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Michel Fattal is a member of the International Plato Society, lecturer since 1994 at the Université de Grenoble Alpes, a specialist on ancient and mediaeval philosophy. M. Fattal has published so far nineteen books and more than forty articles, most of them dealing with philosophical theories about *logos*, including the Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Plotin, Saint Augustine, and the medieval reception of the Greek philosophy. The academy of moral and political
The two key concepts are “to put together” (sundein) and “crisis” (krisis). Crisis comes from the Greek krisis, separation, and the verb krino means to split apart, and then to decide, to judge. From Parmenides to Paul of Tarsus, krinein implies a norm or criteria for choosing what to do and what to avoid doing. Parmenides already proposed that critical reason, or logos, splits apart truth and opinion. Michel Fattal aims thus at studying the critical logos of Parmenides and the noncritical logos of Paul of Tarsus. He starts by considering how the good is relational (desmos) at the Phaedo (99c5-6):

99 ξ τήν δὲ τοῦ ὡς οἴον τε βέλτιστα αὕτα τεθήναι δύναμιν οὕτω νῦν κεῖσθαι, ταύτην οὐτε ἡτοίμαιν οὔτε τινα οἴονται δαίμονια ἵσχυν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ ἠγούνται τοῦτον Ἀτλαντα ἄν ποτε ἱσχυρότερον καὶ ἄθανατώτερον και μάλλον ἄπαντα συνέχοντα ἔξευρεῖν, καὶ ψό ἅλθσες τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ δέον συνέχειν καὶ συνέχειν οὐδὲν οἴονται. ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν τῆς τοιαύτης αἰτίας ὅπη ποτὲ ἔχει μαθητής ὀτουοῦν ἢδιστ’ ἃν γενοίμην: ἐπειδή
δὲ ταύτης ἐστερήθην καὶ οὔτ᾽ αὐτὸς εὑρεῖν οὔτε παρ᾽ ἄλλου μαθεῖν οἶός τε ἐγενόμην, τὸν δεύτερον

99c the power which causes things to be now placed as it is best for them to be placed, nor do they think it has any divine force, but they think they can find a new Atlas more powerful and more immortal and more all-embracing than this, and in truth they give no thought to the good, which must embrace and hold together all things. Now I would gladly be the pupil of anyone who would teach me the nature of such a cause; but since that was denied me and I was not able to discover it myself or to learn of it from anyone else.

It is thus the good that embraces (sundaiei) and holds together (sunechei) everything. Plato (Phd. 99c5) puts together under a single article (to) agathon and deon, the good and necessary at once, considering that the verb deo means to happen and to put together. The good (agathon) is necessarily to put together. At the Phaedo the good is self-sufficient as it is principle (arche) and cause (aitia), being thus relational cause and causal relation. Participation (methexis) means also to put together (metechein), so that the good is a bond at the heart of the human language. Furthermore, Fattal argues that in the Phaedo Plato addresses not only the study of the vertical relationship, a hierarchical one, linking the sensible and the forms, but also the horizontal links that the forms establish among themselves, later developed in the Sophist. The Phaedo extends the principle of mutual exclusion of direct contraries to indirect ones, proposes the rule of inclusion or inference enabling forms to be related to each other.
Michel Fattal turns then to Parmenides and to the origins of the crisis, especially his Poem (8 Fr. 50-52):

[50] Ἔν τῷ σοι παύω πιστὸν λόγον ἣδὲ νόημα ἀμφὶς ἀληθείας· δόξας δ᾽ ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.

50 Here shall I close my trustworthy speech and thought about the truth. Henceforward learn the opinions of mortals, giving ear to the deceptive ordering of my words. (English translation by John Burnet, 1892).

The goddess of the Poem is at the same time thea (goddess) and aletheia (truth), urging the disciple to avoid opinion and preferring truth. So much so, that Parmenides, for the first time in western philosophy, considers that reason, or logos, has a function in relation to truth and critical assessment, enabling later Greek philosophy to establish ontological and gnoseological hierarchies.

All those are the necessary steps conducing to a different Pauline reason, or logos, for it is a pneumatic one. Fattal concludes the study by focusing at the First Letter to the Corinthians, dated around 56 AD and particularly comments a key excerpt:

Paul, 1 Corinthians 2, 14-16
14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

16 For who has known the mind of the LORD, that he will instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

New American Standard Bible

Paul proposes a spiritual conversion of the *nous*, intelligence, reason, intellect, so that the human being gets a superior understanding or judging capacity, and as such the spiritual human being discerns and judges (*ankrinei*)
everything. This is thus the result of the conversion of the physical to the spiritual, enabling the spirit (pneuma) to foster critical discernment. Those proposals result also from the conflicts within the Corinthian church and they establish a non-critical reason or logos, in opposition to the critical one of Parmenides. The criteria proposed by Paul are spiritual, beyond and above the material world. Michel Fattal finishes the volume by questioning what he defines as nihilist approaches countering classical metaphysics, notably those thinkers of suspicion, such as Freud, Nietzsche and Marx. Fattal does not consider that Freudian Subconscious, Nietzschean Der Wille zur Macht or Marxian infrastructure could explain and define humans, human values and conscience. Paul’s reason or logos, on the other hand, broadens human aspirations, as it draws its strength from God, from love (agape), a superior grace. Michel Fattal concludes by stating that Paul’s methodical and dialectical reason or logos is valid for humans in any time. Michel Fattal relates classical ontology to Christian reasoning, opposing critical and non-critical, physical and spiritual reason, pledging for the eternal value of a spiritual approached grounded on love. Not all modern scholars will agree with his stand, but the main strength of the volume is in the in-depth analysis of philosophical concepts from ancient to modern times.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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