

THE CONFLICT OF FEELING AND PURPOSE*

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The radix block (Reich's muscular armor) expresses a conflict that has evolved in the human animal, showing a split in the life force that is of extraordinary importance. This split is the result of the new kind of goal seeking unique to our species, new in the evolutionary biological sense. For the first time in the history of the planet a living terrestrial animal has become able to consciously create and choose its own individual values, select goals in accord with them, and direct its life toward them. No longer need the individual blindly pursue the directions arising from instinct or from the pressures of human society. It is possible for him, instead, to originate and choose to follow a direction that is his own. He does this voluntarily, first in thought, which involves voluntary attention, and then in action, which involves voluntary movement. The life function which makes possible man's new form of goal seeking is volition, the human will. The mechanism of volition is the radix block, the armor.

The existence of volition poses a special problem to the psychologist. Why should there be such a function? Outside of man it does not exist. All of the animal kingdom below man -- and young children -- "evaluate" the alternatives they are faced with through their spontaneous emotional response and do what feels most attractive (or least unattractive) without the need for volition. The very existence of volition means that it can be to man's advantage to require himself to think about or to do that which is not spontaneously most attractive, to go against his spontaneous impulse, to take a course of action that is different from that dictated by his feelings.

But this seems to involve a contradiction. Why doesn't the new course of action the individual elects to follow become the one which is spontaneously most attractive? Why must man force himself to do what he decides to do? The very existence of volition, of the human will, shows that there is a split, that man can choose to do things which he *thinks* he should do which differ from what he *feels* like doing. What man thinks his way to doing and what he feels like doing are often not congruent. When they are, there is no need for volition, the human will. When they are not, there is a conflict. Volition makes it possible for thought to, at times, override feeling when such a conflict is present.

At one level this is a simple point. It only says that man can decide to eat even though he is hungry because he has put himself on a diet; that he can work at an onerous task because he has decided he wants it done; that he can require himself to enter a frightening situation because he has decided it is the right thing to do. At another level the point is anything but simple. No other animal can behave in this way. Man is able to do so as yet only partially, imperfectly, with effort, succeeding under certain circumstances and failing under others. The mechanism by which man "exercises his will" has puzzled philosophers for centuries.

This new form of goal seeking embodied in purpose and the old form expressing spontaneous feeling co-exist, rooted in different structures. Purpose is rooted in the brain and muscles, spontaneous feeling behavior in body plasma and visceral core and the autonomic

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nervous system which governs them. Like gills and lungs, or wings and legs, these forms of goal seeking serve a general life function in a different way. And because they are different, the new and old compete and sometimes conflict, one interfering with or getting in the way of the other. The new places different requirements on the species, even as it opens up different possibilities and forms of life.

Just such a conflict, then, is at the root of the central problem of the human species described in the previous article, "*What is the Matter With Man?*" I refer to it as the "conflict of *feeling* and *purpose*." These words, in this context, have a special meaning. They refer to two specific and different means by which man evaluates his experience and originates a goal-oriented response.

The first of these (*feeling*) deals with sensory-perceptual and spontaneous emotional qualities, and the connections between them. Some of these connections are inborn, but in man, most are learned. Sensory-perceptual qualities refer to the here-and-now, to what lies "in front of the eyes" and inside the skin at the present instant of time. Goal orientation is served only when (and to the extent that) the connections between sensory-perceptual and emotional qualities are appropriate. The emotion that a percept triggers embodies an evaluation of the present situation, not in an intellectual but in a feeling way. We perceive and are attracted, frightened, or indifferent to something in our environment. As a result we move toward, away, or with no relation to (ignoring) it. Experience may change the connection of percept and emotion so that a different emotion is roused by the same perception, and we behave differently, hopefully more appropriately, in response. Thus we, like other animals, learn that a certain plant tastes good (or bad) or a certain creature is dangerous (or innocuous).

This form of goal oriented-response involves no conceptual awareness of future or past. Goal orientation is achieved through it because evaluations are "reinforced" according to their effectiveness. New connections of percept to emotion are "conditioned" as a consequence of the outcome of previous responses to similar percepts. Throughout, attention is oriented outward through the senses, away from the self.

The new form of goal seeking (*purpose*) is of a different sort entirely. In it attention is oriented inward during a critical point of the process. The person functioning purposively in the full human sense turns to concepts, beliefs, values, and the ability to explore future possibilities in thought. In thought one can consider alternatives and the costs and benefits that attach to them. Morality enters here. What kind of person do I see myself as being? What is the right thing for such a person to do in this situation? This complex process is involved in the new uniquely human form of goal seeking that I call purpose. Goals arising from conceptual processes, the goals of purpose, are often not the same as those arising from spontaneous feeling processes. In particular, long range goals of purpose, embodying decisions arrived at by a conscious process of thought, may carry the individual's life in directions that are opposed by short-range spontaneous feelings (impulses). In this conflict, spontaneous feeling and the goal-seeking behavior it generates is opposed by the new different form of goal seeking embodied in purpose. And the function that man has evolved specifically to deal with this conflict is volition, with its mechanism, the radix block.

Volition is the police force of purpose, there to keep the individual from succumbing to short-range attractions that defeat a long-range choice. Volition enables the individual to force himself to do something other than the thing he most feels like doing. The way he is able to go against his own feelings is by the muscular blocking and channeling of his own life force via the

radix block. This is the origin of the "muscular armor."

Conceptual evaluation can, in effect, assign a priority to a direction of attention or to an action opposing a spontaneous tendency. And so a man decides not to run away even though he feels afraid, or to stay with a diet even though he feels hungry, etc., because he has decided it is the right thing for him to do. Conceptual evaluation thus provides the *motive* to go against the "natural" actions arising from the feelings (primitive evaluation), while the radix block provides the *mechanism*. Once formed, evaluation and block tend strongly to become automatized and habitual.

The conceptual functions of thought and evaluation provide man with the ability to imagine and evaluate situations and events removed in space and time. With them he can imagine the future and envision its various possibilities, evaluating and choosing among them that or those he desires to bring about. Conceptual thought allows the individual to behave independently of what is present perceptually, to represent in consciousness objects, individuals and situations not present to the senses, and to organize thought and behavior around them. It allows man and man alone among the animals to individually assume control over the direction of his life, i.e., to establish his own values and goals based on the goals toward which volition and its mechanism, the radix block, enable him to work.

As a result of conceptual thought, man became able to conceive of a harvest if he should plant the seeds and tend their growth, to foresee the coming snow and to store the harvest and gather winter fuel, etc. And because of volition, with its mechanism, the radix block, the goals man conceived of and chose to pursue could be realized. Conceptual thought, conceptual evaluation, voluntary attention and voluntary movement comprise the radix functions which underlie purpose. They make it possible for man to control his environment individually, to shape it to his wishes, to bend it to his will. Few men as yet are able to function in a truly and fully purposive fashion, for purpose is still new in the world. However society is organized to direct the energy of its members to realize the goals envisioned by a few purposive men.

And men who are unable to anticipate the need for a harvest or for gathering winter fuel (or the modern equivalents of these tasks) have been pressured or coerced into service by society. Volition is required of them, though the conceptual functions which support it are imperfectly developed. With such men (and they are the majority) the radix block develops unselectively, grossly, rooted, as it is, in coercion. Society exacts service from these men at the expense of their natural impulses. The social end is gained, but at the cost of the individual's capacity for spontaneity and joy. It has happened to some degree to most of us.

Few men have, as yet, learned to think of their own lives in long range terms, yet volition is required of them in their day to day lives, first in school and then in work. To meet the requirement, they develop the radix block without its conceptual foundation. They become armored. Their feelings are channeled and limited by the chronic muscular tensions which enable them to force themselves to study, to work, to stay at the tasks society requires them, and that they come to require of themselves.

Beneath the surface a tremendous conflict is generated. It is the conflict between what a man does under society's pressure and what he longs to do, conflict between volition and spontaneous activity, between purpose (in its partial, present form) and the lost natural capacity for feeling that the radix block has brought about. It is a conflict that has been experienced to some degree by every one of us.

The conflict between feeling and purpose expresses itself in the most important realms of

human life. It shows in attitudes toward technology, psychology, education, government, ethics and morality. It expresses itself in different, and in major respects antithetical, values and beliefs about the nature of man and of life. The conflict in each realm traces back to the two opposed branches of the radix flow within the body. The older more primitive outward branch underlies spontaneous feeling, and the "primitive," "natural" side of human nature. The inward-curling branch of the radix underlies conceptual thought, voluntary behavior, and the radix block. It is responsible for the "civilized," "artificial" aspect of man. The conflict between these two will be described in several realms.

Emotion vs. Intellect

The animal operates on instinct and feeling, while purpose requires the human mind. The opposition of feeling and purpose is voiced in expressions such as "heart vs. head," "feeling vs. intellect," and "emotional vs. rational." The "feeling" person is thought of as spontaneous, relaxed, open, tender, undisciplined, soft and indulgent. By contrast, the purposive person can be characterized as controlled, tense, guarded, tough, disciplined, hard and stern. These characteristics reflect both the conceptual activity, the body tension, and the emotional blocking required for purposive activity.

Yet another interesting contrast in this realm is with respect to self-awareness. Feeling is associated with those who are outward, unselfconscious, unselfish. Purpose, then, is associated with reserve, strong self-awareness, and selfishness in the sense that Ayn Rand uses the term (Rand, 1964). The absence of highly developed self-awareness is typical of the primitive and the child. The inward-curling radix flow responsible for purpose generates the awareness of self as one object of consciousness.

The contrast so far drawn is summarized in these terms:

Feeling	versus	Purpose
heart		head
feelings		intellect
emotional		rational
spontaneous		controlled
relaxed		tense
open		guarded
tender		tough
undisciplined		disciplined
soft		hard
indulgent		stern
outward		reserved
unselfconscious		strongly self-aware
unselfish		selfish

The drawing of this continuing contrast is not intended as a value judgment on either set of terms. Those who identify strongly "with" one side or the other should suspend their judgments until a more complete perspective has been attained. The important thing at this point is to understand as clearly as possible the nature of the conflict between feeling and purpose that rends our culture, and the way it is rooted in two streams of man's life force, one of which has separated off and turned back inward to control the other.

Evolutionary Development

Purpose is an evolutionary "invention" of the human race, an invention not yet perfected, but under development at the present time. The following contrasts are relevant in this connection:

Feeling	versus	Purpose
all animals		man only
natural		artificial
primitive		civilized
pre-Edenic		post-Edenic
child-like		adult

With the curling back on itself of his radix flow and his consequent awareness of self and his capacity for choice, man lost the free, natural "unselfconscious" existence of the primitive. In exchange he received the imperfect but extraordinarily powerful tool which is purpose. The cost is heavy, and for many is born with strong regret. The myth of the Garden of Eden has this deep significance: when the radix flow underlying man's consciousness turned inward on itself in the evolution of purpose, man did "lose his innocence," and became self-aware. By developing conceptual thought he did come to see the consequences of his actions, and by developing volition became able to exercise true choice, based on his evaluation of foreseen (conceptualized) consequences. With choice he became, for the first time, responsible for his actions in a moral sense. He came to "know good and evil" as the Bible puts it. This development is, in fact, the most important transition point between animal and man.

Each child goes through this transition in the early years of his life as "ontogeny repeats phylogeny." The infant, the toddler, is unselfconscious. His attention moves spontaneously, as he has not yet learned voluntary attention. His radix flow has not yet turned in on itself, as it will in a few years. The young child is usually a delightful creature emotionally. His smiles or tears are always honest, his emotion genuine. He is tender and open and innocent.

With the capacity for voluntary attention (which often matures significantly about age five) a great change occurs. The child becomes self-conscious, and begins to acquire the ability for voluntary activity. With this he becomes able to dissimulate, to fake his feelings, to act for effect. He becomes "wise" somehow, and his parents may view the change from his previous innocence with a real sense of loss. It is the same change that is behind the myth of the Garden of Eden. We were all "cast out of the garden" in our childhood. Many are struggling for re-admittance. The price of admission is the human mind and its function, the capacity for purposive action.

Ethics and Morality

Ethics were born when "sin" entered the world, when man "left the Garden of Eden." With the development of his conceptual faculty man became able to see the consequences of his acts, and with volition became able to either carry them out or not by choice. Only when man became able to conceptualize, evaluate, and choose that which he would strive to bring about did he become responsible in a moral sense.

Consider these contrasting terms in the realm of morality and ethics:

Feeling	versus	Purpose
innocent		responsible
accidental		intentional
involuntary		deliberate
amoral		moral or immoral

Morality is an outgrowth of the individual's capacity for seeing the consequences of possible actions and choosing that which he will endeavor to bring about. It arises with purpose, but goes beyond purpose, for purpose per se is morally neutral. Purpose deals only with the existence of choice, and not with the rightness or wrongness of choices made. The moral and the immoral person may be equally purposive. Hitler and Stalin were very purposive men.

Morality arises with conceptual evaluation. Being able to foresee the possible consequences of one's choices brings the capacity for evaluation of the alternatives, for judgment, for morality. Which alternative ought one strive towards? What is the right thing to do?

The right thing to do is the thing that furthers life, one's own and others, and there is a hierarchy of life, the higher having more value than the lower. A bird's life is higher than a bee's, a dog's higher than a bird's, a child's higher than a dog's. At the highest level the problem is most difficult. The highest value for each of us attaches to those human lives with a nature and style of existence which represents that which is highest or best in our eyes. And what is seen as best is rooted in each individual's character and sense of life.

Technology and Control

Purpose is the source of man's control over his own life, and of his power to reshape the world he lives in. It is the source of technology, of human civilization. To have purpose means to exercise control, to alter the flow of events by plan or intention.

Control, like purpose, is a term that refers to the future, to man's life over time. The past is gone and the present is already here; nothing but the future can be altered. Purpose implies control over the future, the ability to change the future course of events by intention, as a consequence of a conceptual process. Feeling is a more primitive function and lacks this future orientation, as this contrast reflects:

Feeling	versus	Purpose
drifting, floating		focused
"here and now" oriented		future oriented
wandering		goal directed
"befell," "happened"		planned
immediate		anticipatory

There are penalties as well as benefits attached to future orientation. In the final analysis our lives are lived only in the "here and now." Focusing too strongly and for too long on future goals can destroy the capacity to enjoy life in the here-and-now. It is an irony of purpose that it can make it possible for an individual to achieve a difficult long-range goal in his life, while the very process is making him incapable of enjoying the goal when it is finally reached. How many successful middle class Americans are in exactly this position today?

Yet to abandon a future oriented way of life is to abandon all conscious control over the environment and over our lives. It is, in fact, to abandon our minds.

Purpose and control require effort, the effort of voluntary attention and movement. It is the effort going into the radix block, holding back and limiting the radix flow in direction other than toward the chosen goal. The relative effort required for purpose is reflected in these terms:

Feeling	versus	Purpose
"I feel"		"I will"
spontaneous		disciplined
allowed		endeavored
play		work

Technology is rooted in effort, and those who have contributed significantly to technology have been men capable of applying themselves to difficult tasks over years of their lives.

Purpose has given man tremendous power over nature, including the power to reshape the world he lives in. But the aberration in purpose that blocks and distorts the lives of individual men expresses itself socially and technologically also. The physical and social environment created by "armored" men, like other expressions of purpose, includes man's best and his worst, the most creative and the most destructive of his accomplishments. Consider some of the changes purposive man has brought about in his physical environment.

I wrote the first draft of this essay ten years ago while living in the largest city, in the most populous state of the most technologically advanced nation the world has ever seen -- Los Angeles, California, USA. Two hundred years ago, in the decade in which this nation was born, this region was an arid semi-desert. It has no rain most of the year, and little in the rainiest season. Too dry even for grass most of the year, with scattered brush and but an occasional clump of scrubby trees, the area supported animal and vegetable life alike meagerly and thinly. Not many mammals can exist through a seven-month dry season, when all the streams and creeks run dry.

Human habitations were few and far between. There were the widely scattered settlements of the indigenous Indian tribes, a poverty-stricken primitive culture, scratching out a meager subsistence by unremitting effort. But along the coast at intervals of a day's travel on foot or horseback were clusters of fields and dwellings and a few small business enterprises, grouped around the Spanish missions -- the vanguard of European civilization. These areas of green were small oases in the desert of brown. Some were established on Indian settlements; Indians were attracted to others for the comparative wealth and other advantages of life in a stable agricultural community, or Indians were impressed into the service of the Europeans.

Consider this area today. The first notable feature is that it is green, covered with grass and trees, shrubs and flowers of great variety, imported from all over the world, arranged in rectangular plots around dwellings which range from the one-family houses to high-rise apartments. The plots are generally watered with water carried in from hundreds of miles away by man-made canals and aqueducts. All of these plots front on paved streets and sidewalks, along which people drive their individually-owned vehicles or walk to neighborhood businesses, schools, or public transportation. These streets connect to a system of freeways that permit one to get almost any place in a fifty-mile radius in less than an hour, and many of the residents drive 20 to 50 miles to work. The airport gives one access to aircraft crossing the continent in six

hours, and to Europe or Asia in less than a day.

Within most of the buildings in this area the environment is controlled. The touch of a switch converts dark to day; the temperature is kept at a comfortable level year around. Most of us have in our houses our choice from the greatest music ever written as played by the world's finest artists, which is reproduced with a fidelity that in my childhood was beyond the reach of a king. The happenings of the world, sports events and other entertainment of every sort are available to watch at the touch of a switch in virtually every living room. Fine color reproductions of the works of the greatest artists in history are on the walls of those who wish to have them. The wisdom -- and foolishness -- of all human history is available in books available from public libraries or easily and cheaply purchased.

History's most effective system for growing and distributing food brings fresh meat, produce, and other foods to within walking distance of each home, though few take the time to walk. These foods are obtained and marketed with efficiency and convenience unmatched anywhere in the world by highly competitive supermarket chains, who make a profit for this service of slightly more than one percent on their sales.

Let us complete the story of the physical environment where I write this. The air has undergone a marked change in my lifetime due to the development of "smog." It often has a brownish color and an acrid smell, and burns and stings the eyes. Smog affects plant growth--many kinds of vegetation refuse to grow or grow poorly where it is heaviest, and trees have died of it or become scraggly. It has ill effects, not yet fully documented, but clearly real, on human life.

The ocean where our local government pipes our sewage is, partially as a result of the sewage, subject to a periodic growth of microorganisms called a "red tide," from the color it gives the ocean. The "red tide" is extremely destructive of marine life. The ocean is also from time to time covered with oil slicks from off-shore drilling. These are destructive of fish and ocean birds, and spoil many miles of beaches for long periods. And the ground and air vehicles are noisy; my home was never free of their sounds.

The transformation has taken place in the briefest span of history, in the period of time since my grandfather's grandfather was born. It shows the power of purpose, the effects, good and bad, that has had and is having on human life.

The Radix Algebra[†] of Purpose

The radix functions which underlie feeling are simple and direct compared to those which underlie purpose. With the primary feelings, the radix operates in unitary fashion. In purpose, however, the function is duplex, i.e., the flow of the radix is split into two branches. To understand purpose one must analyze each branch and its relation.

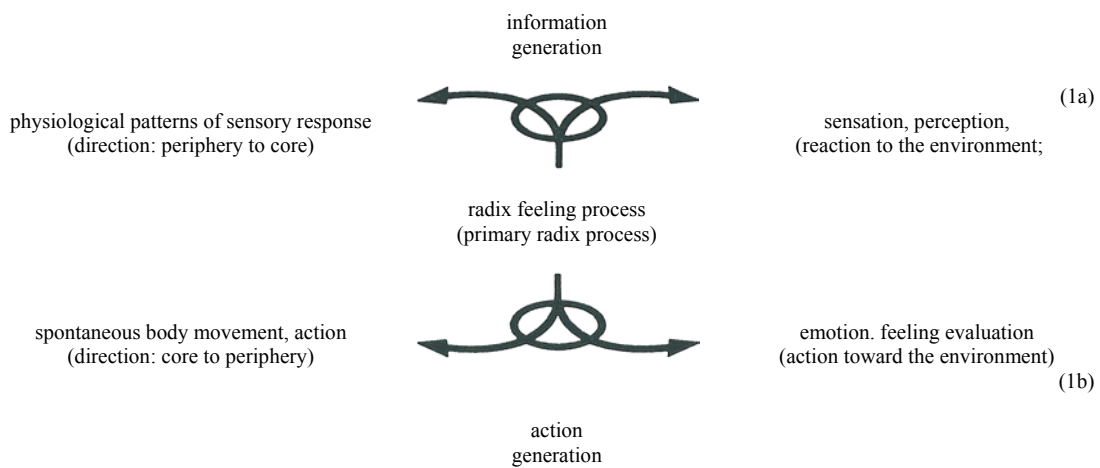
Consider the blocking of feeling. What actually occurs is that muscles tense selectively to impede the primary or original radix flow. But whereas the original feeling in itself may be a simple unitary expression, the radix block by its nature indicates a split in the life force. There is one impulse expressed in the feeling, another opposed impulse expressed in the block. This dual process is basic to purpose. The blocking impulse controls the feeling impulse. Thus in purpose

[†] See Kelley, C.R., 1992 for full descriptions of the formal system of identity and antithetical relationship that he called "Radix Algebra." A more recent example can be found in his book, LIFE FORCE, Chapter 8 *The Algebra of Radix Discharge*, 2004 (Ed.)

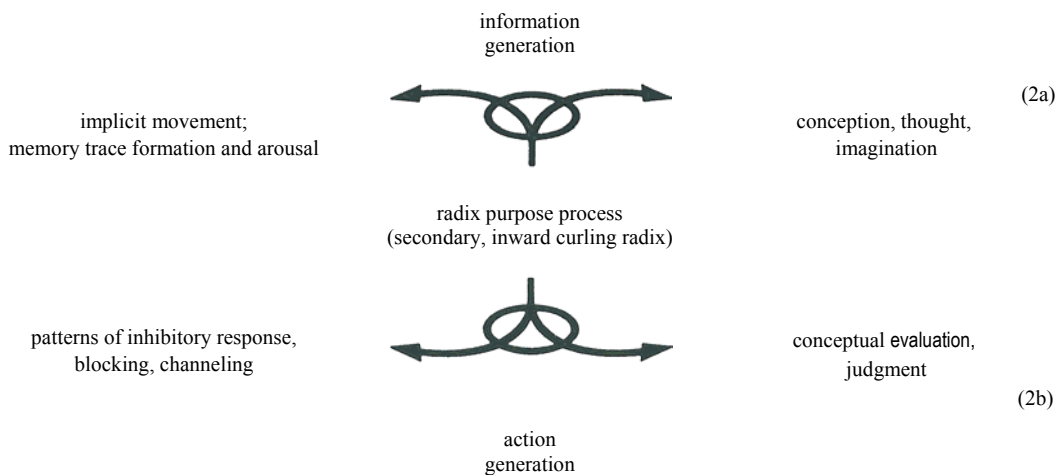
a newly evolved branch of the radix splits off and becomes able to block and channel the primary flow. This blocking and channeling of the one branch of the radix by another is the process of volition, experienced as voluntary attention, expressed in voluntary movement, and mediated by the radix block. The radix block is the process by which the newer branch of the life force exercises control over the older by building the channels and gates in the body through which the latter can be permitted to flow.

The radix algebra of purpose is the representation of these two interacting radix processes, then. And just as the interaction of the venture and protect modes of feeling response produced a duplex antithesis, (see *"The Radix Algebra of Feeling,"* Kelley 1992), we should expect to find a duplex antithesis if we analyze the radix of purpose correctly.

The primary radix process of the body was described in radix antithesis (1) in the article on the radix algebra of feeling:



This is a basic description of the original or primary radix process, in which the feelings differentiate into sensation and emotion and their somatic counterparts. Consider now a similar description of the radix process generated with the splitting off of the new branch of the radix discussed in this and the previous article on purpose. This is radix antithesis (2):

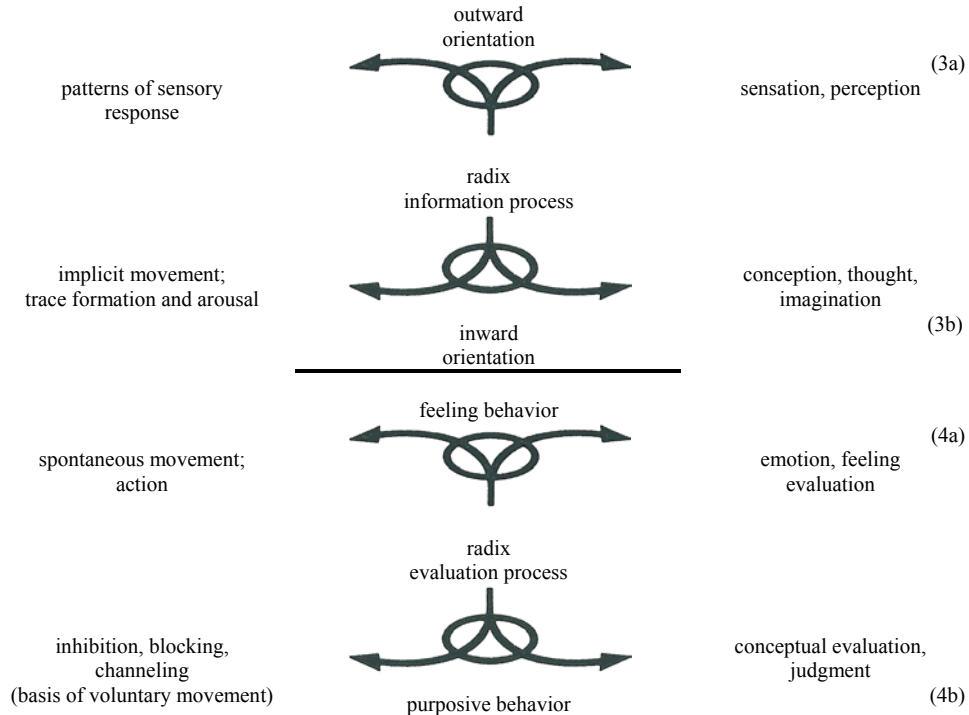


As (1) is the generic radix antithesis describing feeling, (2) is the generic radix antithesis describing purpose, as the term is used in this article. As (1) is primarily a body process, (2) is

primarily a head process. Identity (2a) describes abstract thought. Abstract thought is supported in the body by subtle patterns of implicit movement, and by a continual arousal of traces storing information from past experience and laying down new traces produced by present experience.

Conceptual thought (2a) processes information, while conceptual evaluation (2b), uses the information to make decisions that affect behavior. But whereas feeling evaluation leads into spontaneous activity, conceptual evaluation shapes behavior by inhibiting, shaping, blocking, and channeling the primary radix flow. Whenever there is a significant difference in the evaluation emerging from conceptual and from feeling processes, (i.e., a conflict between thought and feeling) the blocking process is activated. The subjective experience of (2b) does not emerge directly into behavior, but channels another radix flow, which then emerges into action.

The duplex antithesis (which I see as two regular antitheses in a three dimensional relationship, representing two interacting radix processes) can be "rotated" into a new and equally valid pair of antitheses, as was shown previously in describing the radix algebra of feeling. When this is done with (1) and (2) the result is antitheses (3) and (4):



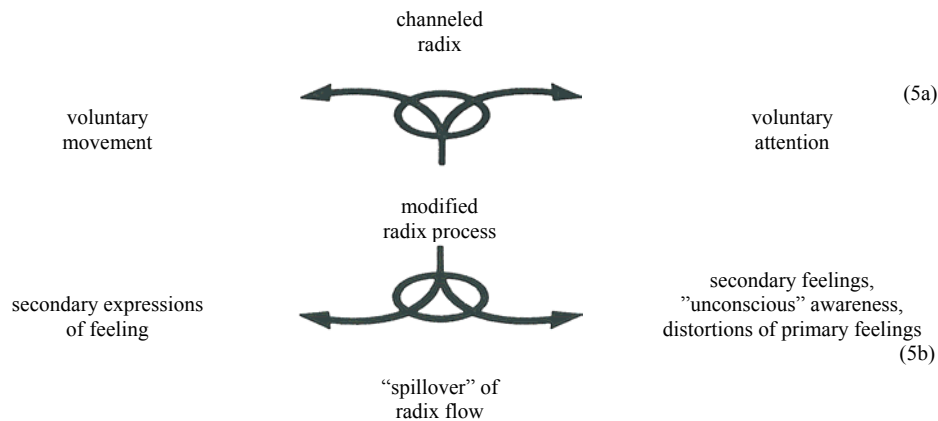
Antithesis (4) shows the contrast between feeling and purposive behavior, both of which emerge from the evaluation process. Again, the action coming as a result of (4b) is very different from that of (4a). Conceptual evaluation does not emerge directly into action, but instead acts on the radix channels underlying feeling and thought. Patterns of muscle tension produced as a consequence of conceptual evaluation block, channel, and guide the other, *original* radix flow. Conceptual processes thus become able to control feeling processes, even though the latter have much more raw power in terms of the radix charge available to them.

Conceptual information processes in themselves have no power to produce action; feelings produce action. Conceptual evaluation produces its own form of action (inhibition) because it also is a feeling, and of a special kind. In evaluating conceptually a person must not

only decide what he ought to do, but also must feel strongly enough about it to trigger the necessary activity or it won't be done. The feelings triggered by conceptual evaluation are quite different in quality from those of primitive feeling evaluation. They are tied to the head, to the belief system and self-concept. Guilt, pride, shame, competitiveness, and humiliation, are examples. These head-connected feelings provide the energy, the power to block and channel. Without them conceptual evaluation results in an empty judgment of "I ought to."

Radix antitheses (1), (2), (3), and (4) are, together, the duplex antithesis expressing what I have termed the primary and the inward curling branches of the radix, respectively. What is not expressed is the interaction between these two branches, an interaction that is central to my understanding of purpose and of the origin and nature of the armor. Consider the effect now of the blocking and channeling process (2b), which is the output of the inward curling branch of the radix on the other branch the primary radix process (1). The primary radix process is changed, and a new (modified) radix process is the result.

The modified radix process expresses itself in two ways, as described in radix antithesis (5):



The first and intended effect is of the voluntary control of awareness, of feeling and thought, and of voluntary behavior, as shown in (5a). This is "proper," acceptable, conscious super-ego approved awareness and behavior, shaped by conceptual thought and evaluation.

But the channeling process is partial and imperfect, and there is a spill-through of the radix from the channels. The feelings expressed in the spilled-through radix flow are the often "improper," unacceptable, Freudian "unconscious" awarenesses that escape or circumvent the thought and judgment process. They are secondary feelings in the sense Reich used the term, the often-distorted by-product of the armor, the radix block. Identity (5b) is the price we pay for (5a).

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