated the rationale of this tendency. Character is nevertheless undeniably real. It can be clinically detected. We now have to determine exactly what is analysed in character analysis, once its insufficiency as a separate notion is recognized. As a separate notion it is nothing but one more fetish.

Our thesis is as follows. The quantitative reigns. All human relations are governed by the

relation of quantity to quantity, though they appear as purely human relations - the deceived gaze only meets things and their prices. We have briefly reviewed the spontaneously spectacle effect of the “natural” invisibility of value. For all that, value never ceases to be lived by each person as the inescapable necessity of his daily life. We have seen that this *lived secret* fulfilled the spectacle tendency of commodity circulation. What is it that Reich clinically detects which he labels “character”? We contend that it is *value*, as inhuman necessity and otherwise invisible, that is grasped by this approach. It is even, up till now, the only concrete way of approaching value as secret misery of individuality. Under this form Reich tracked down *the unconscious*, its misery and its miserable repressive manoeuvres, which only draw their force and their magical pomp from the dominion of value over everyday life. Because human relations have been globally socialized *exclusively* in terms of value, which is their *negation*, authentic human relations, validated by pleasure, are preserved⁽¹¹⁾ within this socialisation as *natural relations* (and thus illicit and clandestine ones), since all sociality, all humanity, is occupied (in the colonialist sense) by value, the only officially validated socialisation. Whatever tends to escape the law of value thus takes the form of the *natural*, i.e. that which *by definition* escapes the mastery of humanity.

In his third Philosophical Manuscript, Marx measures the humanity of man, his socialisation, by the degree of socialisation of that “immediate, natural and necessary” human relationship: the relationship between man and woman. Value as universal socialisation, as sole and inverted form of humanity, is also in fact the impossibility of socializing this relationship; which relationship *remains*, therefore, the “most natural,” that is to say the most frustrated by the reigning social organization. Within a world of universal socialisation by value, this naturalness becomes increasingly equivalent to its degree of decay,⁽¹¹⁾ just as the degree of naturalness of the Nambikwara Indians within our civilization tends to equal the degree of their extermination. This degree of decay - psychosis, neurosis, character - as index of the non-socialisation and non-humanity of man, is the *real* object of psychoanalysis. That old swine Freud went so far as to identify naturalness with “savagery,” and value-inverted socialisation with “civilization.” Psychoanalysis was and will remain the palaeontology of this prehistory.

We support our thesis, still purely theoretical, with the following clinical observation: If, for one reason or another, an individual's character is dissolved, the phenomenal spectacular form of the totality is dissolved in its pretension to pass for the absence of value. Thus we have established, negatively for the moment, an identity between character and the spectacle effect. Whether the subject sinks into madness, practices theory or participates in an uprising,⁽¹²⁾ we have ascertained that the two poles of daily life - contact with a narrow and separate reality on one hand and spectacular contact with the totality on the other - are simultaneously abolished, opening the way for that unity of individual life which Reich unfortunately labels “genitality.” (We prefer *individuality*.)

The works of Reich are the first since Marx that concretely shed light on alienation. The theory of the spectacle is the first theory since Marx that aims explicitly at being a theory of alienation. The synthesis of these two methods leads to some immediate consequences which we will develop in our forthcoming work.

First of all, we maintain that the practice of theory is inseparable from what Reich referred to as “genitality.” Theory becomes continuous knowledge of secret misery, of the secret of misery. It is thus also in itself the end of the spectacle effect. Since the spectacle is the secret