REASON, LOVE, AND MENTAL HEALTH

George Nakhnikian

July 1979
This essay is a defense of Platonic eudaimonism. Plato identified human excellence with mental health, mental health with psychic harmony, psychic harmony with the rule of reason, and he conceived reason to be the synergetic union of the power to know and the power to love. Plato believed that virtue is a constituent of eudaimonia, that, therefore, it is its own reward. Plato was right on all these counts but one. He misunderstood the nature of the love that is a constituent of reason. That love is not theeras of the Symposium. It is what I call 'undemanding love'. In this essay I describe the structure of undemanding love and I explain its connections with reason, mental health, and the moral excellence that is characteristic of a rational being.
Reason, Love, and Mental Health

George Nakhnikian
Indiana University, Bloomington

I Introduction

Inspired by Socrates, Plato was the first writer in the West who identified human excellence with mental health, mental health with psychic harmony, psychic harmony with the rule of reason, and who conceived of reason as being the synergetic union of the power to know and the power to love. Plato believed that virtue is its own reward and that a virtuous man is necessarily a beneficent resource to his fellow men. Thus, very early in its intellectual history the West had on record some very important insights into the constitution of reason in terms of its connections with love and mental health. Plato was, I think, right on all the above counts but one. He misunderstood the nature of the love that is a constituent of reason. The next significant link in this story is the advent of Christianity. Jesus did not teach in so many words that the love he preached and exemplified in his life is a constituent of reason. He taught that love of God is primary and necessary for the existence of love among individuals. That love of God is primary and necessary is questionable. I am of the opinion, however, that the love of individuals Jesus practiced is the love that is an essential component of human reason. What I shall call 'undemanding love' is central to the love that Jesus appears to have preached, and it is undemanding love that is an essential ingredient of reason. The theology initiated by Paul and culminating in Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism interpreted Jesus as having taught that the reality of love is known by faith, and that faith transcends reason. This may or may not be an accurate reading of what Jesus meant. The significant fact is that the Pauline interpretation became official Christian doctrine. Love was associated with faith, and faith was contrasted to reason. Christianity lost sight of Plato's concept of reason as including love. This outlook dominated the medieval mind, and so matters stood until the coming of the seventeenth-century revolution: the Galilean in science, the Cartesian in philosophy.

Descartes conceived of reason on the model of mathematics and geometry. Reason, on this view, is a faculty for intuiting ideas clearly and distinctly, and for drawing out their deductive consequences clearly and distinctly. Love has no place in reason so conceived. The Cartesian model of reason has prevailed during the last three and a half centuries. It has become part of the common sense of Western man. From the very beginning, the scientific outlook launched by Galileo has helped to create an intellectual climate entirely responsive to the Cartesian model of reason. Nowadays the scientifically oriented among us tend to think of love as being an amiable emotion that is not a constituent of reason. On the contrary, the prevalent attitude is that emotions cloud reason, and are, therefore, antithetical to it. There are, among us, practicing psychiatrists who believe that cleverly enough programmed digital computers can replace human therapists. And B.F. Skinner is among us, too. The religiously oriented also agree that love is not a constituent of reason. They and the scientifically oriented are both mistaken, but the religious orientation has the advantage. It appreciates the importance of love in human life. Freud made enormous contributions toward understanding man, but he, too, had no conception of love as a constituent of reason. For Freud love is libido, and the libido has nothing to do with reason. The libido is an organic drive. For Freud all other manifestations of love are epiphenomenal. The real thing is the libido. Thus, up to
roughly the first half of the twentieth century the divorce between reason and passion, between thinking and feeling, has been the fashion. This breach between reason and love is false and dangerous. Cold "rationality", passionless "objectivity", far from being marks of human excellence, are forms of irrationality. An effective way for man to dehumanize himself is to misconceive radically the structure of his own rationality. Reason as passion is reason as love.

The best contemporary accounts of love are to be found in the writings of humanistic psychologists. Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslow, and Erik Erikson deserve special mention. But there is much more to be done. My object in this essay is to provide a systematic analysis of love, to make clear its logical connections with reason and mental health, to reinstate the correct Platonic insight that reason is the synergetic union of the power to know and the power to love, and to explain, in a way that Plato could not, why he was right that virtue is its own reward and that a man of virtue is necessarily an asset and not a hindrance to his fellow man. The theory of love developed in this essay is at once a contribution to moral philosophy, to philosophical psychology, to philosophical anthropology, and to the theory of mental health. It has obvious implications for the theory and practice of psychotherapy. Its further ramifications I leave unexplored for the time being.

II The Structure of Undemanding Love

My principal thesis is that love is an essential component of reason. This enormously important insight bequeathed to us by Plato needs to be corrected and reinstated. What needs to be corrected is Plato's account of the love that is in reason. Reason in man is practical as well as theoretical. As practical, reason is more than a faculty of cognition. It is in virtue of his reason as practical that man is in a position to know what his own well-being consists of, to know also what his obligations and duties are as a social being, and to be motivated to secure his own well-being and discharge his obligations. Human beings can conceive of what it is to live well, and they have at the same time a passionate, an emotionally charged, concern for securing their own well-being. The concept of well-being and the conation for well-being both belong to reason. It is obvious why this is true of the concept. We have concepts only insofar as we have a faculty for conceptualizing, and, by definition, reason is that faculty. The conation for well-being is also an affair of reason. It is not a moral judgment but a conceptual truth that a person is unreasonable, perverse, irrational, if he is indifferent to his own weal or woe, or if he acts in such ways as to make himself miserable. This is like saying that a Euclidean triangle is not equilateral, if it is not equiangular. Just as it is in the nature of a Euclidean triangle that a Euclidean triangle is equilateral if, and only if, it is equiangular, so it is in the nature of being a reasonable person that a person is reasonable only if he is neither indifferent, nor hostile, to his own well-being. The equivalence of being equilateral and equiangular is a theorem of Euclidean geometry. The necessity of being neither indifferent nor hostile to one's own well-being if a person is to count as reasonable is not a theorem in an axiomatic system. It is a conceptual truth just the same that can be discerned by attending to familiar facts. Why do I refrain from drinking a glass of water that I believe to be poisonous? My belief that the water is poisonous is not enough to explain my refusal to drink it. It is necessary to point out that I do not want to be poisoned. But it is equally true that I want to quench my thirst. Why do I choose to remain thirsty? Because I judge that the undesirable state of thirst is preferable to being poisoned, and I judge that it is preferable because I judge that staying thirsty and not being poisoned is more in line with my overall well-being.
than slaking my thirst and dying in the process. It is a fact then, that in my deliberations about what to do considerations about what is and what is not a constituent of my well-being or a factor contributing to it are sometimes decisive in determining my choices. The concern for well-being is there. But where? Where can we locate this concern? Nowhere but in reason. Only a self-conscious creature possessing cognitive powers to a high degree can conceive of its own overall well-being and decide to perform an action for the reason that of all the alternatives available to him that one is maximally consistent with his own well-being.

However, this concern for one's own well-being implies something even more basic. It implies self-love. An animal that lacks reason may be programmed biologically to sustain itself in existence, but no such animal can have deliberate concern for its own well-being. It cannot formulate in thought the project of securing its own well-being as well as its powers and the circumstances of its life permit. Consequently, it cannot commit itself to realizing that project. Deliberate concern for well being requires powers that brutes do not possess: the power to conceive of over all well-being and the power of understanding that the well-being of a reasoning creature can be secured by it only if its actions are guided by its cognitions. But a creature who understands all this may yet be indifferent to its own well-being, or it may even be hostile to the idea of securing its own well-being. In order to commit itself to securing its own well-being, a creature must be neither hostile nor indifferent to its own well-being. A creature of that description wishes its own good and is disposed to work its own weal. In other words, the creature is self-loving. Deliberate concern for one's own maximum well-being and the self-love it implies are thus essentially tied to reason in two ways. They are necessary conditions for being a person of fully developed rationality, for being a reasonable person, and they cannot exist except in a creature capable of deliberation and endowed with cognitive powers to a high degree.

The focal notion to clear up is the concept of the love that is an essential ingredient in reason. The word 'love' is used to refer to very different things, sometimes to incompatible things. The love the intensity of which is measured by the jealously it inspires is incompatible with non-possessive love. The love that is a constituent of reason is love of persons for their own sake. The central characteristic of this love is undemandingness. Let us refer to it as 'undemanding love.' This is the key concept. Self-love is undemanding love of self. Other-love is undemanding love of others. Undemanding love is generic, self-love and other-love being species of it. There is one other important kind of love. For purposes of identification let us call it 'transactional love'. It merits attention because it has significant connections with undemanding love, and it is necessary for living a fully rewarding human life.

We love someone undemandingly when we love him without having to expect to get, or without having to get, anything from him in return for loving him, and without having to perceive him as being a virtuous person. These are the conditions for loving a human being for his own sake. We love someone undemandingly if, and only if, we love him for his own sake.

Like any form of love, undemanding love is a combination of mental state and disposition. As a mental state undemanding love is experienced as felt freedom from anxiety, from insecurity, from any awareness of being in want of anything from the person loved. In the loving experience there is tenderness and affection for
the person loved. He does not have to be, or to do, anything that meets specifications in order to evoke such feelings. He is experienced as being lovable as he is. The tenderness and the affection are his for the taking simply because he is a human being. He can be a total stranger.

Besides being a complex mental state undemanding love is a complex of dispositions. The core of this complex is the disposition to be respectful. By 'being respectful of a person' I mean being disposed to accept him as he is, not as we imagine him to be or as we would wish him to be. By 'being accepting of a person' I mean being disposed not to sit in magisterial judgment over him, and having this disposition as a consequence of benevolence toward him. I shall define 'benevolence' differently from the way the word is defined in standard lay and philosophical dictionaries. Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines the word as follows: "benevolent feeling: kindly disposition to do good and promote the welfare of others." Baldwin's Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology tells us that benevolence is the "habit of voluntary activity (or virtue) which is shown in the effort to promote the good of others". A feature common to these definitions is the limitation of benevolence to good to others. The self is left out. This usage is theoretically inadequate. We need a concept that enables us to think that in exactly the same sense a person may be benevolent to himself as to others, as opposed to being hostile or indifferent. I shall argue below that self-love and other-love are species of the genus undemanding love, and that as a constituent of undemanding love benevolence does not differ from self to others. In anticipation of these theoretical results, I define 'x is benevolent toward y' to mean that x is disposed to do y, and to wish y, good and no harm. According to these definitions, 'x is respectful of y' means that x sees y as y is, and x is not disposed to sit in magisterial judgment over y for the reason that x is disposed to do y only good and no harm, and to wish y only good and no harm. We sit in magisterial judgment over someone if we do any one of the following: belittle him, "put him down," scorn him, ridicule him, despise him, contemn him, look down on him, sneer at him, spurn him. Every one of these reactions to a human being, and any others of the same sort, is a way of being disrespectful, as the term 'disrespect' is ordinarily defined. My definition of being respectful of a person includes this part of the ordinary meaning, but it is richer. It is the richer meaning that comes closer to revealing the logical anatomy of undemanding love. For love includes more than absence of magisterial judgment. We can refrain from judging magisterially because of indifference. That cannot be love. In order for there to be love the absence of magisterial judgment must be due to benevolence. The connection here is logical, not causal. It is logically impossible for someone to be benevolent toward a person and at the same time to be disposed to sit in magisterial judgment over him. One condition necessary for being accepting is being benevolent. The absence of magisterial judgment (part of ordinary respect) follows from it.

Save for extraordinarily saintly people, the usual run of men do not feel these things for someone whom they perceive as a threat to their life or security. But the self-protective reaction even of an ordinary loving man is not to hate the enemy. Self-protective aggressiveness or flight are the natural responses. Neither may be effective, but hatred of the enemy is neither necessary nor sufficient for self-defense. For a good discussion of the difference between self-protective aggressiveness and malignant aggressiveness, see Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.

Not judging a person magisterially because of what he is does not mean that we may let him do whatever he pleases. It does mean, however, that we do not disdain him, ridicule him, feel self-righteously superior to him, insult him, degrade him, despise him.
Acceptance is not complacency. Acceptance does not imply that we "see no evil." There is such a thing as loving someone with all his faults. It is possible that the faults we see are really there. There are instances of realistic acceptance: we see the person as he is, including his faults, and we accept him as he is. To accept someone as he is requires that we see him for what he is and that we do not sit in magisterial judgment over him for being what he is, but it does not require complacency. Quite the opposite. Accepting a person implies wishing that he change for the better because we wish him well. But this is different from demanding that he change for the reason that he produces in us anxiety, nostalgia, malaise, discomfort, hostility, resentment, or fear. Acceptance is incompatible with laissez-faire indifference which is simply negligent tolerance. Acceptance is an active, not a passive disposition. It is an interested disposition in that it implies good will. It involves taking an interest in someone's good. But taking an interest in someone's good does not imply self-interestedness. When one person is accepting of another, he wishes the other person's good for the sake of the other, not for his own sake. Note, however, that self-acceptance, an essential element of self-love, involves self-interestedness. The objective of the good will in this case is the well-being of the self. This self-interestedness, however, is not to be confused either with selfishness or with the built-in disposition to favor the self. Indeed, as we shall see, self-interestedness is incompatible with selfishness, and it often overcomes the tendency to favor the self.

I defined respect in terms of being realistic about a person, that is, in terms of seeing him as he is, not as we imagine him to be or as we would wish him to be. Loving a person for his own sake as he is is different from loving a figment of one's imagination. Fortunately, realism does not require omniscience. We can have a reasonably accurate assessment of a person's character and personality without knowing everything that there is to know about his life history. But we cannot be realistically accepting of a person simply by having a reasonably accurate insight into his character and personality. We need also to know certain universal and morally relevant truths about man. The benevolence of an adult human being of developed rationality and that of a good natured simpleton have something in common. There is no malice in either one. But a simpleton is incapable of forming reasonably accurate insights into individual character and personality. Nor is he capable of understanding the universal morally relevant truths about man. So handicapped, the simpleton is not in a position to make discriminations that are necessary for respecting individuals. The simpleton's good will can easily manifest itself in sentimentality or in helpless wringing of hands. In order to love it is not enough to have no malice and to wish good only. It is also necessary to have a reasonable idea (no matter how controversial it may be in certain respects) of the good that we wish. This is why it is inaccurate to define undemanding love in terms of benevolence alone. The benevolence of love must be grounded in realism. It must be informed benevolence. To wish a human being's good is different from wishing a dog's good. The general good will is the same in both, but the two wishes are different in content. To wish a human being's good requires having a reasonable idea as to what constitutes, or contributes to, human well being. Now no idea about the constitution of human well being can be reasonable unless it is enlightened by an awareness of some universal and necessary morally relevant truths about man. These truths can be known independently of knowing the answers to metaphysical and theological questions about man's origin and destiny. Pope Paul and Gloria Steinem have incompatible views about the morality of abortion, and their differences are in considerable measure traceable to their irreconcilable beliefs about the meaning of human life. But neither the Pope nor
Ms. Steinem can be said to have a reasonable idea of the good for man, if that idea is not informed by their cognizance of a significant universal and necessary truth about any rational being, hence, about man, namely, that there are some things that only a rational being can do for himself, and if he fails to do them, then he necessarily deprives himself of certain vital goods that no one else can provide for him. For example, a rational being has powers for promoting his own well-being, and he can flourish only if he is willing to use those powers. Among these powers is the power to be benevolent toward oneself. Imagine someone who is not benevolent toward himself. Others can be benevolent toward him but no quantity of another's benevolence for him can make up for his failing to be benevolent toward himself. This is a necessary truth, not an empirical law of psychology. If a person is not benevolent toward himself then either he is indifferent to himself or he is hostile to himself. In either case it is logically impossible that he act with the intention of securing his own well-being. But acting so as to secure one's own well-being is part and parcel of living well. This is one essential ingredient in living well that cannot be supplied from outside the self. There is another and related essential component. No life is being lived well unless the one living it has a sense of its goodness. This sense of life's goodness, the felt satisfaction of living it, is necessarily absent from the consciousness of a human being who is indifferent to himself or who is hostile to himself. If he is hostile to himself he cannot experience life as being good. If he is indifferent to himself, then nothing that happens to him and nothing that he experiences can matter to him. It can be pleasant or painful, warm or cold, loud or soft. But it cannot be good or bad. Such a being can have no rational preferences, no rational plans, no rational intentions. His actions and choices are wholly arbitrary.

I have been arguing that the realism of undemanding love requires that we be aware of a necessary truth about the powers of rational beings for affecting their own weal. This awareness enables us to discern the nature of independence (autonomy) in the deepest sense. In this deep sense independence or autonomy is the ability to do for ourselves those things which only we can do for ourselves and by failing to do which we necessarily deprive ourselves of certain vital goods that no one else can provide us. Autonomy so defined is deep-autonomy. It is a necessary condition for undemanding love. Being not controlling and not possessive of persons, be it of ourselves or of others, are also necessary conditions for undemanding love. Shortly I shall explain the necessity of these conditions.

But first a word about the irrationality of dependency on, possessiveness of, and control over, persons should clear the way to a better understanding of the connection with rationality of autonomy, non-possessiveness, and the absence of the disposition to control. A person who is not autonomous necessarily is either dependent on others, that is, he expects others to do for him those vital things that in fact he alone can do for himself, or he entirely withdraws from life. Suicide committed from total despair and felt powerlessness as well as certain forms of psychosis are ways of withdrawing totally. Both are clear instances of irrationality. Being a wish for the impossible dependency on others is also irrational. Because it is bound to produce frustration, disappointment, anger, bitterness, intensification of a sense of powerlessness, none of which is the result of anyone else's mistreatment of the person who experiences these emotions, dependency is a form of irrationality that puts in jeopardy the most vital interests of the self.
Dependency implies possessiveness. To treat a person possessively is to see him as being someone who has been put into this world with the sole purpose of meeting your needs (on demand, but even better, by anticipating them without your having to ask). A dependent person must fixate upon at least one person as being the one who will do for him the vital things that in fact he alone can do for himself. Such fixations cannot exist without possessiveness. How can I think of you as being the agent who secures for me the very things upon which my well-being depends, or consists of, and not think of you as being there solely for the purpose of being my caretaker, of being the one appointed to the task of meeting my needs?

The inevitable companion of dependency and possessiveness is the need to control. If I believe that the whole point of your existence is to meet my needs, and, you can fail me, as you can, either by not anticipating my needs or by ignoring my demands, then I am in need of controlling you to make sure that you do and are what I want you to do and be. And the disposition to control entails the disposition to manipulate. It is possible that my demands clash with your wishes. It is, therefore, necessary that he who is disposed to control be disposed to manipulate, that is, to scheme, to be underhanded, to play tricks, in order to get his way.

Dependency, possessiveness, and the need to control may all be rooted in our ignorance of what they are and how they affect our lives. But purely intellectual understanding of their definitions and of their evil effects is not sufficient for being autonomous, not possessive, and not controlling. People who are dependent, possessive, and controlling are like addicts. Like addicts they can come to know what affliction is and how their particular affliction is ruining their lives. But this knowledge by itself is not sufficient for the afflicted to reform himself. A deeper level of understanding may be required than one at the level of grasping definitions and learning about cause and effect. The requisite understanding is the sort of self-knowledge that is nowadays possible to achieve in deep psychotherapy. The reforming of the self through psychotherapy requires experiences that painfully and gradually lead the subject to experience the fact that there is undemanding love and that he can love undemandingly himself and others, and others can love undemandingly themselves and him. The ultimate object of all psychotherapy, whether the practicing therapist knows it or not, is to help the subject to achieve this experience.

Human beings are innately capable of developing the ability to know themselves. The ability to know oneself is impaired by anxiety, nostalgia, dependency, and it is totally destroyed by certain forms of psychosis. The closer a person comes to being free of these impediments the clearer his vision becomes. One can be a mathematical genius and a fool. In order to be mentally competent in general and not in selected areas only, and, in particular, in order to be mentally competent to see oneself and others realistically, it is necessary to be free of anxiety, nostalgia, dependency, and psychosis.

Patience is the disposition to let things happen in their own time. Some things happen in crisis time, calling for quick and risky decisions. Some things take more time to happen than we like. Patience is a disposition to live steadfastly through crisis and risk as well as through periods of waiting. The steadfastness of patience is incompatible with anxiety. Anxiety is a spectrum from mild discomfort about, to extreme fear of, the future. Patience is also incompatible with the need to control. This is evident since the need to control is an inevitable concomitant of anxiety. To accept people as they are requires patience. Hence, to love people undemandingly requires patience.
The projects, wants, needs, interests, powers, dispositions, and motives of an undemandingly loving person are life-enhancing and self-enhancing. An undemandingly loving person poses no threat to others. On the contrary, he is a beneficent resource for his fellow human beings. An undemandingly loving man's actions may be unfortunate, even tragic, in their consequences, but this is owing not to malevolent intentions, but instead mainly to two things: that human beings are not omniscient, and that they sometimes unintentionally develop bad habits.

Two noteworthy features characterize the complex of dispositions that make up the dispositional aspect of undemanding love. The complex includes the following dispositions: being respectful, patient, autonomous, not possessive, not controlling. The first noteworthy feature is that the complex is not a collection of logically independent dispositions. I have already argued that respect entails patience. I defined being respectful in terms of being realistic and benevolent, and hence, being not magisterially judgmental. I have defended this definition, and I have no more to add to its defense. It remains to show that being respectful entails being autonomous, not possessive, and not controlling. This I shall attempt to do shortly. The second noteworthy feature is that the constituents individually, and the complex as a whole, are suffused with joyfulness, with feelings of heightened energy and of inner strength, with a sense of lightness, of freedom. The opposite dispositions are necessarily suffused with the opposites of these feelings. Thus, the purely mental and dispositional aspects of undemanding love themselves form a logical unity. The first feature is a description of the unity of virtue. Virtue is all of a piece. None of its constituents can be replaced with any of their opposites without destroying the whole. The second feature is what makes it true that virtue is its own reward. Therefore, for understanding that virtue is its own reward it is essential to understand what these two features are.

Let us now reflect on why it is that respect entails being autonomous. The key to understanding that this is so lies in the nature of the realism that is a constituent of respect. I have already argued that in order to achieve his own well-being a person must use his own relevant powers. If I am right, then in order to be respectful a person needs to know this centrally important fact about human beings. I defined respect in terms of accepting a person for what he is. It is important to note that in this definition accepting a person, for example, for being such that in order to live well he must be autonomous requires more than understanding the definition of autonomy and following the logic of my argument that to live well one must be autonomous. Accepting means understanding and acting accordingly. A person is deeply in conflict with himself if he proclaims that no one else can do for him certain things and acts as if he thought that they could. He cannot be accepting the other person as being really incapable of this impossible thing. His actions and dispositions belie his protestations. Actions do not always speak louder than words. But sometimes they do, and this is one of those times. Accepting a human being for what he is requires that we hope and expect from him, and that we demand of him, nothing that is not in his power as a human being to be and to do. Making demands on human beings, and having hopes and expectations of them entails believing that what is hoped for, expected from, demanded of, is humanly possible. It follows from all this that in order to be respectful of an individual it is necessary to be autonomous. A person cannot be dependent on others and at the same time be accepting them realistically. And he cannot be accepting himself realistically either. A dependent person hopes, expects, demands, to get, and, hence, he believes that he can get, what is not humanly possible for him to get. In being dependent he necessarily has radically and dangerously false beliefs about himself as a human being.
Being respectful also entails being not possessive and not controlling. Dependency entails possessiveness, and possessiveness entails the need to control. Inasmuch as dependency is incompatible with respect, then so is possessiveness and the need to control.

I have been arguing that the dispositional constituents of undemanding love are not a haphazard collection. I have analyzed the dispositional aspect of undemanding love in terms of respect. Undemanding love is neither blind affection nor an amiable emotion. It is a rational affair. Its defining constituents are realism and benevolence. The essence of undemanding love is realistic benevolence. These defining elements entail five other dispositions: patience, absence of magisterial judgment, autonomy, absence of possessiveness, and absence of being controlling. So, as a complex disposition undemanding love is composed of seven conceptually distinguishable but logically inseparable dispositions. Of these two, namely, realism and benevolence, are defining dispositions. The other five are entailed by these two. I believe that these seven dispositions are severally necessary and jointly sufficient for giving a complete account of the dispositional aspect of undemanding love. This completes my argument for the proposition that the dispositional constituents of undemanding love are not a haphazard collection but a logical unity.

The second noteworthy fact about undemanding love and its dispositional constituents is that it and they are necessarily suffused with intrinsically desirable feelings, and their opposites are suffused with the opposite kinds of feelings. These feelings comprise the purely mental aspect of undemanding love. And, as one should expect, the mental and the dispositional aspects, though distinct, are logically inseparable. We saw earlier that the realism that is among the constituents of undemanding love is an across the board affair. To be realistic one need not be superhumanly knowledgeable, but one does need to understand the salient facts about what it is to be human, not just bits and pieces of it.

The knowledge that a human being must have in order to be in a position to love undemandingly brings with it joyfulness and vitality. Undemanding love and its constituents taken severally are their own reward because they exist only when we are free of just those inner impediments, e.g., anxiety, a feeling of powerlessness, the presence of which is suffused with a sense of sloth and misery, and the absence of which entails the presence of their intrinsically desirable opposites.

We began this lengthy discourse on undemanding love so that we could achieve some clarity on self-love and other-love as ingredients of reason. We are ready to cash in.

III The Logical Equivalence of Self-Love and Other-Love

Undemanding love may be of self or of others. Self-love is undemanding love of self. Other-love is undemanding love of others. To love others undemandingly is the same as: respecting them, being patient with them, being completely benevolent toward them, being realistic about them, not needing to control them, not needing to possess them, not needing to be dependent on them. Loving oneself undemandingly is: to respect oneself, to be patient with oneself, to be completely benevolent toward oneself, to be realistic about oneself, not to control oneself, not to be possessive of oneself, and to be autonomous. These relations with others are clear enough. Can we stand in every one of these relations to ourselves as well? On the face of it, two of them look paradoxical. What are we to make of not controlling oneself and of not being possessive of oneself?
Not to control oneself is not the same thing as to have no self-control. To have no self-control is to be impulsive, whimsical, imprudent, devil may care, self-indulgent, intemperate. Let us distinguish self-control, which is a good thing, from controlling the self, which is not a good thing. Self-control is a necessary condition for self-love. Controlling oneself is incompatible with it. We control ourselves in very much the same way that we control others: by blackmail, sabotage, magisterial judgment (scorn, ridicule, contempt, etc.), bribes, inducements. The subtle forms of these are the most effective. Subtle threats to withhold "love", reminders of "sacrifices" made, are effective ways of blackmailing others. Fear of "losing" someone is a way of blackmailing the self. Inducing feelings of guilt in ourselves and others is a subtle form of sabotage. We can sabotage ourselves and others also by inducing in ourselves or others feelings of incompetence, inadequacy, powerlessness, worthlessness. Is there anyone who has never felt "I-am-not-good-enough" feelings? The feeling is not one of not being good enough for this or that task or reward. The feeling is that one is simply not good enough, Period. People need to grieve at times. But saying to yourself or to others in magisterial tones: "A real man doesn't show feeling!" can be a very effective way of cutting off the tears that the organism desperately needs to shed. "A loving son cannot be angry with his father!" can cause the camouflaging of the anger behind a screen of guilt. The camouflaged anger ferments into a feeling of powerlessness, worthlessness, and thus we sabotage ourselves twice over in one fell swoop. The list of magisterial "should"-s and "ought"-s is endless. They are all determinate forms of introjected poison.

Not being possessive of oneself is also intelligible. I suggested earlier that treating a person possessively is viewing him as being someone who has been put into this world with the sole purpose of meeting your needs. Applied to oneself, this comes to viewing oneself as existing with the sole purpose of meeting one's own needs. Possessiveness of others is unrealistic, hence, it is contrary to reason. If Jones is possessive of Smith, then Jones believes that Smith would have no purpose, if he, Jones, did not exist. But this is necessarily false. For it is possible that if Jones did not exist, the purpose of Smith's existence was to meet Robinson's needs, or to do God's will, or any one of an endless number of things you please.

Being possessive of oneself is just as unrealistic for the simple reason that much of our business in life concerns the discharging of duties or obligations that are incurred in virtue of our communal roles. If I make you a promise, I incur an obligation. If the discharging of that obligation should conflict with a need of mine, the obligation is not automatically cancelled. The unreasonable assumption that my sole purpose in life is to meet my own needs is not to be confused with the proposition that meeting my needs is part of my legitimate business in life. But in conducting that business I must be prepared to give up the satisfaction of needs because of considerations that override them. The only overriding needs are those the non-satisfaction of which makes it impossible for us to become as fully realized human beings as the circumstances of our lives permit.

Because self-love and other-love are structurally identical undemanding love, the structural common denominator, is the genus of which self-love and other-love are the species.

The next important point is that self-love and other-love are logically inseparable. There is love of others if, and only if, there is self love. This is an immediate consequence of the fact that the two species, self-love and other-love, are structurally identical, and the fact that the generic substructure is
defined in terms that do not include essentially occurring proper names or
indexical references to persons. Self-love is love of a person who happens to
be the self. Other-love is love of a person who happens to be different from
the self. As a generic entity undemanding love is of human beings regardless
of who they are. All the dispositions that are essential for the existence of
undemanding love are dispositions of human beings toward human beings. This is
so because realism is essential for undemanding love. My undemanding love of
myself is my response to what I am. I am a human being. If I thought of myself
as being anything but human, I should be mistaken, hence, unrealistic about
myself. I do not know myself unless I think of myself as being human. If I
try to divest myself of all my human attributes, I am left with nothing that
I can recognize as myself. Therefore, I can love myself undemandingly only as
what I know myself to be: a human being. My undemanding love of myself is an
immediate response to the humanity in me. How can I have that disposition toward
myself and not have it toward other human beings? For I conceive the humanity
in them as being identical with the humanity in me.

Of course, each human being is a unique individual. There are facts about
him that are true of him only. I am the only human being identical with myself.
That is necessarily true. I am also the only human being who is the only sur­
viving son of my parents. That is contingently true. It is necessarily true
of every human being that there are some necessary truths and some contingent
truths that are true of him only. That is an essential fact about being a
human being. Does this fact invalidate my contention that I love myself
undemandingly if, and only if, I love every other human being in the same way?
Not at all. In loving myself undemandingly I accept all of myself, as the being
who exemplifies the generic human traits as well as those features of me that are
uniquely mine. I rejoice in, and am grateful for, my uniqueness not because it is
mine, but because I am aware that being human implies being a unique individual,
and insofar as I am rational, I accept all the implications of my being a human
being. I understand, moreover, that each human being's rational endeavor to
realize the best in his human potential is necessarily a part of the life history
consisting of the singular facts in terms of which his uniqueness is defined.3

3Erik H. Erikson's views on ego-integrity are relevant to the point at
issue. "Only in him", Erikson writes, "who in some way has taken care of things
and people and has adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments adherent
to being, the originator of others or the generator of products or ideas--only
in him may gradually ripen the fruit of these seven stages [1. basic trust vs.
basic mistrust, 2. autonomy vs. shame and doubt, 3. initiative vs. guilt, 4.
industry vs. inferiority, 5. identity vs. role confusion, 6. intimacy vs. iso-
lation, 7. generativity vs. stagnation]. I know no better word for it than
ego integrity. Lacking a clear definition, I shall point to a few constituents
of this state of mind. It is the ego's accrued assurance of its proclivity for
order and meaning. It is a post-narcissistic love of the human ego--not of the
self--as an experience which conveys world order and spiritual sense, no matter
how dearly paid for. It is the acceptance of one's one and only life cycle as
something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions:
it thus means a new, a different love of one's parents. It is a comradeship
with the ordering ways of distant times and different pursuits. Although aware
of the relativity of all the various life styles which have given meaning to human
striving, the possessor of integrity is ready to defend the dignity of his own life
style against all physical and economic threats. For he knows that an individual
life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of
history; and that for him all human integrity stands or falls with the one style of
integrity of which he partakes. The style of integrity developed by his culture or
civilization thus becomes the 'patrimony of his soul', the seal of his moral paternity
of himself....In such final consolidation, death loses its sting." Childhood and
My respectful disposition toward myself, therefore, necessarily includes my realisti-
cally accepting my own uniqueness. My respectful disposition toward you as a human
being must, pari passu, include my realistically accepting your uniqueness. The
fact that each one of us is unique is, therefore, consistent with the proposition that
undemanding love of self is logically equivalent to undemanding love of others: I love
myself undemandingly if, and only if, I love every human being undemandingly. Remember
that undemanding love is a combination of certain of my own mental states with certain
dispositions toward human beings. I can have these mental states and dispositions
without being acquainted with everyone toward whom I have them.

Self-love is thought to be incompatible with other love because three distinct
things are frequently confused with one another. Self-love, selfishness, and the
built-in, instinctive disposition to favor the self are three distinct entities.
Self-love and selfishness are incompatible. Self-love and the disposition to favor
the self are compatible, but frequently self-love overcomes the disposition to favor
the self. Selfishness is a special case of possessiveness. Possessiveness was defined
earlier as follows: \( x \) is possessive of \( y \) \( \equiv \) \( x \) is disposed to treat \( y \) as if the sole
purpose of \( y \)'s existence is to serve \( x \)'s needs. The selfish person is a possessive
person who is indifferent to the needs of others. Being a special case of possessive-
ness, selfishness is incompatible with self-love. For, as we saw earlier, being
self-loving entails not being possessive.

Self-love is compatible with the disposition to favor the self, but they are
not the same thing. Nobody likes to suffer, to endure physical deprivation, to be
exposed to danger. If there is a choice, anyone would instinctively prefer that
someone else, not he himself, suffered such miseries. Anyone instinctively feels
relief that someone else, and not he himself, has been hurt or has died. These are
all ways of favoring the self. The built-in disposition to favor the self is not the
same thing as selfishness. Selfishness is not necessary for favoring the self.
Favoring the self is part of the built-in biological disposition we all have as
organisms to maintain ourselves in existence. That favoring the self is also
different from loving the self is easy to show. Undemanding love is impossible in
the absence of cognition. Favoring the self is not. One can favor oneself in an
irrational manner. Self-love can never be irrational. I can favor myself over you,
as I can selfishly deprive you of your fair share, but I cannot love myself undemand-
ingly more than I love you, nor you more than myself. For you are no more and no
less human than I am.

Undemanding love can overcome the promptings of the disposition to favor the
self. There is no contradiction between this and the earlier observation that
favoring the self is part of the organism's built-in disposition to maintain
itself in existence. The precognitive mechanisms for survival are not enough to
maintain the mature human organism in existence. In the mature individual reason
is a necessary condition for survival. In order for reason to perform this
function its component of undemanding love must be able to overcome the disposition
to favor the self. The duties and obligations that we incur in fulfilling our
social roles must be capable of being discharged on our own initiative, else
communal life is impossible; and without communal life the existence of the
developed individual is impossible. These duties and obligations cannot always
be discharged without danger and discomfort, sometimes great danger and severe
discomfort, to ourselves. The unthinking and built-in disposition to run away
from danger and to avoid discomfort can be overcome by devotion, such as a mother's
for her child. A mother's love is an example of undemanding love. The built-in
disposition to favor the self can also be overcome by becoming aware that the
well-being of a human individual cannot be secured outside a human community.
Reflection shows that a person cannot be undemandingly loving and also shirk his
socially incurred duties simply because they are troublesome or dangerous. The loving commitment to the well-being of any human being cannot be consistently conjoined to a disposition to act deliberately in ways that undermine the practices, such as contracts, agreements, promises, without which human life is impossible. Consequently, undemanding love entails courage and generosity.

Undemanding love of self is furthermore sufficient though not necessary for actions that involve risking one's life. The fireman who dies while fighting a fire is disposed to do his duty on his own initiative, even if it costs him his life. He can be so disposed because of vanity, blind conditioning, or because he is able to love undemandingly. In loving undemandingly he is realistically accepting of the human condition. This includes the awareness that sometimes it is necessary for someone to risk his life in the performance of duty. There is no reason why he should be exempt from this requirement if chance places him in the position of having to risk his life for the sake of duty. The awareness of these facts can be sufficient to determine his conduct. If it is, then he is motivated by reason. The moral prophet who prefers death to apostasy is not discharging a duty. His is an act of supererogation, a good and admirable action that is above and beyond the call of duty. Apostasy is contrary to reason because it implies compromising one's integrity. As a power of thinking, reason can find out that the life of reason, the ability to live as a thinking and loving being, is the basic good of man. A man's integrity is nothing but his fully developed humanity, which includes his ability to think and to love and his awareness that these two interdependent abilities constitute his basic good. Self-love as including a wish for the good of the self, is, therefore, a wish to preserve and enhance the ability to think and to love. The apostate assents to profess what he does not believe and to pretend to love what he abhors. But the aim of thinking is to arrive at honest and reasoned convictions. The aim of loving is to develop honest relationships. The posture adopted by the apostate is, therefore, inconsistent with the aims of thinking and loving. In preferring death to apostasy, a man is refusing to live a life that frustrates the aims of the two interdependent powers that are constituents of his humanity: the power to think and the power to love. That is the only possible rational preference, for otherwise reason would be condoning the choice of a way of life that frustrates the aims of reason.

Thus, whether it is motivated by vanity, by blind obedience, or by reason, discharging a duty or performing an act of supererogation at the cost of one's life implies having the ability to overcome the pre-cognitive, instinctive disposition to favor the self. If there are, as there seem to be, instances of such acts, then the disposition to favor the self is frequently overridden, and in some of these instances reason is the overriding motive.

If the argument that self-love is logically equivalent to undemanding love of others is cogent, then we can (for we cannot but) love our neighbor as ourselves, as the love commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself", presupposes. But if we cannot but love our neighbor as ourselves, then it is idle to command that we do so. When the love that is commanded is correctly understood, the love commandment can be nothing but this. Love undemandingly. If you succeed, it follows that you love your neighbor as yourself, including your enemies, your detractors, your tormentors.

If my central thesis is correct, that undemanding love is an essential constituent of reason, then Christian theology is fundamentally mistaken in grounding love in faith and contrasting faith and reason. The valid love commandment, "Love undemandingly", is implied by the most fundamental of imperatives: Be fully rational. This is the root rational and moral imperative.
Plato was right where Christian theology went wrong. Plato saw that love is an essential ingredient of reason. But Christian theology was more nearly right, whereas Plato went seriously wrong, about the nature of love. I think of my definition of undemanding love as being a philosophical analysis of the love Jesus might have had in mind, the love to which later Paul referred by giving the Greek word, "apage", a new meaning. If the central thesis of this essay is correct, then far from standing in contradistinction to reason, undemanding love is a constituent of it.

We have now identified and defined the self-love that at the beginning of this essay emerged as a necessary presupposition of rational concern for one's own well-being. The love in question is undemanding love of self. That it should underlie rational self-interest is not surprising. We can work our weal or woe with such powers as we now have. We can proceed only from where we are. There must be some degree of self-acceptance in order that we may begin to use, or begin to learn how to use, our own powers for constructive growth. Certain forms of suicide or irrevocable retreat into psychosis signalize the total absence of self-acceptance. The more we accept ourselves as we are the more effectively can we use our own resources for growth. It is, of course, easier to accept ourselves if we experience ourselves as strong. It is easy to be angry with ourselves and to reject ourselves for being weak, unhappy, passive. Thus, paradoxically, when we are most in need of loving ourselves we are least disposed to do so. The function of the other constituents of self-love is exactly like that of acceptance. Respect, patience, realism, autonomy, individually, in combination, and collectively cannot but enhance our abilities to secure our own well-being; their absence has the opposite effect. In order for human reason to be practical, that is, in order that it provide the motivation, and not just the information, that human beings need for acting so as to work their own well-being and to discharge their obligations, a person must be capable of loving a person for his own sake, and not only because of his usefulness, his accomplishments, or his lovable characteristics. If we all waited to be useful, accomplished, and beautiful in body and soul before we were motivated to do ourselves good, some of us might wait a long time. Sometimes the greatest good we can do ourselves is to correct some ugliness in our souls, and we sometimes succeed. But this, even with all the help from outside, requires extensive use of our own powers. It would be impossible to exert the necessary effort if, in spite of the ugliness in us, we did not love ourselves enough to be moved to benefit ourselves. The rational motivation for living well is provided by undemanding love of self. Without that motivation we are not recognizably rational. Therefore, without the ability for undemanding love we are not recognizable specimens of accomplished rationality.

The anguish of being psychically disordered is not of itself a sufficient motive for self-improvement. There are other ways of eliminating anguish: drugs and suicide, for instance. There is abundant evidence that human beings seek to eliminate the anguish of psychic disharmony through self-repair rather than through self-destruction. The preference for self-improvement over slow or quick self-destruction can be accounted for only by supposing that in primordial human nature there are two relevant capacities. One is the capacity to acquire the ability to perceive that self-repair is an available option. The other is the capacity to acquire the ability to wish for the preservation and good of the self.

---

i.e., to love oneself. It is this ability that explains the self's preference for self-improvement rather than self-destruction as a way of eliminating or lessening the anguish and pain that is intrinsic to psychic disharmony.

IV Transactional Love

We now come to what I have proposed to call 'transactional love' and its connections with undemanding love. If we are to live well, undemanding love is necessary but not sufficient. Human life is impossible without mutual need fulfillment. Transactional love is that mode of love that exists between at least two adults who enter into a relationship for the purpose of meeting some need or other in each other. The partners wish for the preservation and good of the other because they view each other as a source of benefit to themselves. Transactional love can exist between people who are not able to love undemandingly. But it is evident that loving transactions are best when the partners are able to love undemandingly as well. People who are able to love undemandingly are not possessive, dependent, controlling, impatient, or evasive in their relationships with others. A man and a woman can enter into a marriage partnership openly avowing their needs. The man may declare that he is possessive and jealous. The woman might respond enthusiastically in the conviction that the man's possessiveness and jealousy are a measure of the intensity of his love for her. As long as the woman's needs to be possessed and the man's need to possess endure, the partnership works for both. But neither of them is getting as much out of the relationship as they would be if the relationship were non-possessive. There are satisfactions in relating possessively. But there is a price to pay. Possessiveness and the jealousy that goes with it are by their very nature unpleasant, uncomfortable, vexing, destructive of peace of mind. The satisfaction a jealous husband gets from the assurance he has that his wife is faithful to him is at the price of constant underlying uneasiness. No matter how faithful the wife is, the husband never feels secure. He must always be vigilant and suspicious. The husband who loves without jealousy suffers none of these vexations. If, in addition to not being jealous the husband believes his wife to be an autonomous and competent adult, he is in a position to part from his wife for an hour or for months, and, at the moment of parting to have feelings which, if verbally expressed, would go something like this: "I love you, I believe that you are a mature and autonomous person, and I part from you without anxiety about you and with a feeling of gratitude for the fact that wherever you are, you are in the best of hands, namely your own. Bless you!" This way of taking joy in a person is one of the highest satisfactions of life, and it is open only to people who are able to love undemandingly. The wife who measures her husband's love of her by the intensity of his possessiveness and jealousy does not know that there is another, a much more rewarding way of loving. She is thereby cheated of intrinsically much more rewarding experiences than the ones she is in a position to enjoy. Again, when two people who are able to love undemandingly must break up a marriage partnership because the life has gone out of the relationship, they do not experience rancor, hostility, or hatred of each other. Dissolving a marriage is not easy, but people who can love undemandingly are spared many of the heartaches and indignities that are inevitable for the rest.

Undemanding love is not sufficient for living the best life possible for a human being, but it is necessary for it. Fully developed human reason is the synergetic union of the power to know and the power to love undemandingly. The more a person understands, the more powerfully he can love. The more he loves, the more can he understand.
The theory of reason, love, and mental health that I have presented makes a contribution to moral psychology. This is a branch of moral philosophy that endeavors to clarify the logical or systematic structure of the network of psychological concepts that we employ in thinking about the problems of moral philosophy. Is man's love of man a rational disposition or is it an extra-rational emotion? This question of moral philosophy cannot be effectively considered in the absence of a prior understanding of the nature of reason itself. Such an understanding is an achievement of moral psychology. If my analysis of reason as including undemanding love is correct, then man's undemanding love of man is a rational disposition, and experience shows that undemanding love exists.

Sociobiology is not aware of the existence of undemanding love. Its conception of reason is the traditional "Cartesian" conception which I characterized at the beginning of this paper. According to that characterization Hume's conception of reason is Cartesian. Hume said that reason is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions. Sociobiology says, in effect, that reason is, and ought to be, the slave of the genes. The only forms of "love" that sociobiology admits are "altruism" and sexual attraction, both of which it views as being nothing more than mechanisms for gene proliferation. I believe that all this amounts to a horribly false conception of human nature, of its scope and limits, and of the morality that is appropriate to it. I shall try to explain why.

Sociobiology is a new biological discipline. Edward O. Wilson, one of its leading representatives, defines sociobiology as being "the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior," including human social behavior. Wilson shares the view prevalent among contemporary biologists that each living organism develops and behaves within the strictures of a biological program written, as it were, in its genes. The gene is viewed as being a mechanism that is a causal determinant of the conditions that are sufficient for its proliferation. The explanation of the strategies by which the genes proliferate is the modern or synthetic theory of evolution. This is Darwinism brought up to date. It is upon this theory that sociobiology bases itself. According to modern Darwinism the primal biological imperative is not species or individual survival. It is survival of the individual's genes. The ordinary reader of Genesis understands God's command, "Be fruitful, and multiply", to be addressed to the animals he has created. According to sociobiology, God was talking to the genes.

In his most recent book, On Human Nature (1978) Wilson defends the proposition that the social behavior of human beings, like that of any other social organism, is to be explained ultimately by reference to the primal biological imperative of individual gene proliferation. Kin selection and individual selection are strategies that explain how the genes proliferate. The former gives rise to the capacity for "hard-core" altruism, the latter to soft-core" altruism.

---

6 I am grateful to Craig Nelson, a university colleague in the Department of Zoology, for valuable discussions about the issues taken up in this section.

Altruism is the biological analogue of love. "The altruistic impulse can be irrational and unilaterally directed to others; the bestower expresses no desire for equal return and performs no unconscious actions leading to the same end. I have called this form of behavior 'hard-core' altruism, a set of responses relatively unaffected by social reward or punishment beyond childhood. 'Soft-core' altruism, in contrast, is ultimately selfish. The 'altruist' expects reciprocation from society for himself or his closest relatives. His good behavior is calculating, often in a wholly conscious way, and his maneuvers are orchestrated by the excruciatingly intricate sanctions and demands of society. The capacity for soft-core altruism can be expected to have evolved primarily by selection of individuals and to be deeply influenced by the vagaries of cultural evolution. Its psychological vehicles are lying, pretense, and deceit, including self-deceit. Hard and soft altruism are respectively the biological counterparts of my undemanding and transactional forms of love. The differences between Wilson's two forms of altruism and my two forms of love are fundamental and unbridgeable. Hard-core altruism "can be irrational", says Wilson, and "it decline[s] steeply in frequency and intensity as relationships become more distant." (p.155). If my analysis is not mistaken, then undemanding love is of the essence of reason. It can never be irrational to love undemandingly, and its frequency and intensity is not a function of kinship. Wilson believes that the psychological vehicles of soft-core altruism are lying, pretense, and deceit, including self-deception. Transactional love, on the other hand, can happen between individuals who are able to love undemandingly as well, hence their relationship can be free of lying, pretense, deceit, and self-deception. Wilson believes that because hard and soft altruism are basic biological mechanisms for gene proliferation, they are the rock-bottom forms of love (along with sexual attraction), and that their nature is circumscribed by their biological origins: "Perhaps to put the best possible construction on the matter, conscious altruism is a transcendental quality that distinguishes human beings from animals. But scientists are not accustomed to declaring any phenomenon off limits, and it is precisely through the deeper analysis of altruism that sociobiology seems best prepared at this time to make a novel contribution." (p.150) Hard-core and soft-core altruism are on this view, capacities of the brain which has been assembled by the genes as a mechanism for their own proliferation. Undemanding and transactional love, on the other hand, and reason as including undemanding love, are not mechanisms. They imply purposes, goals, intentions, volitions, choices. Undemanding love and reason are capacities. They may, for all we know, be capacities of the brain. But they are not mechanisms.

I do not wish to deny the possibility that the same biologically altruistic mechanisms for gene proliferation that explain the behavior of the social insects also explain certain aspects of human behavior. What I wish to deny, and to deny emphatically, is that these basic biological mechanisms explain the whole of human behavior and human nature. Wilson asserts that "the brain exists because it promotes the survival and multiplication of the genes that direct its assembly." (p.2) In the very next sentence Wilson writes: "The human mind is a device for survival and reproduction; and reason is just one of its various techniques." And, again, "the intellect was not constructed to understand atoms or even itself but to promote the survival of human genes." (pp.2,3) Suppose Wilson is right that the brain would not exist, if it did not promote the proliferation of the genes that direct its assembly. But how does it follow from this that man's reason, mind, intellect, brain was not constructed to understand atoms and

---

itself? There is a logical gap here. Then, again, note the bland slippage from talk about the human brain to talk about the human mind, human reason, the human intellect, as if it is obvious that mind, reason, intellect are identical with the brain. Wilson seems to think that this identification is sound science. I hazard an explanation of why he thinks so. Like all good empirical scientists, Wilson is a scientific materialist. This is a methodological stand to the effect that the business of empirical science (as distinct, say, from pure mathematics) is to understand the ways of the material world. But the bland shift from talk about the brain to talk about mind, reason, intellect suggests that Wilson is either a self-conscious or an uncritical devotee of metaphysical materialism as well. This is the view that nothing exists that is not material. The metaphysical thesis does not follow from the methodological principle. Perhaps Wilson has not dwelled on the difference, and is, therefore, prone to assume that a perfectly legitimate procedural principle of empirical science is identical with a metaphysical thesis that is logically independent of it.

Be that as it may, Wilson is blandly assuming that mind, reason, intellect are identical with the brain, and because he sees the brain as being nothing more than the gene's contrivance for affecting its own proliferation, he takes it for granted that human reason is nothing other than a mechanism for gene proliferation. The message is quite clear: "...if [Wilson means not "if" but "as"] the brain is a machine of ten billion nerve cells and the mind can somehow be explained as the summed activity of a finite number of chemical and electrical reactions, boundaries limit the human prospect—we are biological and our souls cannot fly free."

(p.1) Wilson is saying that the mind is a machine. Moreover, he reasons as follows: The brain evolved by Darwinian natural selection. Therefore, genetic chance and environmental necessity explain the nature and existence of the human brain. But the human mind is the same thing as the human brain. Hence, genetic chance and environmental necessity explain the nature and existence of the human mind. It is nothing but a mechanism for gene proliferation. There is nothing else we can know about it because there is nothing else for it to be.

This mode of reasoning is a paraphrase of another argument that Wilson offers, an argument the fallacy of which is obvious. "If humankind evolved by Darwinian natural selection, genetic chance and environmental necessity, not God, made the species. Deity can still be sought in the origin of the ultimate units of matter...but not in the origin of species. However much we embellish that stark conclusion with metaphor and imagery, it remains the philosophical legacy of the last century of scientific research." (p.1) It is almost embarrassingly elementary to indicate that genetic chance and environmental necessity may be the ways in which, for all we know, God manifests his creative will. No matter what the correct scientific account of the origin of species might be, the theist can hold that God willed the species to originate in that fashion. The only way to show the futility of supposing God to be the creator of the world is to show that God is not a possible being. Clearly, no biological premise can entail that conclusion. Similarly, the biologists may be dead right that the brain is a product of Darwinian evolution. But there is no fact of biology which implies that reason is nothing but "the circuitous technique by which human genetic material has been and will be kept intact." (p.167) In order to arrive at that conclusion validly we need another premise, namely, that everything in human nature that is a product of Darwinian natural selection is nothing but a mechanism by which human genetic material has been and will be kept intact. I submit that this assumption is patently false. Even if it should be true that reason and brain are identical, it would not follow that reason is nothing but an instrument for gene proliferation. The brain exhibits complexities that range far beyond that of the microphysical structure of the genes. The genes are not conscious, they formulate no plans, they make no choices, they have no intentions,
no purposes, no ends-in-view to be realized in action. If we assume, for the
sake of the argument, that reason is identical with the brain, then consciousness,
self-consciousness, intentions, evaluations, volitions, inferences, indeed,
every element of human mental life can be viewed as being microphysical states
and processes of the central nervous system, including the brain. Such states
could not exist in genes, nor in sticks and stones. And if they exist in some
non-human animals, they must reflect in their structure the differences in
degree that we know to exist between human intelligence and the intelligence of
the other animals on earth. These differences in degree are so great that for
all practical purposes we may treat them as differences in kind. Thus, even
if metaphysical materialism were true, the fact that there is much more to
human nature than there is to the genes as microphysical structures would
remain a fact. Let the dispositions and mental states that define undemanding
love be microphysical states of the central nervous system. Suppose that
selfishness and the disposition to favor the self are also microphysical states.
These materialistic suppositions do not tell us what each of these things is,
how they imply or exclude each other, in short, the assumption of metaphysical
materialism does not tell us anything about the logic or the systematic structure
of the network of entities that comprise mental life. Wilson appears to reason
under the principle that the nature of a thing is to be understood by locating
its origins. This is the genetic fallacy. The causes of schizophrenia are not,
and cannot be, its definition. Mental life has a systematic structure and the
entities that constitute the elements of mind cannot be understood unless the
structure is understood. The requisite understanding comes only through pains-
taking philosophical reflection. If my thoughts about the structure of human
reason are not mistaken, then, whether or not metaphysical materialism is true,
the imperatives of reason go beyond the primal biological imperative of gene
proliferation. It is not true that as compared to the brain of a mosquito the
human brain is just an enormously more complex mechanism equipped primarily
and exclusively to promote the same result that the mosquito brain promotes: the
proliferation of the genes that organize it. A human being can choose to be like
the anti-hero of Lina Wertmuller's profound movie, Seven Beauties. He wants to
proliferate his genes at any cost, including murder, betrayal, self-betrayal,
stupidity, ignorance, bestiality. He is more mosquito than man. A human being
can choose to "spill" his genes as a necessary condition for pursuing a rational
end. A mosquito can do no such thing. A human being can achieve sainthood. For
me, a saint is someone who approximates to being fully rational to a degree that
the rest of us cannot manage. Saints are understanding and loving more deeply
and over longer periods than the rest of us are. Wilson does not understand
these things. About sainthood this is what he has to say: "Sainthood is not so
much the hypertrophy of human altruism as its ossification. It is cheerfully
subordinate to the biological imperatives above which it is supposed to rise."
(p.166) From my point of view, the essence of sainthood has nothing to do with
Wilson's notion of altruism. Sainthood involves undemanding love, about which
Wilson knows nothing. If sociobiologists have got their biology right, then there
will be far fewer saints than sinners in the population. For although the genes
of a species given to living a fully rational life would have maximized the chances
of their own proliferation, full rationality requires the presence of boundary con-
ditions which did not exist early enough to allow natural selection time enough
to select full rationality as the principal form of adaptation. But the dismal
statistical fact that in any given population the number of people approximating
full rationality will be very small in comparison to the total population does not
imply that trying to become fully rational is not a fundamental rational goal.
This is so for three reasons. A rational goal is defined by the ends of reason
itself, not by the numbers of people who may be expected to achieve them. And
we can know what the ends of reason are only if we know what reason is. Second,
no one knows that he himself is one of those who are statistically destined
to miss the mark. Third, it seems to me more
probable than not that even those who are destined to fail will have been better off for trying. From the second and third points it follows that we stand to lose our greatest good by not trying; therefore, it is irrational not to try.

The last paragraph of Wilson's chapter on altruism in On Human Nature is deeply distressing. He writes: "But to the extent that principles are chosen by knowledge and reason remote from biology, they can at least in theory be non-Darwinian. This leads us ineluctably back to the second great spiritual dilemma. The philosophical question of interest that generates it is the following: Can the cultural evolution of higher ethical values gain a direction and momentum of its own and completely replace genetic evolution? I think not. The genes hold culture on a leash. The leash is very long, but inevitably values will be constrained in accordance with their effects on the human gene pool.

The brain is the product of evolution. Human behavior—like the deepest capacities for emotional response which drive and guide it—is the circuitous technique by which human genetic material has been and will be kept intact. Morality has no other demonstrable ultimate function." (p.167) The higher ethical values Wilson mentions have to do with individuals adopting principles against which the group and the law are judged. The dilemma Wilson poses does not seem to be genuine at all. The question that he poses presupposes that (1) general ethical practices are based on human emotional responses (p.6), (2) that these practices and responses have been programmed to a substantial degree by natural selection (p.6), and in the preceding quotation from p.167 Wilson states his opinion (3) that this biological programming is too tight to allow for something else to replace it. The first presupposition is a dogma. It is a flat assertion with no argument to support it. If my analysis of reason is correct, this dogma states a falsehood. Ethical practices may, to a large extent, be based on unreflective emotional reactions. But ethical practices and ethical judgments are rationally criticizable. What people do because of their unreflective emotions is one thing. What they do if they act in the light of reason is something else. The second presupposition may be true, but it is irrelevant to issues in normative ethics. If my conception of reason is a correct analysis, then normative ethics is a rational enterprise. Nothing in Wilson's book has the slightest tendency to show that reason as I have analyzed it has been programmed by natural selection to be the fundamental guarantor of human gene proliferation. Therefore, the third proposition is also irrelevant. If reason is not programmed by natural selection, then it cannot be tightly circumscribed by it. The question that Wilson poses is a philosophical question in virtue of presupposing at least one philosophical proposition, namely, that ethics is not rational but emotive. That presupposition is false, as I have said. Because one of its presuppositions is false, the question is fatuous. There is no such question. But the very same words that are used to frame Wilson's fatuous question can be used to frame a genuine question. Can the cultural evolution of higher ethical values (this time meaning: ethical practices justified in reason) gain a direction and momentum of its own and completely replace genetic evolution? I take it that Wilson would want to know if rationally justified conduct can replace genetic evolution as a guarantor of the preservation of the human gene pool. It depends. It is conceivable that while procreation is easy the conditions of human life have become so degrading as to lead to the rational conclusion that human life is no longer worth living. To act on such a conclusion is to "spill" the entire human gene pool. But under normal conditions there is no conflict between the imperatives of reason and the biological imperatives. A unique peculiarity of human existence lies in the fact that human society can maintain itself in existence and transmit its genes only if individual human beings
employ their cognitive powers. Moreover, human reason understands the difference between living well and living badly. No man will settle for just being alive. For it is evident to reason that to be alive and living well is better than to be alive and living badly. The bonus of living well is not necessary for being alive. But, other things being equal, the biological imperative to proliferate one's genes can be fulfilled whenever the rational imperative to live well is satisfied. Hence, under normal circumstances, the functions of human reason are consistent with, and advance, the biological order. This is as it should be. Human reason could not exist if it was intrinsically inimical to life. Reason, however, has its own imperatives that go beyond mere survival and blind gene proliferation.

Wilson's biology may be impeccable. That is a matter for the community of biologists to decide. My complaints have to do with those among Wilson's speculations that touch upon philosophical concerns. I believe that the fundamental errors in these speculations are grounded in Wilson's faulty "Cartesian" conception of what human reason is.

VI Conclusion

In this essay I have argued that the Platonic conception of human reason as a synergetic union of the power to know and the power to love is correct. Plato's mistake is a misconception of the love involved. The love in reason is undemanding love. The components of undemanding love are not a haphazard collection of dispositions and mental states. A contrary of any one of them is incompatible with at least one of the rest. The mental components of undemanding love include peace of mind, a sense of being at home in the world and at one with oneself, as well as freedom from anxiety, from insecurity, from any awareness of being in want of anything from the person loved, and total good will. The dispositional components of undemanding love include respect, realism, patience, complete benevolence, autonomy, the disposition to let be: not to control, not to manipulate, not to be possessive. These mental states and dispositions are by their very nature suffused with intrinsically good feelings; their opposites with intrinsically bad feelings. The degree to which a human being is undemandingly loving is the degree to which he is joyful and unhysterically energetic. The most loving are the one ones who live life to the fullest. This is the ultimate reason why virtue is its own reward. For virtue is nothing more than the exercise of fully developed rationality: the employment of the synergetic union of the power to know and the power to love in the conduct of one's life. Undemanding love is the genus of which self-love and other-love are the inseparable species. It is because of this that the condition of virtue, which rewards its possessor by its mere existence, is inseparable from its being also a source of benefits to others. These are facts about human nature and the good appropriate to it that we can ignore only at the enormous price of dehumanizing ourselves.

---

9 In order to live well it is necessary to know how to die well. Socrates drinking hemlock and Jesus dying on the cross are superb examples.