



LIFE FORCE

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From *Chapter 1* –

The Life Force: A Thumbnail History

The life force concept has been with us for 5000 years. At the dawn of written history in Babylonia, when science and religion were one, all nature was seen as alive. Animating nature, giving it its living qualities, was the life force as seen by early man. Astrology/astronomy, alchemy/chemistry, and a belief in many gods ruled human knowledge.

Babylonian knowledge and lore spread through and out from the middle-east, west to Egypt, northwest to Greece, and east to India and China, merging into the already advanced early civilizations in these places. Almost all of them had something like a life force concept, or a related god or gods-in-nature concept, or both. Astrological beliefs were widespread among the advanced early civilizations. The astrological beliefs in the influence of the stars and planets on earthly events and human fate needed a medium to convey the influence from its heavenly source to its target. That medium, stated or unstated, is that aspect of nature I call “the life force.”

An early elaboration of the life force concept, with roots extending 2000 years before Christ, occurred in India, with the Vedic and Hindu idea of the *prana*. The *prana* is defined as the principle or the breath of life. Some branches of Hinduism incorporate an idea of *prana* that is quite similar in its properties to the life force concept that is developed on the pages of this book.

The old Chinese concept of the life force is called the *chi* or *ki*, a widely used term in Chinese martial arts such as *akido* and *t'ai chi*, disciplines popular in western countries today. (Chi is here pronounced “chee” and not “kie” like the Greek letter of the same spelling.) The *chi* is a widely used explanatory concept, not only in body oriented practices like *t'ai chi* and acupuncture, but much more universally, as a natural force in the physical environment....

From Chapter 1 –

(on radix, energy, mechanist and mystic)

... My own reasons were primarily scientific for coining yet another term for the life force. I chose the *radix* because it means “root, or primary cause.” This not only distinguishes it from prior interpretations of what the life force is, but also represents more accurately what I believe the life force to be – the creative force in nature. The *radix process* is the process by which the natural world, the only reality, originated and continues to originate both in its subjective and objective aspects. Physical and mental, material and spiritual, come into existence together as a result of the same process.

Since I had immersed myself in Wilhelm Reich’s work, I used his terminology until eight years after his death. Reich had originally employed the term *bioelectricity* for the life force, in accord with the physicist’s belief in electromagnetic phenomena as the core events in nature. He moved to increasingly general terms, *bioenergy* and finally *orgone energy* when it became clear that the phenomena he worked with were more than electrical in their fundamental nature. But by calling it “energy,” Reich showed his inclination to reduce both subjective and objective phenomena to the concepts of physical science. This is the mechanistic error. The term “energy” has a precise well-defined meaning to the physical scientist, and it must fit into the scientific concept of the nature and properties of energy. This, I discovered, the life force does not do.

Just as the mechanist tries to fit the life force into the physicist’s domain, so the mystic interprets the life force as something supernatural. One may ask: *If the radix process is the creative process in nature, isn’t it just another name for God?* Indeed, the mystical character psychologizes the process of creation, and so makes it intangible and unreal, out of the reach of direct experience and natural observation, experimentation and control. A popular concept is the personification of the life force as a being who has omniscient, omnipotent and other extra-natural powers.

***From Chapter 2 –
The Quiet Millions***

It is fortunate that many religious people, including those in spiritualistic denominations, are not spiritualistic, and that many scientists, including the best, are not scientific in their belief systems. In “true believers,” accepting and protecting the central irrationalities of spiritualistic or scientific beliefs often creates aggressive or militant behavior to defend the irrationality. For most people, the belief system supporting a church or denomination is not its primary feature. Many people are indifferent to doctrine, but want to belong to a religious community where the members support each other and are concerned with doing the right thing. Parents often want religious education groups for their children because they want their children to grow into good human beings. Honesty, compassion, and consideration for others are of central importance to most of us. Anyone who has ever belonged to a strong and effective religious congregation, whatever its doctrine, knows the power of its fellowship and mutual friendship, the support and charity toward members in sorrow or in need, the striving after meaning in life, something other than work, entertainment, and recreation. Churches are often places of beauty and quiet where daily cares and turmoils can be left behind, and one can search for a deeper level of meaning than most people’s daily lives offer them.

The quiet millions who are not “true believers” know that one needn’t believe a church’s stories and dogma to experience gratitude and wonder at the gift of life, the blessing of loving and being loved, the joy of community -- and of periods of meditative solitude.

From Chapter 3 --

(on Wilhelm Reich, orgasm and sex)

...Reich went from Freud's libido and the energy of the instincts to the pulsation of the body in sexuality, and to emotion and the action of the muscular armor in blocked emotion. He saw all of these as natural processes expressing the life force. Reich's life force was real, actual, of the body and of nature, rather than of an intangible, intellectual or spiritual world. The Reichian life force lacked the mystical and religious element with which many life force concepts, including the Hindu *prana* and the Chinese *chi*, have been associated. And this again resulted from Reich's unwavering focus on process rather than content; on expression rather than meaning; and on events and their causes in the body and mind at the present moment rather than their history.

Reich viewed sex then as cosmic and religious as well as natural and practical. Reich saw the form and potency of the sexual embrace, the coming together of male and female, expressed at the cosmic level in the spiral galaxy and, in the earth's atmosphere, in the hurricane. Both of these were to him discharges of the orgone in superimposition and mating. Reich believed the orgasm could be the individual's most powerful experience of the creative process in nature and the closest approach one can have to the cosmic. I can only agree with my teacher. This position is as central to my work as it is to Reich's. Reich saw sex and orgasm in their proper dimension and glory, and lamented that the armored character made them small and dirty. This happens because the reality is too powerful for the heavily armored to encompass. Early in life he blocks and inhibits his own sexuality, and then diminishes the importance of sex in the world to mirror his own self-limited experience.

From Chapter 6

(on teaching “purpose”)

The technical problem of building a student’s radix block, the positive form of muscular armor, is much harder than that of “opening the feelings.” This is because of the nature of the task. Tearing down a building is easier than constructing it. Dismantling chronic patterns of muscle tension to free the feelings is much easier than building such patterns to begin with. Muscular armor develops in the day-after-day life of the child over the years of infancy and childhood. It is difficult and often painful for the child to bring spontaneous life processes, especially feeling processes, under control. Discovering how to produce the muscle tensions that block, channel and shape the flow of the life force in the body that produces feelings and thoughts is an exceedingly complex unconscious skill.

First formed are the patterns of tensions required to control feeling processes that are particularly threatening, the ones that lead to disapproval and sometimes punishment by significant adults. These tensions become articulated, practiced, skilled and effective in their job of containment, even as they become habitual and automatic. Some of these patterns become obsolete as the child grows up, but they hang on unconsciously and stubbornly. They need to be cleared away to make room for new development, new construction, new growth. Opening the feelings is the clearing away process, the learning of purpose is the new construction. Some part of the function of the pattern of tensions that is to be cleared away is usually still needed. Demolition (opening the feelings) therefore requires some care, and should involve a preservation or building back of a more flexible pattern of tension in place of the pattern dismantled to free the feelings.

Thus when a body-oriented personal growth teacher helps a student who has for years or decades been unable to get angry, say, or to cry, the ingrained pattern of muscular tensions, the radix block against rage or crying, give way. The dammed up life force is freed, which means that the body is

opened to a safe outpouring of the resulting feeling discharges: rage or sobs. The short-range consequence of the session is the opening of the deeper self that had been difficult or impossible to access because of the radix block. The longer-range process is the student learning the capacity to choose between expressing and containing these powerful feelings.

The primary goal of purpose work, then, is not to open and free the feelings, but to build spontaneity and feeling in balance with a strengthened capacity to contain feelings and to function thoughtfully in the face of strong feelings.

From Chapter 9

(on centering)

Much of my own awareness comes from my will, my peripheral self, while the vital core, the void at center, lies dormant, a half-asleep giant. To realize the power of my vital core I need "only" center; but centering is more than difficult. Sometimes anxiety is in the way, sometimes pain or anger. Tuning in more deeply, I feel an explosion impending. If I am able to center there is a disintegration of the peripheral self. A sudden expansion then pushes beyond the control of my will. When I surrender and accept the expansion, I come into power, intensity, wholeness. Then I lose the objectives of my peripheral self. The cares, considerations, controls that I carry and nurse in my daily life go. The objectives of my center self are not the objectives of my peripheral self, and my day-to-day concerns cease to matter when I center. A deep-lying power at my core is not available to my ego, my periphery, my conscious will. My center self refuses to be involved in the petty matters that consume so much time, attention, and effort. The center self lies deep inside, half asleep when these matters of disinterest to it go on, which is most of the time.

Then I center and suddenly the deeper self is galvanized. Control is turned over to the inmate of the cell at the center of my being. The sleeping giant comes, not to life, for he is always deeply alive, but into awareness. My life force, my personal radix system, is reorganized from the center self, which moves me off along a new path, its own. The peripheral self is left impotent and deserted, pointing ineffectually in another direction: *"But this is where you must go. **Stay at work on your monument.** What if you die and it isn't finished?"*

The center self doesn't listen. It doesn't care in the least about the program the peripheral self has planned. It has no interest in monument building, no need to please the ego or the world. Its only concern is to fulfill its own nature. Its first task is to discover that

nature. Discovering and fulfilling the nature of the center is not an intellectual process of formulating and moving toward goals. It is, rather, a process of tuning in, of opening inwardly, tapping more fully the wellspring of life, the flow of the life force, the radix, from the core. For me, at least, centering involves a surrender of the will and the goals of the periphery. It is a submission to the deeper self.

We are each one unique radix systems, organizations of the life force, with a mind and body different from all others. We each have our own pattern of pulsation,...

From Chapter 10

Autonomy and Government

In the more advanced nations, those in which most citizens are literate and many have a grasp of the concept of human rights, a conflict is created by the birth of autonomy. In these developed nations, there is a hunger for freedom in masses of people, and an utter failure of most people to understand the nature of freedom and the responsibilities it entails. Witness the chaos that ensued in "East Bloc" nations after decades of collectivist authoritarian communist rule. To the child people of the world, "freedom" means escape from serfdom and drudgery, and to be given a larger share of the good things of life, -- food, housing, clothes, consumer goods, entertainment. To the parent people of the world it means these same things plus a share of responsibility for that part of the political and economic system that is theirs. They are the politicians, bureaucrats, police, the military, teachers, lawyers, doctors, owners and managers of property, employers, etc. Child and parent people alike are fundamentally concerned with and live their lives through other people. Child people do it because it is through parent people that their needs and wants are satisfied. Parent people do it because not only are their physical needs and wants satisfied through other people, their needs for position, power, status, authority over others are met as well.

The autonomous person also has physical and social needs to be satisfied but, unlike parent people, authority and power over other people are not their needs. More important to the autonomous person is the freedom to function in his or her own way, without the interference of child people clamoring for support and possessions, or that of parent people and their laws and regulations asserting authority over the persons and property of others. Autonomous people want to function in the world with full responsibility for themselves and their own lives, and only such responsibility for others as they freely choose to assume. Such a way of functioning is counter to collectivism and the group stage of human development. The collectivist view of society is that

“everybody should be responsible for everybody,” with details of responsibility to be worked out by the parent people who are to assign responsibilities so that everybody’s needs can be met, everybody’s, that is, except those of autonomous people, whose great need is to be left alone. The autonomous desire a different system, one in which adults are each responsible for themselves, and are given the freedom they need to satisfy (or fail to satisfy) their own needs and to take care of their own lives.

Most of the forms of human governance have developed in the group stage of the evolution of purpose, the collectivist stage, and are not appropriate to autonomous human beings. Autonomy means self-government, and autonomous people wish in so far as possible to govern themselves. Those not capable of living autonomously or who are not permitted to do so by government and rules of social organization do need outside help. The principle is that those not able to, or not left free to, take care of themselves need others to take care of them if they are to live. How to solve this problem without theft from the citizens by government is one of the central problems of the human race.

From Chapter 12

Energy and Antithesis

In Chapter 8, *The Algebra of Radix Discharge*, I discuss radix antitheses in human consciousness that show themselves most clearly in feeling and emotional life. Examples are the antitheses of fear and trust, anger and joy, pain and pleasure, as they appear in the expressions of radix algebra. My primary training and experience has been in psychology, so it has been easier for me to develop antitheses in the area of consciousness than in that of energy, the physical side of nature. Yet it is clear that the principle of antithesis operates in both fields.

Two central principles of physical nature stand out. One is of **structure**, of form, of stability of arrangement of materials, so that objects and configurations of objects have a tendency to persist in their form and configuration. The second principle is of **motion** or change, the antithesis of structure. Through this principle objects change their form, grow or decline, and move with respect to other objects. To change or destroy either the structure or the state of motion of something requires energy. But energy is also required to create and sustain structure. Thus energy appears as the root of the antithesis between structure and motion.

Nature is full of forms, processes, and states of matter that illustrate structure and motion. The formation of atoms from smaller particles and their remarkable persistence of form; the arrangement of atoms in molecules; the bonding together of unlike molecules in the formation of compounds; the bonding of both like and unlike molecules to give structure to solid matter. -- These are but a few examples of structure at the atomic level. At the opposite end of the size scale is the structure of galaxies, stars and planetary systems, organized and held together by gravity. Their stability of form reflects the principle of structure, while their fluidity and changeability reflect the antithesis, motion or movement.

Growth and decay both involve movement within a structure. It is the structure which is identifiable over time. Structures can grow, decay, or go through other changes in which parts move and change. The changes reflect the antithesis of structure, i.e., motion, change, transformation or deformation of existing structure.

New energy creates new physical structure, such as atoms or molecules of new matter, and may break down old structure. New energy also creates change in arrangement within existing structure, such as transformations of growth, in which new energy is added. In transformations of decay, however, old energy is lost, usually through radiation.