

Photographic Images of Orgone Energy Functions—I: The Ameba

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Editor's Note: *This is the first article in a series providing photographic demonstration of orgone energy functions.* [Howard Chavis, M.D.]

The behavior of unicellular microorganisms has always captured the attention of scientists. Binet (1888) claimed to see “psychological properties” in microorganisms: fear, memory, perception, even choice and sight. Freud (1914), however, limited the analogy between microorganisms and human psychology to a particular behavior of a particular microorganism, the ameba (page 75). For him, the movement of the libido toward the world or toward the self brought to mind the protrusion and retraction of the ameba’s pseudopods (“false feet”).

Reich’s interest in the behavior of the ameba originated from his desire to observe its “plasmatic currents,” familiar to him through the work of Hartmann and Rhumbler¹ (Reich 1938, page 25). He correlated these with the bodily “vegetative currents” perceived by patients after their characterological and muscular defensive attitudes, called “armor,” loosened during vegetotherapy² (Sharaf, pages 208-209). In the expansion and protrusion of the pseudopods, Reich recognized the emotion *pleasure*, and in their contraction and retraction, the emotion *anxiety*,³ together resulting in the movement of *pulsation*.

¹His interest in the “currents” led Reich to initiate almost simultaneously his microbiological and his bioelectrical experiments (1934-1938). Currents are also known by modern protozoologists (Miyoshi, Kagawa and Tsuchiya 2001).

²Reich gave the name “vegetotherapy” to the form of therapy he practiced from 1935 to 1939, prior to his discovery of orgone energy, because it affected vegetative life (the autonomic nervous system) more directly than character analysis alone.

³The original German term was “*Lust*,” erroneously translated into the mild English word “pleasure” rather than into the stronger word “desire.” The same mistranslation occurred for its counterpart “*Angst*,” translated into “anxiety” rather than into the more immediate and primitive “fear.” See Foglia, A. 2005. Pleasure and Anxiety: An Important Mistranslation. *Journal of Orgonomy* 39(1):77-80.

Expansion and contraction are thus functions opposite to each other and represent opposite directions of movement of their common origin, the “plasmatic currents” in ameba and the “vegetative currents” in humans (Reich 1937, page 99). In primitive organisms the plasmatic system is represented by the cytoplasm, and in more complex organisms by the autonomic nervous system, as well as by the vascular, endocrine and immune systems (Konia). Just as the cytoplasm moves in lower organisms, it follows that all of the above systems move in higher organisms. This movement is, in part, of a pulsatory nature.

The behavior of the ameba, of course, is not of a psychological nature, as theorized by early biologists and psychologists, nor is it only an analogy for human behavior, as seen by Freud. Moreover, it is not a simple reaction to external changes mediated by the protozoa's internal, chemical energy supply. It is, in reality, the representation of a profound functional identity between emotions and plasmatic movement in the evolutionary line of living beings.



Figure 1

Amoeba proteus, the “favorite demonstration cell in laboratory practicals,” is present everywhere and is particularly resistant to environmental stress thanks to its ability to form “cysts,” resting stages, that can be dispersed by wind (Rogerson and Patterson). (Differential Interference Contrast 1000x)



Figure 2

Ameba proteus protruding its pseudopods. Whereas mechanistic biology sees in this function the primitive acts of locomotion and feeding, Reich correlated this expansion (motor function) with the primitive emotion (psychic function) of *desire* or *pleasure*. (DIC 630x)

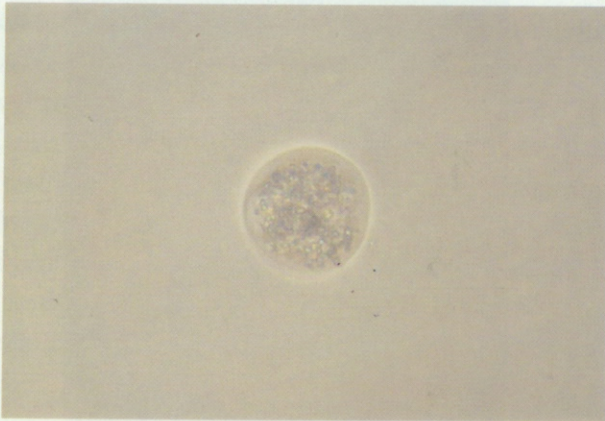


Figure 3

Ameba proteus in a state of contraction. Mechanistic science explains this state as a "cyst," a basic theoretical issue in the "air germ theory." Reich first correlated this movement of contraction with *fear* or *anxiety*. Cysts, or spores, are functionally identical with armor, which is the result of chronic contraction. (DIC 630x)

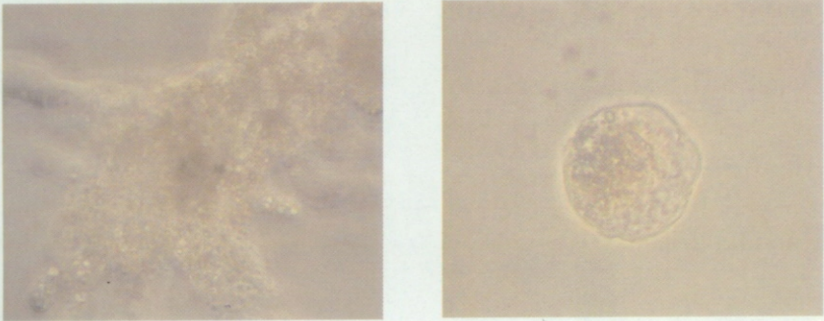


Figure 4

Contraction of an amoeba proteus under the influence of a chemical irritant (here epinephrine). After exposure to epinephrine, the amoeba is in a state of *fear* or *anxiety*. For mechanistic science, the amoeba has reduced itself to its classical “cyst” stage. (DIC 320x)

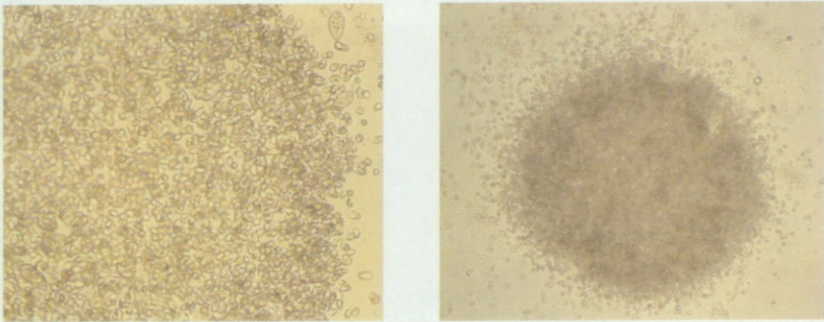


Figure 5

Contraction under the influence of chemical irritants is present in the “social” behavior, sometimes called “swarm intelligence” (Camazine, Deneubourg et al.), of protozoa, as here in *Tetrahymena pyriformis*. Behaving like a single organism, this colony of protozoa contracts under the influence of epinephrine. (Bright Field 160x)

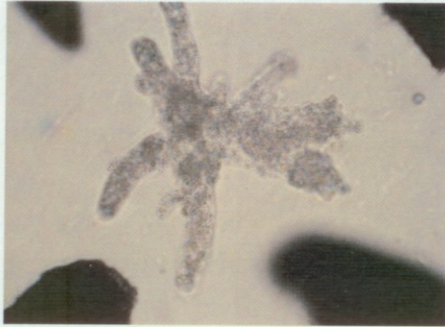


Figure 6a

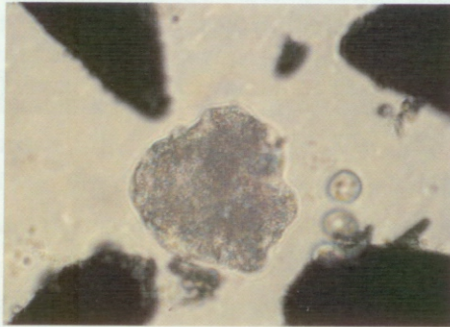


Figure 6b

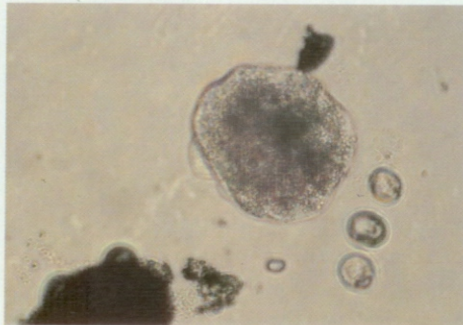


Figure 6c

Mechanical identity: irritated by the presence of needles that limit its expansion (6a), an amoeba proteus assumes a contracted state (6b). If the same needles prolong the irritation, contraction will become chronic and remain even when the needles are removed (6c). Armor is thus formed. (Baker, pages 3-6) (Bright Field 320x)

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