

The Logos

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

The *Logos* is the intelligible expression of a reality that exceeds expression. The Greek word signifies word or reason, and in Theosophical philosophy it concerns the emergence of cosmic order and consciousness from an unconditioned source. This essay approaches the subject especially through the relation between the *Logos* and the human being. Professor Iyer's "The Logos and Man" makes that relation a discipline of reflection: the mind can inquire into its universal root and learn to give that inquiry a more truthful expression in life.

A spoken word offers an initial analogy. Thought may remain inward and unexpressed, then acquire a form through which it can be understood. The analogy is useful because it distinguishes a concealed possibility from its intelligible manifestation. It remains limited, since cosmic manifestation is not represented as a human speaker choosing a sentence. The student uses an ordinary experience to approach a metaphysical relationship, while remembering that the relationship exceeds the experience that first helped make it conceivable.

The distinction between the Absolute and the *Logos* is fundamental. *Parabrahman* signifies the unconditioned reality beyond limitation, relation and attributes. The *Logos* is considered in relation to manifestation and may be described as a first reflection of that reality. Reflection suggests dependence without identity of scale. The unconditioned source cannot be reduced to a particular intelligence, however exalted, or treated as one being among other beings. The language of the *Logos* begins where a relationship to cosmic life and consciousness can be contemplated.

Theosophical texts distinguish three *Logoi*. In a common formulation, the First is unmanifested, the Second is the unmanifested-manifested, and the Third is the manifested *Logos*, associated with *Mahat* or universal intelligence. These names indicate degrees or aspects of emergence into intelligible manifestation. They do not describe three separate creators competing for a world, nor ordinary events measured by a clock. The student must follow each passage's use of the terms, since a discussion may emphasize a particular aspect without repeating the whole scheme.

H.P. Blavatsky relates this inquiry to the distinction between the consciousness and substance aspects of manifestation. In *The Secret Doctrine*, *Mulaprakriti* is approached as the root of objectivity, while the *Logos* is the foundation of the conscious aspect of individual existence. Subject and object are thus considered together within a deeper unity. The world cannot be

understood adequately by isolating intelligence from its means of expression, or by describing substance as though its relation to consciousness were an accidental addition.

Professor Iyer brings this cosmic relationship into the study of humanity. In “The Logos and Man,” he treats the human being as a microcosm whose highest possibilities are rooted in universal intelligence. *Manas* has a special importance because self-conscious thought can turn toward its source or become absorbed in the preferences of the personality. The mind's spiritual origin does not make every personal opinion divine. It gives the thinker a responsibility to examine the uses of thought and the motives that direct its movement.

The image of a ray extending from a centre to a circumference helps clarify this responsibility. The ray participates in a source that it does not privately own, while its expression occurs through particular conditions. A person's intelligence works through a history, a language and a limited field of experience. These instruments make communication possible and can also restrict it. The task is to use them consciously, allowing thought to become more receptive to truth than to the preservation of a preferred image of the thinker. This requires a willingness to receive correction and to let the subject, rather than personal prestige, determine the direction of inquiry.

In “Mahat, Manu and the Avatar,” Professor Iyer relates universal ideation to the capacity of advanced beings to embody and transmit wisdom. The relationship between a source and an expression acquires an ethical dimension. A teaching becomes effective through a consciousness and a life capable of giving it form. The student can approach this principle without claiming the attainments of an avatar. Every person already faces the smaller but serious question of whether an accepted truth is being expressed faithfully in speech and action.

The Secret Doctrine's account of *Fohat* adds another aspect to this contemplation. *Fohat* is described as the dynamic link through which cosmic ideation is impressed upon substance. It belongs to a metaphysical explanation of the relation between intelligence and manifestation. In human practice, the corresponding question is how an idea becomes effective. An intention needs understanding, means and sustained effort. The analogy must remain an analogy, yet it directs attention toward the often neglected interval between admiring a principle and bringing its implications into conduct.

Consider someone who affirms that every learner deserves respect. The principle becomes visible in the explanations they prepare, the questions they permit and the way they respond to a mistake. It can be weakened by impatience even while the words remain correct. To examine these details is to study expression as a responsibility. The inward conviction must continually inform its outward vehicle. When a discrepancy appears, it offers something concrete to repair:

a clearer instruction, a more patient response or an opportunity to begin again without humiliation.

This is also a discipline of language. A word can disclose a thought accurately, conceal an uncertainty or encourage a conclusion the speaker has not earned. We can ask whether our language makes understanding easier and whether its emotional force is proportioned to what we know. Such questions do not require lifeless speech. They allow warmth and imagination to serve meaning more faithfully. The connection between inward purpose and outward expression becomes stronger as we release the wish to produce an effect at the expense of truth.

Human Solidarity gives the discipline its wider field. The doctrine relates individual minds to a universal intelligence, while human communication brings those minds into practical relationship. Another person's perspective may disclose a part of the subject that our own position obscures. Listening is therefore more than courtesy. It can be an act of intellectual responsibility toward a truth that exceeds any single formulation. We preserve the right to discriminate, while allowing a shared inquiry to become more comprehensive through the participation of different experiences and capacities.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception also changes comparative study. Word, wisdom and divine reason appear in different religious and philosophical settings, yet their meanings require careful attention to those settings. A student can investigate correspondences without assuming that every tradition teaches an identical scheme of three *Logoi*. The larger circle makes room for kinship and distinction together. It asks what a comparison illuminates, what it leaves unresolved and how it might deepen respect for the sources from which understanding is being sought.

The *Logos* thus leads from the mystery of manifestation to a close examination of consciousness and expression. *Manas* becomes more responsive to *Buddhi* as discrimination is joined to a universal concern, and the personality becomes a more trustworthy instrument as its motives are clarified. We cannot contain cosmic intelligence in a definition. We can, however, make one thought more honest, one explanation more illuminating and one action more faithful to a worthy purpose. Through such work, the relation between the inward source and its human expression becomes a living question, answered a little more clearly in the way we participate in the world.

Glossary

Absolute — The unconditioned Reality, beyond the limitations and distinctions of manifested existence.

Adam-Kadmon — The archetypal or primordial human in Kabbalistic symbolism; related in the quoted comparison to the manifested *Logos* and objective universe.

Ah-hi — Spiritual intelligences that contain and reflect universal ideation in the cited cosmology.

Ain-Soph — The boundless or limitless in Kabbalistic terminology; distinguished in the quoted comparison from the periodic Depth and its manifested expression.

Anupadaka — Parentless or self-existing; a term in the cited metaphysical account of Space and primordial substance. *Anupapadaka* is a related spelling.

Arcane — Hidden or esoteric; requiring more than an outward reading.

Avatar — A divine descent or incarnation; in the definition used here, an exalted being's voluntary embodiment beyond the necessity of ordinary rebirth. *Avatâra* is the Sanskrit form.

Be-ness — Blavatsky's term indicating an unconditioned reality beyond particular, conditioned being.

Brahma — The creative deity or *Logos* when masculine; in the quoted designation *Brahma* (neuter), the term refers to *Brahman*, the unconditioned spiritual ground.

Buddhi — The spiritual soul or faculty of intuitive discernment; Buddhist means pertaining to it.

Bythos / Buthon — Depth; a Gnostic designation for the periodic source of manifestation in the quoted comparison, also called *Propator*.

Cognition — Knowing or the act of knowing; cogniser names the knower, and cognised refers to what is known.

Correspondence — A meaningful relation between different orders or levels; an instrument of analogy that requires attention to context.

Cosmogenesis — An account of the origin and emergence of a cosmos; paired with anthropogenesis, the account of human origins.

Demiurge — The formative or ordering intelligence of a cosmos; Professor Iyer uses the term in relation to the Second *Logos*.

Dhyanis — Meditative spiritual intelligences; *Dhyani* is the singular. *Dhyani Chohans* is a related designation of spiritual hierarchies.

Differentiation — The emergence of distinct forms, functions or levels from a less divided condition.

Divine Darkness — The unmanifest spiritual ground or boundless potential, distinguished from ignorance, evil and ordinary absence of visible light.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception — Widening understanding to include more relationships, consequences and the needs of others.

En / Ain — A designation of the self-existent in the quoted Kabbalistic comparison; *Aiôr* is another form printed in the passage.

Esse — Latin for being; used by Professor Iyer for a triadic ground considered in relation to differentiated existence.

Fohat — The dynamic agency relating cosmic ideation to substance in Theosophical cosmology; Fohatic means pertaining to its activity.

Gupta Vidya — Sacred or esoteric wisdom; also the title of Professor Iyer's collected Theosophical writings.

Hebdomadic — Arranged in sevens or pertaining to a group of seven.

Hermetic — Pertaining to the wisdom tradition associated with Hermes; used by Professor Iyer in discussing spiritual knowledge and meditation.

Homogeneous / heterogeneous — Homogeneous means of a uniform nature; heterogeneous means differentiated or diverse. The quotations also use homogenous and heterogenous.

Human Solidarity — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for one another's welfare.

Hypostasis — An underlying reality or substantial aspect; hypostases is the plural, used in the quotation for aspects contemplated in relation to the Absolute.

Ideation — The activity of thought or the expression of ideal patterns; Divine Ideation concerns cosmic intelligence in the cited teaching.

Logos — Word or reason; in Theosophical metaphysics, an intelligible expression or ordering principle of manifestation. *Logoi* is the plural, and Logoic means pertaining to it.

Maha Pralaya — A great period of cosmic dissolution or non-manifestation.

Mahat — Universal intelligence or cosmic ideation in manifestation; identified with the Third *Logos* in the cited accounts.

Manas — The self-conscious thinking principle; in its higher sense, the reincarnating individuality. Manasic means pertaining to this principle.

Manasaputras — Sons of Mind; spiritual intelligences associated with the awakening of self-conscious *Manas* in humanity.

Manifestation — The expression of differentiated existence from a subtler or unmanifest condition.

Mantram — A sacred formula or invocation; a spelling related to mantra in the quoted sources.

Manu — A progenitor or guiding intelligence of humanity in the Theosophical interpretation; *Manus* is the plural.

Manvantara — A period of manifestation and activity, contrasted with *pralaya*; manvantaric means pertaining to such a period.

Matrix — An originating or encompassing field within which forms develop.

Maya — Conditioned or illusory appearance when compared with ultimate reality; not a denial of responsibility within lived experience.

Microcosm — A smaller expression or reflection of the whole; the human being considered in relation to the universal macrocosm.

Monad — The spiritual unit or pilgrim, commonly related to *Atma-Buddhi*; its essential unity is distinguished from the changing vehicles through which evolution proceeds.

Monas — Greek for a unit or unity; used in the quoted numerical and cosmological comparisons.

Mulaprakriti — Root-substance; the primordial basis of the objective aspect of manifestation, distinguished conceptually from the consciousness aspect associated with the *Logos*.

Narayana — A divine name associated with the spiritual source brooding over the primordial waters; related to *Ishwara* in the quoted interpretation.

Noumenal — Pertaining to an inward intelligible or spiritual ground, considered in relation to phenomenal expression; noumenon is the singular noun.

Parabrahmam / Parabrahman — The unconditioned Absolute beyond attributes and the distinction between subject and object; *Parabrahm* is another form in the sources.

Personality — The temporary identity, habits and instruments associated with a particular life, distinguished from enduring spiritual individuality.

Phenomenal — Pertaining to manifested appearances; phenomena is the plural noun.

Pralaya — A period of dissolution or rest between cycles of manifested activity.

Propator — Forefather or primal father; used in the quoted passage for the Depth or unmanifested *Logos*.

Self-consciousness — The capacity to reflect upon one's own experience, intention and action; the sources distinguish personal and more universal degrees.

Subjectivity / objectivity — The aspects of knowing consciousness and of what appears as an object; the quoted metaphysics examines their shared ground before differentiation.

Substance — The underlying material or field of manifestation in the metaphysical account; it is not restricted to ordinary physical matter.

Svayambhuva — Self-existent or self-born; *Swayambhuva* is another spelling in the quoted sources.

Tat — That; a designation directing attention beyond limiting descriptions and personal claims.

Tetraktys — The Pythagorean sacred four, represented by ten points in four rows; *Tetractys* is another spelling used in Theosophical interpretation.

Triad — A group of three; its members depend upon context, including *Atma*, *Buddhi* and *Manas* in the higher human constitution.

Universal Mind — The spiritual source or field of cosmic ideation; its relation to *Mahat* varies with the standpoint being discussed.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. R.N. Iyer — “The Logos and Man”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 55.

“The sacred mantram ‘the *Logos* in the Cosmos and the God in Man’ is more than a cryptic algebraic formula for the correlation of forces between cosmic Nature and the human principles. It intimates the identity in *esse* of the ever-present matrix of all worlds and the sovereign immortal spirit of Man. The complete realization of this close union and harmonious concord is the fruition of the Hermetic discipline of conscious invocation of the Invisible Sun, which alone can unveil the manifold Logoic mystery of the *Tetraktys*.”

Meditation thought: The relation between cosmic intelligence and human spirit invites inward study. What would make a professed conviction more faithfully present in the words and actions through which others encounter it?

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: Emergence into manifestation is more than a mechanical sequence. Let the distinction between Be-ness and being open a question that cannot be resolved by imagining one more object in time.

3. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 24.

“At the commencement of a great *Manvantara*, *Parabrahm* manifests as *Mulaprakriti* and then as the *Logos*. This *Logos* is equivalent to the ‘Unconscious Universal Mind,’ etc., of Western Pantheists. It constitutes the Basis of the subject-side of manifested Being, and is the source of all manifestations of individual consciousness. *Mulaprakriti* or Primordial Cosmic Substance, is the foundation of the object-side of things — the basis of all objective evolution and Cosmogenesis.”

Meditation thought: Attend to the consciousness and substance aspects together. What is lost when a means of expression is considered without its informing purpose, or a purpose without the conditions of its expression?

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

“As this process is recapitulated at more manifest levels, the Second *Logos* or Demiurge and the Third *Logos* or Man arise, each the objective expression of that degree of the concealed Thought which it reflects or mirrors in itself. With each, the triadic *esse* gives way to the sevenfold existence, the combination ten or 10, numerically and geometrically representing the descent and differentiation of light into the series of hebdomadic hierarchies symbolized by π . Each universe, world or planet has its own *Logos*, Lord or Eye manifesting sevenfold light.”

Meditation thought: Each expression reflects a degree of concealed thought. Consider the responsibility of a human instrument: what clarification is needed for an inward meaning to become less distorted in outward form?

5. 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. It is by this sevenfold Ray alone that the evolving Monads of a world can cognize the *Logos* through the Demiurge. The Third *Logos* is *Mahat*, the Divine Mind, Humanity ensouled by *Manasaputras*.”

Meditation thought: The ray connects a particular standpoint with a universal source. Let that image encourage confidence in the possibility of understanding and humility about the limits of a personal formulation.

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

“Within every Logoic sphere there is a mirroring from the relatively abstract to the relatively concrete, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, the realm of noumenal light to the phenomenal region of relative darkness. For eyes and senses accustomed to the shadowy concretions of a phenomenal world, the noumenal antecedents of that world are as darkness. Understood from the side of the concealed Thought, however, the phenomena of a world are but a ceaselessly shifting *maya*, a play of lesser lights against the bright white screen of Eternity.”

Meditation thought: A familiar appearance may conceal its deeper conditions. What assumption about the visible world becomes more open to inquiry when the difference between phenomenon and noumenon is remembered?

7. R.N. Iyer — “Mahat, Manu and the Avatar”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 372.

“Though these three hypostases of the Absolute are inconceivable to the finite mind, one may rise, through intuitive intimations, towards that ultimate ground of manifestation which is beyond all boundaries, prior to all beginnings and endings. To do so is to penetrate towards the fathomless Night of non-manifestation, the virtually immeasurable *Maha Pralaya* after the dissolution of the entire solar universe. This is the Divine Darkness wherein Universal Mind ‘was not’, because there were no *Ah-Hi* to contain and reflect the infinite Divine Thought.”

Meditation thought: Let the image of Divine Darkness interrupt the habit of equating the unknown with absence. Can the mind acknowledge a source beyond its present powers without filling the silence with a hasty picture?

8. R.N. Iyer — “Mahat, Manu and the Avatar”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, pp. 372–373.

“In the primordial process of unfoldment that precedes the emergence of the cosmos, *Mahat* is the Third *Logos*. In the arcane teachings of *Gupta Vidya* and in the derivative philosophical systems of antiquity, the First and the Second *Logoi* are characterized in a variety of ways to prevent any hard and fast or concretized conceptions of them. This alchemical variation of language is needed because the cosmic process intimated to the intuitive is rather like the passage from midnight through dawn to the day.”

Meditation thought: Dawn offers a gradual image for what rigid definitions can obscure. Follow the distinctions carefully, allowing a change in terminology to disclose an aspect that one fixed formula might conceal.

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

“*Narayana* is the Unmanifest *Logos*, which, like the Pythagorean cosmic *Monas*, radiates only to retire into the Divine Darkness. It is the Three-in-One which gives rise to the primordial seven *Logoi*, the highest *Ah-Hi*. It is the self-existent and parentless – *Svayambhuva Anupadaka*; it partakes of no differentiation in space or time, but belongs entirely to the undifferentiated noumenal abstract plane of cause.”

Meditation thought: Contemplate the self-existent within the passage's account of causation. Preserve the distinction between an unmanifest source and its periodic expression before extending the symbol into further comparisons.

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

“The fundamental idea which the student of *Gupta Vidya* must initially grasp is that we can never relate the One to the many unless we first recognize that the One is by its nature unconditioned, without attributes, and so without any relationship to anything else. There is an unbridgeable abyss separating that Unconditioned One or *Parabrahman* from the differentiated world of manifestation. We cannot, therefore, reduce the multiplicity of manifestation to a primordial or primeval unity simply by invoking *TAT* or *Parabrahman* – the absolute, attributeless One.”

Meditation thought: The unconditioned cannot be reached merely by adding together conditioned things. Notice where a useful concept has become an imagined possession, and allow the inquiry to regain its proper depth.

11. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 214.

“In the ‘Book of Numbers’ it is explained that *En* (or *Ain*, *Aiôr*) is the only self-existent, whereas its ‘Depth’ (*Bythos* or *Buthon* of the Gnostics, called *Propator*) is only periodical. The latter is *Brahmâ* as differentiated from *Brahma* or *Parabrahm*. It is the Depth, the Source of Light, or *Propator*, which is the unmanifested *Logos* or the abstract Idea, and not *Ain-Soph*, whose ray uses *Adam-Kadmon* or the manifested *Logos* (the objective Universe) ‘male and female’ — as a chariot through which to manifest.”

Meditation thought: A comparison can reveal kinship while preserving levels of meaning. Follow the difference between the self-existent and the periodical, without making every sacred name interchangeable.

12. 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 Dhyan Chohans, the Architects of the visible World. Thus from Spirit, or Cosmic Ideation, comes our consciousness; from Cosmic Substance the several vehicles in which that consciousness is individualised and attains to self — or reflective — consciousness; while Fohat, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life.”

Meditation thought: The dynamic link between ideation and manifestation invites a practical question. What understanding, means and sustained effort would allow one worthy idea to become a dependable contribution to shared life?