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Commentary On “Approaching Logos Among Reason, Rationality and Reasonable”

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1. Introduction

Let me begin my comments with a brief overview of the paper, then a slightly more detailed summary, and finally some comments and lingering questions.

The paper has these five sections.

Section 1: The Introduction provides an overview of the paper, in which the authors announce three objectives (13). The first objective is to figure out how the multidimensional forms of logos—reason, rationality and reasonableness—have evolved from logos, step by step. The second is to present their understanding of what defects occur when reason, rationality and reasonableness are regarded as logos. The third objective is their view about how to develop a more authentic conception of logos.

Section 2: This historical section contains their account of the evolution of logos.

Section 3: Here the authors attempt to show how in Western Philosophy, there is a development built around successive attempts to spell out Logos (the Ultimate Principle) first in terms of Reason, then in terms of Rationality and then finally in terms of the Reasonable.

Section 4: In this section having already discussed what happens when these pretenders assume to be Logos, they discuss the return to Logos and how by understanding the mistakes of the past, “a more authentic approach to Logos” is possible.

Section 5: The authors conclude that Logos is the ultimate principle and that any attempt to rely on only one form of reason to build a world will not succeed.

2. Comments

Let me just say that the authors have raised some extremely complex issues involving high levels of abstraction and based on their reading of such philosophers as Descartes, Husserl, Heidegger and Toulmin’s *The Return to Reason*. The thesis of the paper, which becomes clear at the end, is a metaphysical-historical thesis about how Logos (the Ultimate Principle) has manifested itself in human history. The authors propose a thesis about the relationship between reason, rationality and reasonableness, upon which they base a normative claim about the importance of maintaining a balance between them that ultimately depends on Logos.

In the process of developing this thesis, the authors claim to have done the following:

they have provided a brief evolutionary history of *logos*;

they have discussed the origin of reason;

they have outlined mis-transformation of reason into rationality;

they have analyzed some criticisms of rationality, they have stated that reasonableness may be taken as the form of *logos* that deals with social conflicts.

What, then, is the upshot of all this work: where is their analysis heading? The authors are arguing for this historico-philosophical thesis:

“Our main thesis [is] that any attempt to separate the entirety of reason, rationality and reasonable, and any effort to use only one principle (be it reason, or rationality or reasonableness) would cause a crisis of knowledge and human life as well as of science; in addition a stagnation or backwardness in term(s) of the process of human civilization.” (p. 14)

However, it seems to me that the exact nature of the crisis and its causal dimension have not been sufficiently spelled out. They propose their alternative this way:

...If reason is the principle of our ultimate concern, and if rationality is the instrumental purposeful principle in natural sciences, then reasonableness can serve to be the principal of human practical life which embraces morality laws arts etc. (p. 2)

What they are proposing, I take it, is that in the history of Western civilization, *Logos* (the ultimate principle) has sometimes been identified with Reason (but this is a mistake); sometimes with Rationality (but that is a mistake) and sometimes with Reasonableness (but that is a mistake). Their proposal strikes me as plausible, yet I believe that the authors need to provide slightly more developed analyses of these three fundamental concepts if they are to fully justify what I take to be pivotal theses. For example, the authors claim *Logos* is necessary if these demarcations are to be held to. That may well be true, but much depends on how (specifically) they understand *Logos* and how with that specific understanding, they will be able to derive the appropriate demarcations. About *Logos*, they say:

The ancient Greek term ‘Logos,’ the original root of the modern English word ‘reasons,’ is *Logos*, in other words, [is thought of] as a kind of omnipotent power throughout the universe according to requirements of rational principles rule by natural law is the basis of law and justice, the root of good and evil. (p. 3)

It is clear that *Logos* is their overarching metaphysical principle. But if it is to be usefully employed in the way they have, it may need to be given greater articulation.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say that the authors have presented here the outlines of a very ambitious project. I have offered the following observations.

First, their paper lacks a clear link to the announced theme: Argumentation, Objectivity and Bias. In the revision, some attempt should be made to connect their issues to the theme of the conference.

Second, the authors claim that there will be a crisis if proper relationships are not developed, but, as far as I could determine, the nature of this crisis is not clearly spelled out, nor have the precise nature and details of the causal claim been presented.

Third, the presentation of the crucial concepts, Reason, Rationality and Reasonableness) needs further attention. I realize that each term could easily require a chapter. One solution might be to offer a working (stipulative) definition of each, for the purposes of this paper. The authors offer an interpretation of how these forces have played out in history that is quite dependent on Toulmin's work. Their interpretations of complex philosophers Decartes, Husserl, and Heidegger tend to be schematic. However, lengthy exegesis is not an option either.

To conclude, the authors have presented a very challenging historico-metaphysical interpretation of developments surrounding the conception of Logos. But there are gaps and issues in their account that must be attended to in order to deliver on the promise, and I have endeavored to point out some of them.

PS: I am mindful that English is the second language for these authors. They have done very well expressing themselves in English on matters that require a high level of abstraction and a great deal of knowledge of Western culture. I (who cannot write or understand one character of Chinese) have made suggestions that I hope will be useful to them in revising the paper.