

Logos

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Logos means word or reason. In Theosophy it names the spiritual intelligence through which concealed thought receives expression and a cosmos becomes intelligible. The familiar movement from an idea to its expression offers an initial analogy, but the teaching extends far beyond human speech. It concerns the relation of consciousness to substance, the emergence of worlds, and the capacity of human beings to understand and participate in a living order. Its symbols include the Word, the mirror, and the ray connecting an unseen centre with the life it illumines.

The term has several levels of meaning. In *The Theosophical Glossary*, H.P. Blavatsky emphasizes the manifested deity and the outward expression of a concealed cause. *The Secret Doctrine* also speaks of an unmanifested *Logos*. These usages require attention to context. Neither permits us to imagine that the Absolute has become a comprehensible object. *Parabrahman* signifies the unconditioned Reality beyond attributes and relationships. The *Logos* provides a way of contemplating manifestation while preserving the distinction between that Reality and its primordial reflection. A definition becomes useful when it helps us follow these distinctions through the passage being studied.

Professor Iyer makes this distinction central to “Transcendence and Transformation.” Even the Unmanifested *Logos* is not *Parabrahman*. It mirrors the One in a manner beyond ordinary conceptions of relationship. Calling it a First Cause therefore concerns its relation to subsequent manifestation. It does not place the Absolute at the beginning of a chain of events. The language of beginning here asks the mind to consider dependence and origin without assuming that a clock already measures their unfolding.

The three *Logoi*, the plural of *Logos*, distinguish aspects of this mystery. The First is unmanifested. The Second is described as unmanifest-manifest, the potentiality of differentiated Divine Thought. The Third is *Mahat*, cosmic intelligence in manifestation. In “Mahat, Manu and the Avatar,” Professor Iyer compares their awakening to the passage from midnight through dawn to day. He warns against a fixed scheme. Names such as *Narayana*, *Ishwara* and *Brahma* receive different applications according to the level and enumeration being considered.

The relation between thought and substance is equally important. *The Secret Doctrine* presents consciousness and matter as aspects of one Reality. *Mulaprakriti*, root-substance, supplies the basis of objective manifestation; cosmic ideation supplies its intelligible, subjective aspect. These are mutually dependent within a manifested universe. Consciousness requires a vehicle through

which it can become individualized, while substance considered apart from ideation remains an abstraction. The doctrine invites us to understand their cooperation throughout Nature, including the forms through which our own awareness finds expression.

Fohat names the dynamic link in this account. Blavatsky describes it as the energy through which Divine Thought is impressed upon cosmic substance as the laws of Nature. Ideation, energy and form are thus related aspects of manifestation. This is a metaphysical teaching about an ensouled cosmos. Its language should be studied on that basis, without confusing spiritual light with visible radiation or treating the Word as a sound that physical instruments might detect at the beginning of the universe.

In “The Logos and Man,” Professor Iyer develops the image of a centre, its rays, and a circumference. The ray links the *Logos* with the cosmos and the spiritual source with the human being. A ray expresses its source without exhausting it. Likewise, a particular world or consciousness can manifest intelligence without containing the fullness of Divine Mind. This image encourages a wider understanding of individuality: a centre of experience has its own work, while belonging to relations that sustain and exceed it.

The Word also connects *Logos* with *Vach*, sacred speech. Human language provides a modest analogy for hidden meaning becoming articulate. A sentence can carry an insight, yet the insight exceeds the sentence that first conveys it. Translation, patient questioning and renewed study may reveal further implications. This makes care with language part of philosophical practice. We need enough precision to communicate, together with enough openness to discover where our chosen words have narrowed what we hoped to express.

The human correspondence concerns *Manas*, the thinking principle, especially as it becomes illumined by *Buddhi*, spiritual discernment. Professor Iyer gives an unexpectedly practical measure: “A practical test of real intelligence at the ordinary level is one's ability to recognize and release the intelligence of others.” The test moves attention from displaying what we know to helping understanding become possible. A person who asks a fruitful question or makes room for another's insight may serve intelligence more effectively than someone who dominates every conversation.

Such practice begins wherever people learn or work together. We can explain an unfamiliar term without making the listener feel small. We can invite the quiet participant to contribute, or acknowledge that an overlooked suggestion solved the difficulty. Our own understanding often grows through these acts. The teaching about reflected intelligence becomes inwardly useful when it softens contempt and encourages us to look again at capacities that impatience, habit or social prejudice have prevented us from recognizing.

Human Solidarity follows naturally from this shared spiritual inheritance. The dignity of intelligence belongs to people across differences of culture, education and outward ability. Those differences call for attentive responses, while the common root calls for respect. A community expresses that respect through opportunities to learn, truthful public communication and care for people whose voices carry little influence. Brotherhood becomes more substantial when our use of thought helps others participate in the life we share.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception also changes comparative study. *Logos*, *Vach*, *Verbum* and *Mahat* can illuminate one another within Theosophical interpretation, but each term retains its context. Recognizing a correspondence asks us to study both the likeness and its limits. We can welcome another tradition's symbols without declaring that its teachers meant exactly what we already believe. Intellectual hospitality grows through this willingness to learn. The wider circle includes the unfamiliar, and allows it to deepen our questions.

The same outlook extends to Nature. If manifestation expresses a living order, our intelligence carries responsibilities towards the conditions that sustain life. Knowledge becomes more serviceable when it considers the effects of an invention, a building or a daily habit upon other beings. This does not give us automatic answers to difficult choices. It gives us a reason to investigate carefully, weigh consequences, and bring concern for the whole into decisions that might otherwise be governed by immediate convenience.

Contemplation gives these responsibilities an inward foundation. Professor Iyer joins meditation with moral sensitivity in his treatment of the *Logoi*. A quiet interval can help us notice the wish to impress, the fear of being corrected, or the haste that distorts an honest intention. Recognizing these movements creates room for a clearer response. The cosmic doctrine remains profound, but its human approach can begin with patient study and the ordinary willingness to make thought answerable to truth.

Logos gathers these themes around the mystery of expression. Intelligence has a source; its manifestations carry relationships and consequences. We study the Word by tracing those relationships in the texts and by attending to our own use of mind. When understanding becomes clearer, speech more trustworthy, and knowledge more available to others, the teaching begins to inform conduct. A little of the light we have received can then become useful in another person's day.

Glossary

Brahma — The creative principle; its place among the *Logoi* varies with the enumeration and context.

Buddhi — Spiritual discernment and intuition; the principle that can illumine the human mind.

Cosmic ideation — The universal intelligence and formative thought underlying manifested Nature.

Dhyan Chohans — Spiritual intelligences through which cosmic ideation becomes operative in manifestation.

Esse — Latin for being or essential existence; used here for the ground of a manifested universe.

Fohat — The dynamic energy linking cosmic ideation with cosmic substance.

Ishwara — Lord; in the threefold account used here, the Second or unmanifest-manifest *Logos*.

Logos and Logoi — Word or reason; *Logos* is singular and *Logoi* plural. Their metaphysical meanings vary with context.

Mahat — Universal intelligence; in the account of manifested cosmic mind, the Third *Logos*.

Manas — The human thinking principle and capacity for self-conscious understanding.

Mulaprakriti — Root-substance; the primordial basis of the objective aspect of manifestation.

Narayana — A name applied to the Unmanifest *Logos* in Professor Iyer's account of the three *Logoi*.

Noetic — Pertaining to intuitive spiritual intelligence and its apprehension of meaning.

Parabrahman or Parabrahm — The unconditioned Absolute, beyond the attributes and relationships of manifested existence.

Vach — Sacred speech or the Word; the formative power of divine expression.

Verbum — Latin for Word; a term used in the comparative study of the *Logos*.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Theosophical Glossary*, "Logos", p. 193.

"The manifested deity with every nation and people; the outward expression, or the effect of the cause which is ever concealed. Thus, speech is the *Logos* of thought; hence it is aptly translated by the 'Verbum' and 'Word' in its metaphysical sense."

Meditation thought: Consider the relationship between a thought and its expression. What does the expression reveal, and what may remain unexpressed?

2. R.N. Iyer — “The Logos and Man,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 57.

“At the most fundamental philosophical level the *Logos* is the mysterious heart of cosmogenesis, for genesis is no mechanical generation but rather the emergence out of the eternal into time, from *esse* into existence, from BE-NESS into being.”

Meditation thought: Let the distinction between eternal ground and temporal emergence guide reflection, without turning it into a sequence measured by a clock.

3. R.N. Iyer — “Transcendence and Transformation,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 351.

“The Unmanifested *Logos* is not *Parabrahman*, but it does, in a transcendental way superior to all formulatable conceptions of relationship, mirror *Parabrahman*.”

Meditation thought: Hold the distinction between the Absolute and its primordial reflection. Allow the image of a mirror to orient thought without claiming to explain the Absolute.

4. R.N. Iyer — “Mahat, Manu and the Avatar,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 373.

“The dawn of manifestation cannot be thought of in terms of any fixed schema, any multi-dimensional map in space or any series of points of temporal succession; it is something that can only be sensed in deep meditation.”

Meditation thought: Use the account of the three *Logoi* as an invitation to contemplative inquiry. Notice where a helpful distinction begins to harden into a fixed picture.

5. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 15.

“Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter are, however, to be regarded, not as independent realities, but as the two facets or aspects of the Absolute (*Parabrahm*), which constitute the basis of conditioned Being whether subjective or objective.”

Meditation thought: Consider consciousness and substance together. What changes when the familiar opposition is placed within a more comprehensive unity?

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

“*Fohat* is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, the ‘Thought Divine’ transmitted and made manifest through the *Dhyani Chohans*, the Architects of the visible World.”

Meditation thought: Distinguish ideation, its dynamic transmission, and its expression in form, while contemplating their cooperation within one process.

7. R.N. Iyer — “The Logos and Man,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 57.

“The Ray is the mysterious proportional link between centre and circumference, between the *Logos* and cosmos, between God and Man.”

Meditation thought: Contemplate a ray as a relationship with a source it does not exhaust. Let the image widen the meaning of individuality.

8. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 25.

“The *Logos* is the mirror reflecting divine mind, and the Universe is the mirror of the *Logos*, though the latter is the *esse* of that Universe.”

Meditation thought: The image points from an appearance towards its ground. Consider how a faithful reflection may disclose meaning without containing its source.

9. R.N. Iyer — “The Logos and Man,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 56.

“A practical test of real intelligence at the ordinary level is one's ability to recognize and release the intelligence of others.”

Meditation thought: Recall one situation in which a question, an explanation or a little encouragement could help another person use their understanding more freely.

10. R.N. Iyer — “The Logos and Man,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 56.

“The tendency to underestimate the intelligence of other human beings is inevitably the mark of insufficient intelligence and the cause of needless obstructions and wasteful conflicts between people.”

Meditation thought: Notice an assumption about another person that may deserve a second look. What has impatience kept you from recognizing?

11. R.N. Iyer — “The Logos and Man,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 59.

“One must be calm, wide awake, relaxed and reverential.”

Meditation thought: Explore the possibility of alertness without tension. Bring that quality to a page of study or to someone who needs your attention.

12. R.N. Iyer — “The Logos and Man,” *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 59.

“The more one uses what one knows, the more meaning will come to one's aid, with a greater continuity of ardent aspiration.”

Meditation thought: Choose a teaching already understood well enough to practise. Let its use in an ordinary duty become part of the next stage of learning.