

The Structural Architecture of Ideology: A Functional Analysis of the Core Emotion Framework in Political and Economic Systems

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Abstract

The study of political and economic ideologies has long been a battleground between two primary analytical traditions: the cognitive models that emphasize rational choice and the affective models that focus on emotional signaling and tribal identity. While both frameworks offer valuable insights into the behavior of voters and the structure of states, they often fail to provide a unified architecture that explains the underlying psychological mechanisms driving the fundamental divide between the Right and the Left. The emergence of the Core Emotion Framework (CEF), a structural-constructivist psychological model developed by Jamel Bulgaria, represents a paradigm shift in this field. By organizing the human psyche into three distinct functional centers—the Cognitive (Head), the Affective (Heart), and the Conative (Gut)—the CEF provides a granular audit of how specific "operator" combinations generate the traditionalism, hierarchy, and market-driven behaviors of the Right, as well as the rebellion,

**) We welcome feedback on the preregistration and study design, and invite researchers who are interested in pre-reviewing the system to contact us.*

equality, and collectivism of the Left.

This comprehensive analysis posits that what are commonly perceived as stable ideological traits are, in fact, dynamic configurations of ten irreducible "primal powers" or functional operators. These operators—Sensing, Calculating, and Deciding in the Head; Expanding, Constricting, and Achieving in the Heart; and Arranging, Appreciating, Boosting, and Accepting in the Gut—interact in complex, simultaneous patterns that define an individual's stance toward authority, resource distribution, and social change. Within this framework, the distinctions between political and economic systems are not merely matters of intellectual preference but are the direct manifestations of the psyche's leading tendencies. Through the application of the Emotional Cycling protocol, these configurations can be identified, differentiated, and "detangled," shifting the basis of political engagement from reflexive emotional fusion to conscious, learned choice.

The Architecture of the Cognitive Center: Mapping the Right-Headed and Left-Headed Psyche

The Cognitive Center, or the "Head" in CEF terminology, serves as the primary seat of information processing, perception, and logical modeling. In the context of political ideology, the Head Center's operators determine how an individual perceives the current state of society and what they calculate as the most logical future trajectory. The framework identifies a fundamental distinction between what it terms "right-headed" and "left-headed" cognitive orientations, each driven by a specific pair of operators.

The Right-Headed Orientation: Sensing, Deciding, and the Clinging to Tradition

A dominance of the Sensing operator defines the right-headed psyche and how it influences the Deciding. In the CEF, Sensing is the operator of raw perception, responsible for tracking incoming environmental cues and grounding the individual in the immediate reality. When Sensing is paired with Deciding—the operator of selection among interpretations and commitment to action—it creates a psychological landscape characterized by intuitive, wishful, and idealistic thinking.

This right-headed configuration leads to a profound attachment to what is perceived as traditional and valuable. The Sensing operator scans the environment not necessarily for what is missing, but for what is already present and functionally stable. It tracks the historical grounding, the precedents, and the immediate external threats to order. Because this sensing is "fused" with Deciding, the individual reaches a state of "logical saturation" where the existing

social and constitutional order is seen as the only viable reality. The idealism of the Right is therefore an idealism of the "actual"—a wishful commitment to the preservation of the sacred and the established. This explains why conservative movements often emphasize "originalism" in law and "preservationism" in culture; their cognitive architecture is structurally biased toward the refinement and precision of existing coherence rather than the exploration of new models.

The Left-Headed Orientation: Calculating, Deciding, and the Architecture of Rebellion

In contrast, a dominance of Calculating defines the left-headed psyche, which also the Deciding gets influenced from the calculations more than from the primitive Sensing. Calculating is the operator of evaluation, implications, and predictive modeling. Unlike the raw perception of Sensing, Calculating is an abstract function that models what "could be" or "should be" based on a critique of systemic inequities. When paired with Deciding, this leads to a counter-intuitive, calculated mode of thinking that inherently leads to rebellion against established norms.

The left-headed individual uses the Calculating operator to identify social ruptures and systemic failures that the Sensing-dominant individual might ignore. By modeling utopian or reformed alternatives, the Calculating operator creates a mental gap between the current reality and a projected future of social justice. This cognitive "rebellion" is a logical commitment to change, driven by the calculation of the social cost of existing hierarchies. While the right-headed psyche is intuitive and grounded in the "felt sense" of tradition, the left-headed psyche is analytical and grounded in the "modeled sense" of progress. This distinction provides a structural explanation for why progressive movements are often seen as "intellectualist" or "counter-intuitive" by their opponents; they are operating in a cognitive mode that prioritizes the model over the immediate perception.

Cognitive Operator	Functional Role	Right-Headed Application	Left-Headed Application
Sensing	Raw perception; tracking environmental cues and grounding.	Focus on historical grounding, precedent, and continuity of order.	Identifying social ruptures, systemic inequities, and marginalized suffering.

Calculating	Evaluating implications; modeling and predictive analysis.	Assessing economic efficiency and the stability of traditional structures.	Modeling reformed alternatives and calculating social costs of hierarchy.
Deciding	Commitment to an interpretation or a course of action.	Commitment to established constitutional or religious principles as "logical saturation."	Selection of adaptive policies and commitment to evolving social justice standards.

The Affective Center: Heart-Level Dynamics of Capitalism and Socialism

The Affective Center, or the "Heart," governs the "self-other dynamic" and the felt sense of openness or closure. This center is the primary driver of economic preference and the distinction between in-group loyalty and universal empathy. In the CEF, the tension between capitalism and socialism is found in the interplay of the Expanding, Constricting, and Achieving operators.

The Right Heart: Expanding, Achieving, and the Genesis of Capitalism

The CEF posits that a combination of the Expanding and Achieving operators (the "Right Heart") leads to the psychological foundation of capitalism. In this context, Expanding is not used for universal connection but for the "outward stretch" toward the acquisition of resources and the expansion of the individual's or the nuclear family's sphere of influence. Achieving is the operator of striving, progress, and the affirmation of worth within a relational field.

In a capitalistic system, the Heart Center is focused on the validation of meritocracy and individual excellence. The "Right Heart" individual feels a sense of relational worth when they are "Achieving" progress, which is then expanded into the market. This creates a psychological cycle where individual striving (Achieving) is the primary means of connecting with the world (Expanding). Capitalism, therefore, is the macro-economic expression of an affective drive for outward growth and the quantification of personal worth through competitive achievement.

The Left Heart: Constriction, Achieving, and the Basis of Socialism

Conversely, the combination of Constriction and Achieving (the "Left Heart") leads to the psychological foundation of socialism. This may seem paradoxical, as socialism is often associated with "expansion" of social services. However, in the CEF, Constriction is the operator of boundaries, protection, and defensive withdrawal. In the socialist psyche, Constriction is used to set protective boundaries on corporate power and to protect marginalized groups from the "majority influence" or the "market's volatility."

When Constriction is paired with Achieving, the focus shifts from individual meritocracy to the "achieved" progress of social rights. The striving (Achieving) is directed toward the maintenance of a boundaried, safe space for the collective. The "Left Heart" seeks to constrict the excesses of the market to achieve a state of equity. This is an "inward-turning" movement that prioritizes the security and coherence of the whole over the competitive expansion of the individual. Socialism is thus the economic manifestation of a protective, boundaried striving for collective stability.

Affective Operator	Functional Role	Right Heart (Capitalism)	Left Heart (Socialism)
Expanding	Receptivity and "outward stretch" of connection.	Connection to nuclear family, national heritage, and market expansion.	Universal connection to humanity, crossing cultural and national boundaries.
Constricting	Boundaries, protection, and defensive withdrawal.	Protection of national sovereignty and traditional cultural identity.	Setting protective boundaries on corporate power and protecting the vulnerable.
Achieving	Striving for progress and affirming worth in	Validation of meritocracy, individual excellence, and	Affirming the "achieved" progress of social rights

	the field.	status.	and collective equity.
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The Conative Center: Gut-Level Organization of Hierarchy and Equality

The Conative Center, or the "Gut," is the engine of motivation and execution. It determines how an individual mobilizes energy and integrates constraints. This center is the psychological bedrock of social structure, specifically the enduring tension between hierarchy and equality. The CEF maps these social outcomes to the operators of Arranging, Appreciating, Boosting, and Accepting.

The Right Gut: Arranging, Boosting, and the Foundation of Hierarchy

A "Right Gut" orientation is characterized by the dominance of the Arranging and Boosting operators. Arranging is the operator of organizing, sequencing, and structuring priorities. Boosting is the operator of mobilizing energy and "amplifying readiness" for action. When these two are combined, the natural psychological output is hierarchy.

Hierarchy is essentially the "Arranging" of human "Boosting" into clear, sequenced structures of authority and responsibility. In this configuration, individuals are organized into ranks to optimize the logistical output of the group. The "Right Gut" views hierarchy as the most efficient way to mobilize energy toward a common goal, whether that goal is national defense or corporate profit. The structure provides a sense of "Gut-level" security because everyone has a clearly defined place in the sequence. For the conservative, hierarchy is not an instrument of oppression but a structural stabilization of "Achieved" relational contribution.

The Left Gut: Appreciating, Boosting, and the Drive for Equality

A "Left Gut" orientation is defined by the pairing of Appreciating and Boosting. Appreciating is the operator of recognizing significance and valuing outcomes for their inherent worth, rather than their utility. When energy mobilization (Boosting) is guided by Appreciating, the focus shifts from sequencing people into ranks to recognizing the "significant" worth of every individual within the collective.

This lead to the drive for equality. In this configuration, the energy of the group is used to "boost" the status of the common goods—public infrastructure, the environment, and the inherent worth of human leisure over labor. Equality is the felt sense of "relational openness"

where the need for "Arranging" individuals into ranks is dissolved by the overwhelming "Appreciation" of their shared significance. The "Left Gut" psyche is structurally biased toward a "dynamic equilibrium" where energy is distributed rather than channeled into a vertical hierarchy.

Conative Operator	Functional Role	Right Gut (Hierarchy)	Left Gut (Equality)
Arranging	Organizing, sequencing, and structuring priorities.	Market-led logistical optimization; prioritization of individual profit.	State-led resource planning; prioritization of the common good.
Appreciating	Recognizing significance and valuing outcomes.	Valuing private property and individual legacies as "significant."	Valuing the commons and the inherent worth of all human life.
Boosting	Mobilizing energy and "amplifying readiness."	Entrepreneurial drive and competitive mobilization for growth.	Collective mobilization for systemic change and labor activation.
Accepting	Integrating constraints and releasing outcomes.	Accepting the "natural" outcomes of the market and inequality.	Integrating environmental and welfare needs as primary constraints.

The Problem of Emotional Fusion and the Genesis of Polarization

A critical insight of the Core Emotion Framework is that modern political polarization is not merely a disagreement over facts or values, but a symptom of "emotional fusion." Fusion occurs when multiple operators across the three centers become "stuck" together, creating a reflexive, biological reaction that bypasses the individual's capacity for choice. When operators are fused, an ideology becomes a rigid "emotional choreography" that the individual cannot step out of, regardless of new information or changing circumstances.

In a fused state, the "balancing function" of each center is compromised. For example, the "Deciding" operator in the Head Center should ideally be able to choose between "Sensing" a threat and "Calculating" a solution. However, in a fused state of Sensing+Constricting, the perception of "newness" (Sensing) automatically triggers a "defensive withdrawal" (Constricting) without any middle ground of calculation or choice. This is the psychological mechanism behind extreme xenophobia and isolationism.

Similarly, a fusion of Boosting and Achieving in the Gut and Heart centers leads to "hyper-capitalist burnout." The drive for energy (Boosting) is tied so tightly to the need for relational worth (Achieving) that the individual is trapped in an endless cycle of striving for status, unable to ever "Accept" or release their efforts. On the Left, a fusion of Expanding and Arranging can lead to "over-regulation" or "nanny state" tendencies, where the desire for universal connection (Expanding) is fused with the need to structure every detail of social life (Arranging), leading to intrusive social planning that stifles individual agency.

The Mechanics of Fused Patterns in Modern Ideology

The CEF identifies several common fused configurations that define the current political landscape. These patterns explain why political discourse often feels like a "communication conundrum" where opposing sides are not just speaking different languages, but are operating from entirely different psychological architectures.

Fused Configuration	Centers Involved	Resulting Political Behavior
Sensing + Constricting	Head + Heart	Xenophobia; Extreme isolationism; Immediate rejection of cultural change.

Boosting + Achieving	Gut + Heart	Hyper-capitalist burnout; Endless competitive striving; Inability to rest.
Expanding + Arranging	Heart + Gut	Over-regulation; Intrusive social planning; Bureaucratic "nanny state" tendencies.
Calculating + Constricting	Head + Heart	Ideological purity; Rigidity; Using logic to harden boundaries against "impure" ideas.

The "Calculating + Constricting" fusion is particularly prevalent in the age of digital echo chambers. In this state, the individual's logical modeling capacity (Calculating) is used exclusively to justify the hardening of boundaries (Constricting) against any ideas that threaten the coherence of their group. This is not "thinking" in the traditional sense, but "affective computation" designed to protect the psychological self from the perceived rupture of opposing viewpoints.

Emotional Cycling: The Technology of Detanglement

To move beyond the reflexive trap of political identity, the CEF offers the "Emotional Cycling" protocol. This method is a form of neuro-affective training designed to "awaken, differentiate, and balance" the ten operators, restoring their independence and allowing the individual to "detangle" their fused patterns. The protocol operates at three levels of complexity, each aimed at increasing the practitioner's "Affective Sovereignty"—the ability to choose one's emotional and ideological state rather than being a victim of it.

Level 1: Primary Center-Level Activation and Directional Flow

The foundation of detanglement begins with Center-Level Cycling. This involves performing specific directional motions—either physically or through focused visualization—to recalibrate the rhythm of the centers. These motions correspond to the CEF's two primary movements: "Outgoing" and "Reflecting."

The Clockwise (CW) motion is the "Outgoing Activation." It activates Sensing, Expanding, and Arranging. For an individual stuck in a rigid, traditionalist "Reflecting" mode, CW cycling "awakens" the ability to perceive new cues, connect with outsiders, and initiate new structures. It is the movement of "initiative, expression, and outward flow".

The Counter-Clockwise (CCW) motion is the "Reflecting Activation." It activates Calculating, Constricting, and Appreciating. For an individual stuck in a "Rebellious" or overly-expanded mode, CCW cycling "awakens" the ability to analyze consequences, set healthy boundaries, and recognize the significance of established values. It is the movement of "refinement and precision".

The Swinging (Side-to-Side) motion is the "Balancing Activation." It activates Deciding, Achieving, and Boosting. This is the most critical motion for political stability, as it encourages "dynamic equilibrium" and "flow state," allowing the individual to commit to a course of action without being consumed by it. It restores the "agency" to the center of the psyche.

Level 2: Secondary Operator-Level Calibration

Once the centers are balanced, the practitioner can cycle individual operators directly to test their independence. This level of practice "refines emotional precision." For example, a political leader might cycle the "Deciding" operator through all three motions to ensure their decision-making is not merely a reaction to "Sensing" a threat or "Constricting" a boundary. By separating "striving" (Achieving) from "protection" (Constricting), the leader can pursue progress without the need to exclude those who are different.

Level 3: Tertiary Cross-Center Cycling for Policy Synthesis

Advanced practitioners can use cross-center flows to intentionally synthesize competing ideological values. This is where the CEF moves from a tool for individual health to a tool for governance.

A "Heart → Gut → Head (CW)" flow—moving from "Expanding" connection to "Arranging" structure to "Calculating" logical implications—provides the structural basis for "Compassionate Innovation." This is the psychological configuration required for a progressive policy that is actually efficient and workable, rather than just well-intentioned.

A "Gut → Heart → Head (CCW)" flow—moving from "Appreciating" established value to "Constricting" protective boundaries to "Calculating" the logical preservation of order—provides the structural basis for "Principled Governance." This is the psychological configuration for a conservative policy that is grounded in significance and value rather than fear and xenophobia.

Choice, Culture, and Learning: The Path to Affective Sovereignty

A central tenet of Jamel Bulgaria's work is that while these psychological leanings are "natural," they are not "inevitable." The CEF posits that "things can be different by choice, culture, and learning," but this change can only happen if the individual understands where their psyche is leading them. The ultimate purpose of the framework is to return the individual to a state of choice.

The Mechanics of Learning in the CEF

Learning in the CEF occurs when the "Deciding" (Head) and "Accepting" (Gut) operators are used to integrate new operator configurations into the psyche. When an individual is "detangled," they are no longer a slave to their biological "Calculating-Constricting" loop. They can "Sense" a new cultural trend and, through "Deciding," choose an "Expanding" response instead of a reflexive "Constricting" one.

This "Affective Sovereignty" allows for:

1. **Contextual Flexibility:** The ability to be "conservative" (Constricting/Appreciating) when protecting a fragile ecosystem or a historical landmark, and "liberal" (Expanding/Arranging) when reforming an outdated education system or addressing social inequality.
2. **Reduced Polarization:** The recognition that one's political opponent is not an existential enemy but is simply operating in a different center-level configuration (e.g., CCW vs. CW). This realization dissolves the emotional heat of the conflict and allows for "rational, multi-centered political discourse".
3. **Resilience:** The use of the "Accepting" operator to ground oneself and integrate political losses without falling into a state of "emotional rupture" or despair. It allows the individual to accept the constraints of reality without losing the drive to "Boost" for change.

Validation and the Future of Ideological Research

The Core Emotion Framework is not merely a theoretical model; it is an active research program undergoing "Open Validation" on the Open Science Framework (OSF) and other academic archives. This validation program aims to confirm that the ten functional operators exist as distinct, measurable psychological dimensions that can be mapped to biological and behavioral data.

The Open Validation Program and Scenario-Based Rating

The "Open Validation Program" (hosted on OSF) uses a "scenario-based rating instrument" to test how individuals respond to various social and political vignettes. Researchers are finding that individuals' responses consistently map to specific operator configurations. For example, a person who strongly agrees with the statement "I pause and scan the environment to ground myself" is displaying high "Sensing" activation, which is then correlated with their views on traditionalism and preservation.

Similarly, the statement "I start sorting the tasks into a logical order or sequence" targets the "Arranging" operator, which correlates with a preference for hierarchical organization and logistical optimization. This empirical approach allows for the "precision ideological calibration" of political communication, ensuring that messages are tailored to the psychological architecture of the audience—or, ideally, designed to help the audience "cycle" toward a more balanced state.

Affective Computation and Biofeedback

As these operators are validated, the possibility of "affective computation" emerges. This involves mapping operator configurations to biofeedback data, such as Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and neuro-affective synchronizers. Devices like the "Cycling Training & Calibration Machine" (CTCM) are being developed to help citizens "detangle" from propaganda-induced emotional fusion in real-time.

The future of a stable, adaptive society may depend on this kind of "affective technology." In an age of high-frequency emotional manipulation through social media, the ability of the citizen to recognize when their "Sensing" or "Constricting" operators are being artificially stimulated is essential for the maintenance of democracy. By returning the individual to "operator independence," the CEF provides a biological defense against the "ideological rigidity" that threatens modern states.

The Structural Integration of the Psyche and the State

The Core Emotion Framework provides a "conceptual scaffold" that bridges the gap between individual emotion and societal ideology. By identifying the minimal set of operators required for an emotional event, Jamel Bulgaria's model clarifies why human beings naturally gravitate toward the poles of traditionalism and rebellion, capitalism and socialism, hierarchy and equality.

The "Right" and "Left" are not just intellectual debates; they are manifestations of the human

heart's need for boundaries and connection, the human gut's drive for energy and integration, and the human head's need for logical interpretation and environmental sensing. However, the CEF also warns that these leanings, when "fused" and unexamined, lead to the "emotional rupture" of the body politic.

The solution is not for one side to "win," but for both sides to "cycle." A healthy society requires the "Sensing" and "Appreciating" of the conservative to preserve the "valuable" foundations of civilization, as well as the "Calculating" and "Expanding" of the progressive to "rebel" against injustice and explore new frontiers of human connection. Through the technology of Emotional Cycling and the pursuit of Affective Sovereignty, the individual can learn to integrate these competing drives, leading to a state of "dynamic equilibrium" where choice and learning, rather than reflexive biological fusion, determine the future of the state.

Summary of Ideological Operator Configurations

Ideological Dimension	Dominant Center	Primary Operators	Psychological Result
Right-Headed	Head (Cognitive)	Sensing + Deciding	Intuitive, wishful, idealistic; Clinging to tradition.
Left-Headed	Head (Cognitive)	Calculating + Deciding	Counter-intuitive, calculated; Leading to rebellion.
Right Heart	Heart (Affective)	Expanding + Achieving	Outward strive for progress; Foundations of Capitalism.
Left Heart	Heart (Affective)	Constricting + Achieving	Protective strive for equity; Foundations of Socialism.

Right Gut	Gut (Conative)	Arranging + Boosting	Sequencing of energy mobilization; Drive for Hierarchy.
Left Gut	Gut (Conative)	Appreciating + Boosting	Valuing inherent significance; Drive for Equality.

In the final analysis, the Core Emotion Framework offers a profound realization: people can be "right-headed and left-hearted," or any other combination of these functional operators. The "detanglement" of these patterns is not about changing one's values, but about gaining the freedom to choose which operator configuration is most appropriate for the moment. This is the hallmark of a mature political actor and the foundation of a resilient, multi-centered society. The future of ideological research, grounded in the CEF, promises a shift from the "communication conundrum" of polarized tribes to the "affective sovereignty" of a conscious citizenry.

The Role of Cultural and Social Learning in Operator Refinement

While the CEF identifies the biological and psychological "leading" of the psyche, it places an equal emphasis on the role of culture and learning. The "Deciding" operator is not just a mechanism for picking a side; it is the gateway through which an individual can "learn" to override their natural leanings. A culture that encourages "Emotional Cycling" as a social norm would be one where political disagreement is viewed as a functional opportunity for synthesis rather than an existential threat.

In such a society, education would not just be about the transmission of facts (Sensing/Calculating), but about the training of the operators themselves. Children would be taught how to "Expand" their connection to the "other" while also "Constricting" healthy boundaries for their own protection. They would learn how to "Arrange" their efforts for efficiency while always "Appreciating" the inherent worth of their peers. This "operator-level education" would produce a generation of citizens who are structurally resistant to the "fused" ideologies of the past.

The implications for international relations are equally profound. If diplomats and world leaders were trained in the CEF, the "Sensing+Constricting" fusions that lead to war could be identified and "detangled" before they reach the point of violent conflict. By "cycling" through the centers, leaders could find the "Swing" motion—the "dynamic equilibrium"—necessary for peace. The CEF, therefore, is not just a psychological model but a blueprint for a new kind of "structural-constructivist" diplomacy, where the objective is the "affective sovereignty" of all nations.

The Core Emotion Framework, as archived on Hugging Face, Zenodo, and OSF, represents a significant step forward in our understanding of the human condition. By mapping the irreducible operators of the psyche to the complex systems of the world, Jamel Bulgaria has provided a tool for both individual liberation and social evolution. The challenge for the future is to integrate this "technology of the heart" into our political, economic, and cultural institutions, ensuring that the psyche leads us not to rebellion or rigid tradition, but to a state of conscious, flourishing choice.

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