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The Logic of Love

Chapter 2: Reasoning and Experience

*Mr. Mindfull thought he had it
All figured out, but when
He took one step out his front door,
He came back in again.
The weatherman had said quite clearly
There was no chance of rain.
So when he felt some drops come down
They hit him in the brain.*

*Since he was blind, he could not see.
And the cars made such a bleat,
He could not hear the sprinklers
Which were ten yards from his feet.
So, neither the weatherman's wisdom,
Nor the experience of the street,
Provided him the answer.
But still, ain't life a treat!*

When considering whether faith in God is a logical extension of love, we quite naturally turn to logic as a tool for exploring the question. But it is only one of the fabulous tools at our disposal. Intuitive reasoning and experience also play an important role in developing an answer to such a profound question. We can interrelate our experiences with our logical and intuitive reasoning abilities. This enhances our ability to reach decisions that make the most of our experiences and reflect our best thinking.

Our understanding and appreciation of life comes from two main sources: reasoning and experience. The interplay between the inner world of reasoning and the outer world of experience provides an opportunity for each realm to improve the other. We use our reasoning abilities to interpret our experiences and give them meaning. We construct meanings and apply values in an effort to appreciate what has already occurred. These interpretations of past experience can then be used as storehouses of wisdom to make better decisions in the present. In this way our reasoning works to both interpret and direct our experiences. There is a continuous feedback loop between reasoning and experience for the development of insight.

Reasoning and experience, however, are sometimes in conflict with each other. For example, a sprinkler can make us think it is raining. When there is conflict, then our experience has been misinterpreted and/or our reasoning process is faulty. Working to keep reasoning and experience in harmony can provide a sense of security about our understanding of life.

There can also be disharmony between logic and intuition—the two modes of reasoning. When this is the case, it indicates that we have not yet developed our best wisdom on an issue. Insights developed with logic are often respected more than insights gleaned through intuition. In fact, some definitions of intuition place this facility of the mind outside the realm of reason. However, the value of direct perception—intuition—is *not* inferior to logical reasoning. What gives rise to the devaluation of intuition is a tendency to use it in situations that call for logical reasoning.

Intuitive reasoning is appropriately applied when time is of the essence, when decisions are too

close to call, or when the need to make a decision does not require the use of logic. Keen intuitive insights are labeled “brilliant,” and the seers of such insights commonly get showered with accolades. This reflects our general appreciation for well-developed intuitive abilities.

Unfortunately, intuition can easily become confused with other internal experiences, such as emotions. Sometimes it can be difficult to distinguish a "gut feeling" from gas caused by the burrito we had for dinner. Those who are familiar with the original *Star Trek* television series may recall how the show regularly poked fun at Mr. Spock, an alien crew member. Mr. Spock's native culture glorified logic and shunned emotion. Because he inappropriately equated emotion with intuition, Spock would awkwardly stammer through situations that called for quick decisions, educated guesses, or personal preferences.

Intuitive reasoning does have a down side. The problem, however, is not that it is rooted in emotion; the "problem" is that the cognitive process underlying intuition is unarticulable because it tends toward spontaneity. When the Logician is confronted, the question "Why?" gets a "because" with stuff after it. When the Intuitor is confronted with the same question, there is no stuff after the "because." Just because. When we do not need to explain ourselves to anyone else, then "just because" is just fine. But when we have the time and want to *reason together*, then logic is the form of reasoning that can be shared. Logic gives us the opportunity to scrutinize and critique our ideas and insights. Through this process, we can progressively develop common understandings that help us live in harmony with each other. Logic can be a powerful, unifying force.

As with intuition, logic also has a limited sphere of application. One of these limitations was encountered when *love* was defined. A person might reasonably argue that the definition being used for love is not logical because it assumes too much, i.e., that love is real. Love implies a selfless quality while at the same time assuming that it is the self that desires to love. Is it really possible for a self to be selfless? If I say that I want to love selflessly, isn't that a selfish desire? Such questions point to the limitations of logic.

Definitions and concepts can be logical, illogical, or alogical—outside the bounds of logic. Love, as it has been defined, is alogical. But this is not a problem. We do not need to have a logical definition of love in order to know that our love for others is real or to find satisfaction in the experience of being loved. Though logic may not even be able to make sense of love, our *experience* can make it very real indeed.

Logic, intuition, and experience all serve important functions in the development of insight. Experience is a master teacher. Logic is a wonderfully socializable tool. Intuition is a valuable personal resource. When addressing issues that are alogical in nature (such as defining *love*) experience can atone for the limitations of logic. By respecting when situations call for logic, intuition, and experience, we access our highest wisdom in reaching decisions about what to do and what to believe.

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