

First Logos

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

The First *Logos* is the unmanifested *Logos*, the first impersonal radiation or reflection contemplated at the threshold of cosmic manifestation. The expression marks a distinction between the unknowable Absolute and the spiritual source of an ordered universe. It gives thought a point of approach while preserving the mystery beyond that point. Its study calls for patience: words such as first, radiation and cause are being used beyond the ordinary setting in which events happen at particular places and follow one another in time.

The Absolute, called *Parabrahman* or *Sat*, cannot be placed within a series. However far we extend a sequence of causes, the next member still belongs to a relationship. In “Negation and Transcendence,” Professor Iyer distinguishes this unconditioned Reality from the First *Logos*, which is philosophically unmanifested even when described as the first manifestation. The wording may initially seem puzzling. It identifies the first metaphysical principle of manifestation without making that principle a visible object or an already differentiated cosmos.

The Secret Doctrine’s Proem calls this impersonal *Logos* the precursor of the manifested and applies the term First Cause to it. Professor Iyer explains why the distinction matters. To use that expression for the Absolute would suggest an ordered sequence where the teaching requires freedom from every such limitation. The First *Logos* can be regarded as a source in relation to what follows from it. *Parabrahman* remains beyond the entire field of relation, including our most subtle conceptions of a source.

The numerical image of zero and one helps to mark the difference. In this particular symbolism, zero points towards the Absolute and one towards the First *Logos*. The image is a means of reflection, rather than an equation or a definition of Reality. Extending a number indefinitely never takes us outside the conditions of number. Similarly, making our idea of a divine being immeasurably larger does not reach the unconditioned. The distinction asks the mind to reconsider its starting assumptions.

The point within the circle offers another contemplative image. At the opening of *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky describes an immaculate disk and then the disk with a central point, signifying the dawn of differentiation. She also acknowledges the limitations of the circular symbol itself. Its drawn boundary serves a mind that needs some means of representation. We can contemplate the point as a first focus of possibility without imagining a geographical centre, an edge to boundless Space, or a division within the Absolute.

The First *Logos* belongs to the threefold account whose later aspects are the Second and Third *Logoi*. The Second expresses latent polarity and the possibility of differentiated Divine Thought; the Third is cosmic intelligence in manifestation. Professor Iyer likens the unfolding to midnight, dawn and day, while cautioning against a timetable. The word first therefore marks a metaphysical priority. It does not mean that an observer might wait beside an empty universe and watch three successive events take place.

“Primeval Self-Generation — Lakshminarayana” gives a fuller sense of the primordial unity. Professor Iyer describes the unmanifest *Logos* as pre-cosmic ideation, pre-cosmic substance and potential force, three in one. This corrects a tendency to imagine the First *Logos* as a single isolated ingredient awaiting others. It names a unity prior to the differentiated worlds of subjects and objects. Its transcendence, in his account, expresses a greater degree of reality than the forms that depend upon it.

Another qualification concerns *Mahat*. Although frequently associated with the Third *Logos*, the term has more than one application. In “Cognition, Breath and Speech,” Professor Iyer uses it in its primary sense for Universal Mind as the permanent possibility of Thought, calling it the all-pervading First *Logos*. He distinguishes this from the mind of a cosmos in manifestation. Reading the context keeps the distinction clear. We are considering Universal Cognition, without a separate thinker or a succession of personal mental states.

The correspondence with *Atman*, the universal Self, brings this teaching towards human self-study. *Atman* is considered with *Buddhi* and *Manas* in the higher triad of the human constitution. Such correspondences concern spiritual principles, rather than the personality's claims about itself. They invite a distinction between the awareness that makes experience possible and the changing descriptions through which we announce who we are. The cosmic teaching remains larger than this inward analogy, but the analogy can help loosen a cramped identification with passing states.

Its first practical gift may be intellectual humility. Even a refined conception is still a conception. We can hold it carefully without making it the measure of everything real. Study then becomes an ongoing apprenticeship: reading a difficult passage again, noticing the question it actually addresses, and acknowledging what remains unclear. This leaves room for discovery. A mind that can say “I do not yet understand” has already relaxed one obstacle to understanding, while keeping the wish to learn fully alive.

In conversation, that humility can become a generous kind of attention. Another person may be speaking from an experience that our favourite explanation does not contain. We need not abandon judgment to listen patiently. We can allow the account to become clear before deciding how to respond. This modest practice is not a realization of the First *Logos*. It is a fitting

preparation for metaphysical study because it educates the mind to recognize how readily it confines what it encounters.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception means allowing our account of life to exceed the boundaries of personal identity. The First *Logos* directs attention towards a source that no individual, school or community can possess. That recognition can widen the range of people whose questions we take seriously. It can also remind us to read unfamiliar symbols with care. We approach the deeper meaning of another tradition more faithfully when curiosity accompanies discrimination and our own vocabulary remains open to examination.

Human Solidarity gives shared origin a practical expression. The Theosophical teaching places beings within a common spiritual life, while their circumstances and needs remain particular. Respect for that common life becomes credible through attention to those particulars. We can help someone learn, make a necessary repair, or relieve a burden without asking the recipient to share our metaphysics. Service can honour a unity that words only approach. Its value is present in what it makes possible for another being.

This also offers a quiet remedy for spiritual pride. If our deepest source exceeds possession, useful action need not keep returning to the importance of its author. We can do the work carefully, accept correction, and allow its benefit to continue beyond our involvement. Impersonal service still has warmth. It can include humour, affection and a readiness to notice what would actually help. The personality becomes less demanding of recognition, leaving more attention available for the person or task before us.

Contemplation can begin with the distinction itself: the Absolute, and the first reflection through which manifestation is approached. Let the image orient thought without forcing a picture of the unimaginable. Return afterwards to an ordinary duty with greater care. The First *Logos* remains a profound metaphysical teaching, but patient attention can give it a place in daily life. We learn to respect origins we cannot own, and to let that respect make our understanding more spacious and our service more exact.

Glossary

Aja — Unborn or uncreated; an epithet especially associated with the First *Logos*.

Atman — The universal Self; considered with *Buddhi* and *Manas* in the higher human triad.

Buddhi — Spiritual intuition and the vehicle of *Atman*.

First Cause — A designation applied here to the impersonal *Logos* in relation to subsequent manifestation.

First Logos — The unmanifested *Logos*; the first impersonal radiation or reflection at the threshold of manifestation.

Logoi — Plural of *Logos*; the related principles or aspects distinguished in the account of manifestation.

Mahat — Universal Mind; the intended level must be read from context, including its unmanifest and manifested applications.

Manas — The human thinking principle and faculty of self-conscious understanding.

Parabrahman — The Absolute, beyond attributes, relationships and the conditions of manifested existence.

Pralaya — A period of dissolution or non-manifestation in the cosmic cycles.

Sat — Be-ness or absolute Reality; beyond conditioned being and non-being.

Second Logos — The unmanifest-manifest aspect, associated with latent polarity and the potentiality of differentiated thought.

Third Logos — Cosmic intelligence in manifestation; *Mahat* in the account of the differentiated cosmos.

Universal Cognition — A term for transcendental consciousness without an individuated thinker or linear succession of thoughts.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 16.

“The first manifestation, the impersonal, and, in philosophy, unmanifested *Logos*, the precursor of the ‘manifested.’ This is the ‘First Cause,’ the ‘Unconscious’ of European Pantheists.”

Meditation thought: Consider why a principle can be called the first manifestation while remaining philosophically unmanifested. Attend to the level being described.

2. R.N. Iyer — “Negation and Transcendence,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 354.

“First of all, the difference between the Absolute and the relative arises even at the highest level, the plane of the Unmanifested *Logos*.”

Meditation thought: Let the distinction remain intact even at the limit of thought. A profound conception still does not contain the unconditioned.

3. R.N. Iyer — “Negation and Transcendence,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 354.

“The Absolute is sometimes mistakenly called the ‘First Cause’, as Aristotle did, but since this implies the inappropriate conception of an ordinal series, the term is better reserved for that first impersonal manifestation, which is the second element in this distinction.”

Meditation thought: Notice the assumptions carried by the word first. Can you consider spiritual origin without imagining another event in a sequence?

4. R.N. Iyer — “Negation and Transcendence,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 355.

“This important, fundamental and rather abstruse truth is sometimes suggested by the difference between zero and one, taken as symbolic of the distinction between the Absolute and the First *Logos*.”

Meditation thought: Use zero and one as symbols for a distinction in kind. Resist the temptation to make the symbols a literal measure of Reality.

5. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 1.

“The point in the hitherto immaculate Disk, Space and Eternity in *Pralaya*, denotes the dawn of differentiation.”

Meditation thought: Contemplate the point as a focus of possibility. Remember that the drawn circle is a limited aid to a mind approaching the boundless.

6. R.N. Iyer — “Primeval Self-Generation — Lakshminarayana,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 91.

“The unmanifest *Logos* is pre-cosmic ideation and pre-cosmic substance, and also potential pre-cosmic force. It is all these three in one, in a state of primordial unity.”

Meditation thought: Consider a unity prior to separating thought, substance and force into independent things. Let the passage correct an overly narrow idea of the First *Logos*.

7. R.N. Iyer — “Primeval Self-Generation — Lakshminarayana,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 91.

“If this *Logos* is intrinsically eternal, omnipresent and ever-existent, it cannot be brought into any temporal, causal or chronological sequence, or into any possible relationship to our world of space and time.”

Meditation thought: Read the statement as a limit upon ordinary explanatory habits. Allow some room for what those habits cannot represent.

8. R.N. Iyer — “Cognition, Breath and Speech,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 74.

“In *Gupta Vidya* a fundamental distinction divides Universal Mind as the permanent possibility of Thought from the mind of a cosmos in manifestation. Ontologically prior to any set of elements that embody it in a cosmos, *Mahat* in its most primary sense is the all-pervading first *Logos*.”

Meditation thought: Follow the two applications of *Mahat*. Careful attention to context can deepen understanding without forcing the term into one fixed definition.

9. R.N. Iyer — “Cognition, Breath and Speech,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 75.

“When Universal Mind is juxtaposed with the idea of thought, as in the conception of the Thought Divine, there is no reference to any discrete or individuated thinker. Rather, the Thought Divine conveys the idea of a purely transcendental Universal Cognition, without implying any linear succession in time.”

Meditation thought: Distinguish Universal Cognition from a person thinking. Let the familiar activity of the mind become a starting point for inquiry rather than its final standard.

10. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Theosophical Glossary*, “Aja”, p. 13.

“‘Unborn’, uncreated; an epithet belonging to many of the primordial gods, but especially to the first *Logos*—a radiation of the Absolute on the plane of illusion.”

Meditation thought: *Aja* directs attention beyond ordinary birth while preserving the distinction between the Absolute and its radiation.

11. R.N. Iyer — “Negation and Transcendence,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 353.

“Even the most general statements or the most comprehensive closed, logical and axiomatic systems must contain inclusions as well as omissions, or have rules of relevance and reference as well as implicit, if not explicit, rules of exclusion.”

Meditation thought: Ask what a familiar explanation leaves outside its boundaries. Greater awareness of its limits can make the explanation more useful and the mind more hospitable.

12. R.N. Iyer — “Negation and Transcendence,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 356.

“Thirdly, the way to approach this abstruse, and yet sublimely sacred, mystery is nearer to all human beings than even the tips of their own fingers. It is hidden in every atom and every heart.”

Meditation thought: Let the thought of inward nearness deepen care for the life before you. Choose one small act through which reverence can become service.