



Passion of Youth: An Autobiography, 1897-1922

Wilhelm Reich

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When he died in 1957, Wilhelm Reich had been the most revolutionary figure in psychoanalysis and the only student of Freud's to carry his libido theory into experimental science. Reich's legacy includes such essential volumes as *Character Analysis*, *The Function of the Orgasm*, and *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*.

Passion of Youth is the latest of Reich's writings to appear posthumously, and it reveals that Reich's life, no less than his work, was provocative and instructive.

In a reminiscence composed in 1919, "Childhood and Puberty," Reich tells of his earliest years, spent on a country estate in Bukovina. He describes his first conscious experiences of sexuality, and the further development of his sexual life; his schooling; and, above all, the catastrophic infidelity that led first to his mother's suicide in 1910 and then to his father's death in 1914.

With the outbreak of the Great War, Reich fled Bukovina and enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army, where he became a battalion commander. In an excerpt from his 1937 *History of Sexpol*, he recounts how his four years in the military impressed on him the masses' numb obedience to authority and the automatic quality of a ceaselessly operating "war machine."

Reich began his study of medicine at the University of Vienna in 1919 and graduated in the summer of 1922. His diaries from these years record his encounter with Freud; the growth of his conviction that sexuality is the core around which all social life, and the inner life, revolves; his first political stirrings; and his analysis of the woman who would become his first wife. These diaries abound in turbulent emotions and the passion of youth.

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