

# THE LOVER AND THE LOGICIAN

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## ABSTRACT

Traditionally, it has been taken for granted that there is a fundamental disparity between reason and emotion, so that often they are in conflict. Basing my analysis on the work of Peter G. Ossorio, I propose that there is not and cannot be any conflict between thinking, no matter how rigorous, and feeling, no matter how passionate. Conflict indeed there is, both within and between persons, but that which has been misidentified as between "the lover and the logician," so to speak, is instead between or among the hedonic, prudential, ethical, and esthetic perspectives. When we recognize "reason" and "emotion" as allies, not antagonists, a wider range of behavioral possibilities becomes available to us than was the case when we saw them as polarized.

The division between the warm heart and the cool head, passion and reason, permeates our thoughts so deeply that we take for granted their polarity, if not their conflict. The lover, while he is deep in his infatuation,

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is not rational about his beloved. The logician, while he is deep in his symbolic abstractions, has no concern for the emotional repercussions of his analysis upon others—or himself. In the first case, the arterial blood, so to speak, does not reach the brain; in the second, cerebral control is not exercised upon the viscera. Biologically, this would be an unsatisfactory state of affairs; philosophically and psychologically it is even more so. But how are we to establish a genuine integration of the heart and the head, of passion and reason?

Not, certainly, by assiduously pointing out to the lover the imperfections—obvious to us—in his beloved, or by pleading with the logician to take account of matters as remote from his proper task as the art of painting is from quantum mechanics. Nor by ascetic disciplines designed to subdue the “natural man,” or psychotherapy to “release the elemental powers which are being suppressed.” None of these probes deeply enough. They are all concerned with coordinating elements which are, on the face of it, incompatible, and coordination is a far cry from integrity. A bevy of quotations will suggest the scope of the problem.

“No amount of rational analysis can bring healing” (Luke, n.d., p. ii).

“Suppose one doesn’t quite know which one wants to put first? Suppose . . . one is cursed with both a heart and a brain?” (Sayers, 1936, p. 179).

“She knew that this conflict would continue in her always: a battle between . . . the thing reasoned and the same thing imagined” (Morgan, 1936, p. 284).

“There are experiences which take the place of philosophy” (Morgan, 1932, p. 389).

“It is not at best easy to unite the world of intellect and the world of sensation; only perhaps in great art can they both be experienced at once. The movements of the flesh and of the mind pass along separated channels; philosophy can make roads by which we can pass to the banks of either great stream, but even philosophy itself can rarely dig canals along which the waters of both may mingle. Yet separate, they can hardly be justified” (Williams, 1935, pp. 81–82).

I have deliberately chosen my quotations from literature rather than philosophy or psychology, but one technical citation needs to be added.

“Virtually all personality theorists of whatever creed or persuasion assume that the personality contains polar tendencies that may come into conflict with one another” (Hall & Lindzey, 1970).

That there is a difference between emotion and reason is beyond dispute. But are they *polar* opposites, like north and south, so that the more emotional our behavior, the farther we depart from reasonableness? Are the lover and the logician at opposite poles of the same continuum? Or is the difference not polar, but of some other kind? And if—when—

there is conflict, what precisely is at issue, and between whom or what? These are problems which arise both within us individually and among us socially, and "lover" and "logician" are only two of the forms in which they may appear. The emotion may be not love, but fear or hostility or guilt or some other, and reason is not by any means limited to the extreme abstractions and technicalities of logic. But as Charles Williams once wrote in another connection, "On the achievement in the extreme all depends" (Williams, 1950, p. 157), so for my protagonists here, I am taking the infatuated lover, and the highly trained, zealous logician.

## I.

As is usual with problems such as this, we must begin our formulation not with the complexities of the immediate, urgent situation as it surfaces in our daily lives, but with its structure: here, with the relationship between what we know, and what we want or have a reason for doing, and what we need. The first and third of these are, in themselves, relatively simple to deal with; the second is more intricate.

For lover and logician alike—and for everyone between and beyond—to know is to distinguish A from B, A' from A, A'' from A' and so on: for example, persons from things, the person we happen to love from other persons, and that person from the concept "person." *What* distinctions we make is not—for the moment—our concern, or why we draw the lines where we do, or how subtle our discriminations. What *is* our concern is that knowledge is a matter of differentiating among objects, processes, events, states of affairs, relationships, and concepts, without weighting them or appraising their values except in special cases: e.g., to know something is dangerous *is* to make an appraisal.

Formally, what we want is for something to be the case, but since we cannot desire any state of affairs unless we can differentiate it from other states of affairs, what we want depends upon what we know. Thus wants are sharply separated from needs, which are conditions that, if not met, result in pathological states, but we may not be aware of a need at all—as we may need medical attention but not realize it, or need food yet be unable to discriminate between what is nourishing and what is not. There is no necessary relation, causal or otherwise, between what we need and what we know or want, whereas our wants are directly dependent upon what we know, and to want something is to have a reason or motive for trying to get it.

From this, we can take the first steps in untangling the relationship between knowing and wanting. Merely differentiating A from B carries no motivational significance, and provides no basis for choosing which we shall act on: either, or both, or neither. We act on reasons, and our

circumstances supply us with those reasons: the circumstances of the real world and what we know of it, who we are individually, and what we want and value. Merely wanting something can be a reason for acting; so also are all the hedonic, prudential, ethical, and aesthetic justifications we marshal when we are "being reasonable." From such reasons come our judgements, the choices we make, and ultimately whatever behavior follows upon our choices.

This formulation of knowing and wanting gives no more ground for conflict between reason and emotion than there is, for example, between description and appraisal. Paradigmatically, a description does not imply any appraisal or judgement; it is no more than an identification or portrayal, in as much detail as the circumstances require, of A as distinct from B, or of A' from A, and so on, with no valuational or motivational connotations. Mere description commits us to nothing, urges us to nothing. Given the description, we can of course appraise the meaning and importance of A, in its relation to B or to the rest of our lives or to any part of the world, but where is any occasion for conflict between these two operations of describing and appraising? And because description corresponds to knowing, appraisal to wanting, what occasion can there be for conflict between what we know and what we desire?

Since, however, conflict there is between the logician and the lover, the combatants must be other than those traditionally identified as reason and emotion. Let us return, then, to our lover and logician to hear more of what they say to each other, and to look for what they are doing by means of what they say.

## II.

The logician here stands not only for himself, but for all those who in one tone of voice or another implore the besotted lover, "Be reasonable," or criticize him for his failure to be intelligent about his beloved. "Look, you're not even interested in the same things. . . . You really want a permanent relationship and that's the last thing he [or she—this to be understood throughout] wants. . . . If he were the kind of person you think he is, he wouldn't be doing what he does"—if X, then Y, and since Y does not occur, X cannot be the case. "For God's sake, be reasonable. *Think of what you're doing!*" To which the lover is likely to respond with "one brief, emphatic word unfit for publication," to the effect not that the critical logician is wrong, but that his critique is irrelevant. Common interests, permanence, consistency have nothing to do with the flaming passion which engulfs him. "They are not to the point," cries the lover, and if the logician replies, "They should be," the lover can retort unanswerably, "But they aren't. 'If he is sufficiently articulate and de-

tached, he may be more explicit. "What I want is to achieve a state of affairs in which I enjoy the presence of my beloved. And I can do that without all your picayune analyses. For that matter, these distinctions of yours interfere with my doing what I need to do in order to enjoy my beloved." And he is right. As every experienced craftsman knows, too close a concentration upon *how* he is doing what he does can impede his performance to the point where he can no longer work effectively. And as every philosopher knows, the introduction of concepts which are not germane to the issue serves only to confuse it.

But what concepts are germane here? Indeed, what is the issue? There are, in fact, two issues: for the lover, it is to achieve a satisfactory relationship with his beloved, for the logician, to clarify what is going on. That is, we have here two personages, an actor and a spectator, and the question of what—if anything—the spectator can contribute to the actor. Or more to the point, *when* can a spectator contribute anything of value to an actor? The answer is easy enough: nothing—when everything is going right and promises to keep on going right. But when something goes wrong, or threatens to, the critical spectator's attitudes and skills are indispensable. If going wrong is to be corrected or averted, the nature of the malfunctioning needs to be understood before a remedy can be found. It may be a failure in knowledge—the lover (as a special case of the actor) is not discriminating A from B, e.g., the state of mind of his beloved today from what it was a week ago. Or he may have changed his way of looking at the situation, his perspective, because his circumstances have changed. Or he may lack the requisite skills to sustain as intimate a personal relationship as he desires.

The lover has reasons for the way he feels, reasons which are firmly rooted in what he knows and what he wants to achieve, in his individual characteristics—his attitudes, values, states—and in his circumstances. A spectator may, for reasons of his own, appraise them as not "good" reasons, but this is crucially different from the claim that emotional reactions are inherently unreasonable or are inaccessible to reason. It is eminently reasonable to fear what is dangerous, be angry at injustice, love what is lovely, and feel guilty for having done wrong; and failure of a spectator to recognize what is dangerous, or wherein the beloved is lovely, in no way diminishes the validity and authenticity of those responses. The spectator is not, simply by virtue of his role, infallible in his judgements. His critiques are not exempt from criticism.

Because emotional states and emotional behavior *are* reasonable, the actor and the spectator have reason as a common meeting ground. But a ground on which persons can meet is one on which they can not only confer, agree, embrace, but also argue, disagree, and do battle. The parties to this specific meeting, however, are not reason and emotion, but

the different kinds of reasons generated by different perspectives: hedonic, prudential, ethical, aesthetic—the last including not only the artistic per se but also the intellectual and social domains, in all of which the ultimate standard is coherence. A conflict between—for example—hedonic and prudential reasons does not represent an emotion warring with the intellect, but two perspectives, *both* involving reasons and *both* having emotional values. Pascal to the contrary, if the heart has reasons that the mind does not know, it is because the mind is not doing its job.

### III.

Traditionally at least in western culture, “mind” has been identified with the prudential, intellectual, and social perspectives, and almost by fiat has been excluded from the hedonic, artistic, and sometimes the ethical perspectives. It is as if to want and fear and love were unreasonable, as if the mystical vision did not involve discriminations, as if our values had no connection with what we know. Moreover, we have reified “reason” and “emotion,” establishing them in our thought as entities known by their products and predicated because we observe those products. They can, however, be seen in another way as two states of affairs—knowing and feeling—and knowing *what* emotional state one is in and what circumstances occasioned it are genuinely knowledge. And there is nothing about identifying the state which need interfere with it: joy is not diminished merely because it is known to be joy, or love when it is admitted to oneself and confessed to another. Yet the notion is abroad in the land that the intellectual penetration of such states must destroy them. “Let us not *think* about what love is,” we are told, “or the vision of God, or the bases for our principles, lest we lose them.”

Beyond question, some uses of the mind are destructive to emotional states—sometimes, it seems, the intellect is deliberately so used. The “nothing but” ploy by which love is reduced to physiology, or behavior to movement, or consciousness to cerebral processes, is only one case in point. Unfortunately, it requires a fair degree of philosophical sophistication to hold one’s own against such reductionism, although given that, the ploy can be effectively counteracted.

What the reductionists are doing by what they say is to cleave reason from emotion and appraisal from description, pursuing the thesis that “pure” reason is that which has been purged of presumably fortuitous emotional color. So doing, they leave out of account the fact that all reasoning and all describing are motivated by what is important to us, by what we want and value. Thus the effort to achieve “pure” reason is undertaken for reasons, and the ostensibly detached, rational analyses which the reductionists produce are as colored by those reasons as any



other polemics are. In other words, the relation between reason and emotion, description and appraisal, is by no means a simple one. Description indeed precedes appraisal *of that description*, but also, appraisal precedes description in that originally we must appraise whether we have sufficient reason to give a description of an object or process or event or state of affairs at all, and if so, of what kind and in how much detail.

In practice, describing and appraising are distinguishable but inseparable, as are reason and emotion. They appear to us contradictory principally because we have inherited a tradition in which they were reified and polarized, and because somewhere along the line we have forgotten—or have chosen to ignore—that it is *persons* who think and feel, and that all behavior of persons involves both thinking and feeling, not as two functions which are somehow associated—and only God knows how—but as the single complex function of judgement. And judgement is always in terms of what state of affairs one wants to achieve.

The presumed conflict between thinking and feeling, therefore, is in fact no such thing, but is instead a discrepancy between different wants supported by reasons, or different reasons supported by wants. The lover wants to achieve one state of affairs, the logician another. In both cases, feeling and thinking are conjoined, but in the one case serving the hedonic perspective, and in the other, the intellectual or social, perhaps, or the ethical or prudential. To the question, “Which perspective shall predominate in a given situation—or throughout a lifetime?” there can be only one answer: we choose among them, and those choices at once reveal who we are and create whom we shall become. There is no mystery here, nothing which is in principle inaccessible to intellectual examination, or which will be destroyed by an examination that takes account of the entire situation—notably, the individual’s personal characteristics and circumstances. The lover and the logician are at odds not because the former is unreasonable and the latter reasonable, but because they have different reasons generated by the different perspectives and geared to different achievements. “You see, in this world there is one awful thing, and that is that everyone has his reasons” (Gilliatt, 1964, p. 63).

Thus when the logician begs the lover to be reasonable, in all likelihood he is calling on the lover to shift his perspective—and most certainly occasions do arise when such a shift is called for. Perhaps the lover cannot attain his beloved: she dies, or leaves him for another, or is already married. He need not cease loving her, but it is not reasonable by any standard or under any perspective actively to pursue what is known to be unattainable. Since his prior reasons for seeking fulfilment with her are no longer coherent with his circumstances, they are no longer reasons. Now he must change his wants, or live divorced from his real situation in an unreal world of wishes or dreams. Within the lover’s own

framework, the concerned logician now has valid grounds for trying to persuade the lover to adapt his wants to those inexorable (on the hypothesis) circumstances.

It is a commonplace that lovers tend to be impervious to knowledge which conflicts with their vision of the beloved. This also the logician will take account of, knowing that the lover's appraisal of his beloved is a summary formulation, not an arithmetic sum. In effect, it is a status assignment, and status assignments, being non-factual in any case, are notably—and necessarily—resistant to change by the introduction of facts. Thus we are brought back to the relation of description to appraisal, and beyond that, to the relation of the various perspectives to one another.

#### IV.

The perspectives which generate our reasons are the hedonic, the prudential, the ethical, and the aesthetic (the last, as above, including the artistic, the intellectual, and the social). Logical economy might suggest that any three of them could be absorbed into the fourth, but conceptual clarity dictates their separation. It is not inevitable that they conflict—prudence with morality, or immediate pleasure with long-term consistency, or any other such combination—and when they do not, what results is that integrity which has been called “the feeling intellect.” When they are at odds, however, when wants or values are irreconcilable—what then?

The infatuated lover cannot choose what he shall feel. But he does in fact, and he must, choose what he shall *do*, which of the perspectives he shall act on, and there is no need to complicate matters by interpolating a reified “will” which does the choosing. That the choice may be difficult goes without saying. That he may do what he does not want to do, as in acting on ethical or prudential or aesthetic rather than hedonic considerations, also goes without saying—or should—although in that case “want” carries a double meaning. If, for example, he chooses to do the “right” thing rather than what would give him more pleasure, his primary want clearly is for the ethical or prudential or aesthetic achievement rather than the hedonic.

The lover—or anyone—selects among his wants in the same way or lack of way that he selects among the 31 flavors offered in the local ice cream store. He chooses—and there is no *way* to choose. It is simply something one does. Before he makes his choice (and there is instruction in the idiom itself: a choice is *made*—fashioned, produced, brought into being)—before he makes his choice, he may consider what reasons the perspectives provide for and against alternative courses of action, whether some reasons relate synergistically, and the like. And he may



find some format like the one suggested here to be useful in reminding him of reasons which he otherwise might neglect. Preparation for choosing, however, does not belong to the act of choice. In the end, having balanced or synthesized as best he can, the lover simply acts in one way rather than another, and to one end or set of ends instead of any other.

All the perspectives are brought together in a way of life which has greater or less completeness and coherence. To be seriously deficient in any of the perspectives—significantly to lack prudence or a moral sense, or a sense of the fitness of things, or consistently to renounce all pleasures in an extreme asceticism—is to be incomplete, a defective person. And a series of choices which lead toward incompatible achievements, as marriage may be incompatible with a particular vocation, betrays some degree of incoherence in a way of life. Still, since reasons necessarily involve both discrimination and appraisal—knowing and feeling—the lover and the logician are associated with different perspectives, and not with emotion and reason.

To return to the first of the quotations at the beginning of this paper: indeed “no amount of rational analysis can bring healing,” but without such analysis, the nature of the dis-ease will not be accurately diagnosed; therefore appropriate remedies will be identified only by accident. For example, the breach between the lover and the logician cannot be healed as long as they are identified respectively with the traditional concepts of emotion and reason. The conceptual analysis given here does not in itself heal that breach, but it does provide the condition necessary for healing: it brings the lover and the logician within a common framework where their differences *can* be worked out, as they *cannot* be in their traditional polarization.

The reason-vs-emotion formulation makes it look as if our only alternatives were an empty head or a hungry heart. In contrast, the perspectives formulation guarantees some satisfaction of both mind and heart, whichever perspective or combination of perspectives we ultimately act on. We do not have to disavow any of our powers, so that even in those excruciating decisions where what we lose, whatever we decide, is almost more than we can bear, we do not deny either the legitimacy of our passion or the illuminations of our intellect. We may be unhappy, but we are not crippled. Neither formulation will solve our problems for us, but the one narrows our options down to an arbitrary either-or, while the other opens out upon an infinite range of possible courses of action and, therefore, ways of life.

Now, when the logician confronts the lover, it is as an ally, not as a competitor, in our daily responsibility for clarifying who we are and choosing what we shall do.

## NOTE

This paper was prepared and has been presented as a lecture to general audiences, where explicit reference to Descriptive Psychology would have generated confusion or suspicion. Anyone at all conversant with the work of Peter G. Ossorio, however, will recognize at once that it is based directly on his thinking. For specific material on the Perspectives, see Ossorio (1977, 1971/1978, 1969, 1981). Correspondence to the author should be addressed: 501 Sky Trail Road, Jamestown Star Route, Boulder, Colorado 80302.

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