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## PRE-CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHICAL ORIGINS OF THE IDEA OF *LÓGOS*

– *Abstract* –

As a necessary link, in the history of religious ideas, between polytheistic and monotheistic establishments, a remarkable concordance, sapiential continuity and epistemological harmony characterize the pre-Christian philosophical positions on *lógos*, a transcendent principle that actively assist the supreme power of divinity in the making, organizing and governing of the spiritual universe, being at the same time immanent to the material universe, as an intelligible and causative determiner.

*Keywords:* *lógos*; word of God; Heraclitus of Ephesus; Plato; Aristotle; Philo of Alexandria.

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The Greek word *lógos* (utterance, rational justification, reason, definition, rational faculty, proportion) is polysemantic. As Francis E. Peters<sup>1</sup> states, one of the major difficulties related to its constant interpretation is to determine when exactly this common, amorphous term was used in a technical, specialized way, in order to express philosophical, theological, and theosophical notions. Concerning the history of the Christian spiritual universe, the first and most striking appearance of this term is to be found in the *Gospel according to John*, 1, 1 (“In the beginning was the Word, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Francis E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms*, New York University Press, New York, 1967, pp. 160-163.

Word was with God, and the Word was God”, which not surprisingly resonates with *Genesis*, 1, 1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”). It practically inaugurates, at the textual and dogmatic level, the communion of meaning between *davar-Elohyim*, the Divine *Lógos* (a philosophical and theological notion of Greek, Hellenistic origin) and Jesus Christ, the Christian Messiah (*Mashiah* or “God’s Anointed One”, an abstract but nevertheless prosopographical concept built in the Biblical text through Biblical prophetology and Biblical apocalypticism) and the Second Person of the Trinity.

This semantic union of two, originally distinct, fundamental theological notions (integrated in different or even hostile religious spaces the fusion of which can be explained by the Mediterranean Hellenistic syncretism) needs to be approached against the background of the “biography” or historical insertion of the *lógos*. Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 550-480 BCE) is the first pre-Socratic thinker in whose system (reduced nowadays to a fragmentary textual existence) *lógos* takes a central place: order of the macro-cosmic and micro-cosmic existence (order of the self and the Universe), principle of universal cohesion and unity, balance, measure of change, harmony, proportionality and norm of a well-governed society. Plato (c. 427-347 BCE) stated the opposition between *mýthos* (legendary, fantastic, mythical approach) and *lógos* (rational, analytical, truthful approach) in *Phaedo*, 61b and *Timaeus*, 26e. In *Phaedo*, 76b, the ability to provide a reason (*lógos*) of what we know is seen as a characteristic of the true consciousness (*epistēmē*). For Aristotle (c. 384-322 BCE), *lógos* is, on the one hand, the “right rule” or the “right reason” (*orthós lógos*, later rephrased by the Stoics as *recta ratio*; see *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1103b, 1144b) and, on the other, subsists in the notion of *eídos* (appearance, constitutive nature, form, type, species, idea) seen as *phýsis* (nature). Here we should point out that Aristotle identifies *phýsis* with *psychē* (vital breath, specter, vital principle, soul, *anima*) – as the term *psychē* was spiritually defined by the Platonic doctrine – which allows for *phýsis*, in its immanent role, to be considered *lógos* (*Physics*, II, 192b). This Aristotelian approach is at the root of the Stoic doctrine on *lógoi spermatikoi* (seminal reasons, *rationes seminales*) – germinating, everlasting, spiritual powers that include in their

embryonic, potential, pre-evolutionary and evolutionary state, the specimens of all individuals, the seminal elements of the universe<sup>2</sup>.

The meanings of *lógos* outlined so far may have been known to John the Apostle and the educated Christians of the I<sup>st</sup> century CE. In other words, it is likely that Heraclitic, Platonic and Aristotelian treatises or commentaries could be found in the library or on the desk of the “most endeared” apprentice. Writing on a slate, papyrus or parchment placed *on one’s knees*, squatting near the rabbis’ feet, and not writing *on the table*, is, in fact, the scribal paradigm for the Palestinian Antiquity of the I<sup>st</sup> and II<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE. Early Stoicism (Zeno of Kition or Citium, Cleanthes, Chrysippus) preceded, and later Stoicism (Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius) succeeded the beginning of the Christian era. Consequently, the Stoic ideas about *lógos* were present in the intellectual proximity of the Apostles and Church Fathers. The latter were also influenced, to a great extent, by Plotinus and neo-Platonism. In Plotinus’ opinion, *lógoi spermatikoi* coexist in the *psychē*, they define and symbolize the presence of the multiple in unity and constitute the cause of movement and its dynamism (see *Enneads*, II, 3, 14; IV, 3, 10; IV, 3, 15).

Philo of Alexandria (c. 15 BCE-50 CE) should be justly considered the author of the Greek-Semitic synthesis of *lógos*, his system blending the Hebrew Biblical tradition (“God’s Word”, *davar-Elohyim*) and the Greek philosophical categories. From a chronological viewpoint, he preceded Plotinus (c. 205-270 CE) by two centuries and was a contemporary of John the Apostle (c. 6-100 CE). Philo identified *lógos* to Divine Reason and *kosmos noētón* (the universe which is accessible to intelligence). For Philo, *lógos* is transcendent and divine, and its status is that of an instrumental cause of creation (visible world or *kosmos aisthētón*) and “God’s eldest Son”. Nevertheless He is not identical to God<sup>3</sup>. While Plotinus’ *lógos* is related to the Stoics’ *lógoi spermatikoi*, Philo of Alexandria identifies *lógos* with *noûs* (intelligence, intellect, spirit).

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 163.

Consequently, Heraclitic, Platonic, Stoic, Aristotelic, Hebrew-Biblical, Philonian, neo-Platonic and Christian layers edified the concept of *lógos* as part of the European philosophical and religious universe.

In order to outline the ideological architecture of the *lógos* concept within the pre-Christian philosophical systems already mentioned, it must be recalled that Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 550-480 BCE) defined *lógos* as order of the universe and the self, balance and measure, principle of things, reason, fire and contradiction, normative law of the society and cosmos<sup>4</sup>. Socrates (470-399 BCE) styled as “excellent” Heraclitus’ statements which he understood, as well as those which he did not understand, and claimed that, in order to reveal their profoundness, a diver from Delos would be required. Plato recalled in *Cratylus*, 402a, Heraclitus’ axiom concerning the transient nature of material realities, which reveals the impossibility to dive twice in the same river, while Aristotle, in *Physics*, III, 5, 205 a 3, mentioned Heraclitus’ doctrine about *ekpýrōsis*, the end of the universe through conflagration. Sextus Empiricus (c. 160-210 CE) preserved and re-wrote the basics of the Heraclitic gnoseology, built around the idea of *lógos*. Man is endowed with two organs for the knowledge of truth: senses and reason (*lógos*). While sensation is not trustworthy, reason (*lógos*) is the criterion of truth, a radical position according to which the Ephesian thinker postulated that “it is characteristic of Barbarian souls to trust senses lacking reason (*lógos*)”. Consequently, the *lógos* of divine essence, the *lógos* common to everyone, is the arbiter of truth, and everything that surrounds us, the universe itself, is imbued with *lógos* and intelligence. We become intelligent only if we breathe in the Divine *Lógos*. Intelligence (*noûs*), subjected to amnesia during sleep, keeps in touch with the outside universe only by breathing. After awakening, human intelligence re-establishes communion with the environment and the divine reason, which leads to the recovery of the ability to reason (*lógikè dýnamis*) and the continuity of intelligence’s vital flux through the senses. Like incandescent coals (when close to the fire) that turn cold if they have been removed from the fire, the fragments (elements, substances) from the environment included in the receptacles of the human

<sup>4</sup> Adelina Piatkowski, Ion Banu (ed.), *Filosofia greacă până la Platon*, I-2, Editura științifică și enciclopedică, București, 1979-1984, pp. 323-372.

bodies, when separated, they lose their power to reason. That is why everyone sharing the divine reason is identified by Heraclitus with the knowledge of truth. According to Sextus Empiricus, Heraclitus proves most convincingly that common reason (*koinòs lógos*) is the only criterion to pursue and that only the things that show to all of us are trustworthy, while the things that separately appear to each of us are false. In Heraclitus' opinion, *lógos* is impersonal: man is not endowed with reason and it is only the environment that has the ability to think<sup>5</sup>.

Diogenes Laërtius (III<sup>rd</sup> century CE) supports the Heraclitic sentence in that the depth of the human soul is, in fact, the depth of the *lógos*: "Searching the boundaries of the soul you could not find them, no matter the path you would choose. *Lógos* is that deep." For Charles Bénard, who does the exegesis of this text in *La philosophie ancienne*, *lógos* in Heraclitus' vision becomes the ultimate, all-encompassing reason, the rational basis of all existence, necessity, universal order, and essence of all things: "The rule means, therefore, complying with reason, resigning to law, universal necessity. From this viewpoint good and evil, just like being and non-being, are identical. There is no good without evil and no evil without good, there is reciprocity. Not to revolt but to understand, that is true wisdom. Serenity should be looked for in rest, in the compliance with the universal order<sup>6</sup>."

As conceived by Heraclitic philosophy, *lógos* is at the same time everlasting and incomprehensible. Although it is the basis, cause, and principle of human rationality, it forever transcends this low rank rationality; and yet, people need to do continuously the rational ritual of approaching *lógos*, to attain continuously the dynamic, active knowledge of the ultimate truth by directly participating in a cosmos organized through *lógos*. Sextus Empiricus deals with this dimension of the Heraclitic *lógos* in *Adversus mathematicos* (VII, 132): "People are unable to grasp the meaning of this *lógos* that has always existed, either before or as soon as they heard about it; although everything happens according to this *lógos*, people look incompetent when they pretend to be competent about such words and things as I describe, dividing everything according to its nature and showing its

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 330-336.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Bénard, *La philosophie ancienne*, Félix Alcan, Paris, 1885, p. 58.

structure.” A principle of the whole, *lógos* is at the same time a principle of contradiction, achieving through itself, through axiomatic authority, the unity of opposites, an important fragment of the Heraclitic doctrine that has been preserved in *The Refutation of All Heresies* (IX, 9) of Saint Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-235): “Heraclitus then says that the universe is one, divisible and indivisible; generated and ungenerated; mortal and immortal; reason, eternity; Father, Son, and justice, God. ‘For those who hearken not to me, but to *lógos*, it is wise that they acknowledge all things to be one.’” From the perspective of modern philosophical exegesis, the Heraclitic position points out the deep unity of the active multiple forces in the cosmos. In relation to this unity-multiplicity, the philosopher’s attitude should rely not on the passive waiting for revelation but on “awakening”, attention, spiritual activity, rational dynamism, in order to identify directly, beyond any false wisdom, the ultimate truth, the Universal, *Lógos* as organizing cosmic principle: “*Lógos* is our reason and Reason of the whole, undividedly; Reason or Verb, Law, Unity, driving Force leading to evolution, that can be seen as separate because it is universal, but that can also be understood by identifying it with the cosmos in evolution, because it is present even in the human beings who ignore it<sup>7</sup>.”

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-211/216) mentions in *Stromata* (V, 105) the Heraclitic doctrine of denying the Genesis of the world through the auctorial action of a god or a man so that one can understand the world philosophically, as an eternal fire which exists in an eternal present: “This world, the same for everyone, was not made by a god or a man. It has always been and it will always be an eternal fire which, if needs be, gets lit or goes out.” Clement’s worldview postulates that the Christian truth is the crowning of the preceding pagan philosophy. Nevertheless his re-writing of ancient Greek cosmogonical works reminisces of the identity between *fire* and *lógos* within the all-encompassing fresco of the creation of the universe. The elements are thus generated from the fire and will return into the fire at the end of time, the eternal fire changes into a sea, an embryo of universal order from which the earth and the sky are born together with everything in them,

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<sup>7</sup> Pierre Aubenque, Jean Bernhardt, François Chatelet, *La philosophie païenne*, I-II, Hachette, Paris, 1972, I, pp. 39-40.

before everything changes back to fire through a universal conflagration (*ekpýrōsis*): “(The earth) spreads growing bigger and bigger and, according to the *lógos* proportion, it retains the measure it used to have before becoming earth.” *Lógos* (“the divinity that manages everything”) understood as fire stands as principle-instrument and proportion-measure of the universal metamorphoses, of alchemy, and world destruction. For Heinrich Ritter, who sees Heracliteism as a *dynamic physics* within the larger framework of the exegesis of pre-Socratic Ionian philosophy, the passage above implies the understanding of *lógos* as a *rational fire*, a principle of all things, the eternal life of the fire being the only constant, stable, irreducible element present in beings. That is why Heraclitus states that the human soul is just a spark temporarily separated from the universal fire, from the *lógos* that comprises the sky and governs everything, and can subsist only through the rational fire that continuously revives it, as long as man has a fundamentally irrational nature, reason being the prerogative of the all-encompassing sky. The analogy between *lógos* and celestial fire, the divine ether that governs the world, explains the dynamics of the continual generation and destruction of the elements, the polymorphous life of the world, animated by the eternal return of the one and the multiple<sup>8</sup>.

Before dealing with the post-Heraclitic approaches of the concept of *lógos*, it is worth mentioning, in accordance with George Thomson<sup>9</sup>, the fact that a possible origin of the Heraclitic doctrine about *lógos* can be identified in *hieroi lógoi* (the sacred words), in the sense of mystical and ritual formulae uttered by those taking part in the Eleusinian mysteries and Orphic-Pythagorean mysteries. The hypothetical Pythagorean origin of *lógos* – in other words, the terminus of the process of regression in time, in order to analytically elucidate this notion – is also supported by Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) when he considers Pythagoras (c. 570-495 BCE) the most influential authority in European thought (the incipient delimitation between

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson (ed.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II-V, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1978-1979, II, pp. 163-568; Heinrich Ritter, *Histoire de la philosophie*, I-IV, Paris, Ladrangé, 1835-1836, I, pp. 172-197; Brice Parain (ed.), *Histoire de la philosophie*, I-II, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, I, pp. 55-122; Aubenque, Bernhardt, Chatelet, *La philosophie païenne*, I, pp. 51-133.

<sup>9</sup> George Thomson, “Héraclite et sa philosophie”, in: *La Pensée*, 116 / 1964, p. 16.

what was to become Europe's intellectualized theology and Asian mysticism): "The whole conception of an eternal world, revealed to the intellect but not to the senses, is derived from him. But for him, Christians would not have thought of Christ as the Word; but for him, theologians would not have sought logical proofs of God and immortality. But in him all this is still implicit<sup>10</sup>."

The word *lógos* lengthens its polysemantic career in the vast scholarly edifice of Platonism. The *mýthos-lógos* dichotomy is affirmed in *Phaedo*, 61b ("So first I composed a hymn to the god whose festival it was; and after the god, considering that a poet, if he is really to be a poet, must compose myths and not speeches (...)"). The syntagm "myths and not speeches" designate as *lógos*' field the rational, analytical and true narrative as opposed to the *mýthos*' field, a field of legend, of the fantastic and unreal<sup>10</sup>. It is also useful to take into account the ability to see the reason (*lógos*) of what we know as a characteristic of true knowledge (*epistēmē*), according to *Phaedo*, 76b ("When a man knows, can he give an account of what he knows or not?" (...)) "And do you think that everybody can give an account of the matters about which we have just been talking?"). This gnoseological position is better outlined in *Theaetetus*, 201c-d ("He said that true belief with the addition of an account was knowledge, while belief without an account was outside its range. Where no account could be given of a thing, it was not 'knowable' – that was the word he used – where it could, it was knowable."), in which the author practically postulates the following equation: *dóxa* (true opinion) plus *lógos* (meaning) equals knowledge or *epistēmē*, the absence of *lógos* necessarily placing opinions and meaningless things in the field of non-knowledge and the unknowable. From this viewpoint, it is most fascinating to look at the relation (in *Theaetetus*, 206d) of the *dóxa-lógos-epistēmē* trinity to the human mouth's "system" and to the sonorous flow or spring of words, in accordance with *Timaeus*, 75e ("For all that enters in and supplies food to the body is necessary; while the stream of speech which flows out and ministers to intelligence is of all streams the fairest and most good."), the personal thought reflecting itself in the flow of words like in a mirror or in water. In

<sup>10</sup> Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Peters, *op.cit.*, p. 272.



the same context, in the referential system of another definition of knowledge (*Theaetetus*, 210a-b), *lógos* is considered to be the specificity or distinctiveness of each thing, through which things differ from one another (a previous defining sketch identified in *lógos* the knowledge of a reality from one extreme to the other, though the statement does not satisfy the Socratic “midwife”). The idea of the communion between reason (*lógos*) and the essence or being (*ousía*) of each thing is resumed by Plato in *Republic*, 534b (“And do you not also give the name dialectician to the man who is able to exact an account of the essence of each thing?”), the knowledge of “what is good” being also attained by *lógos*, only reason being able to extract the idea of what is good from the amalgam of things.

Equally memorable is the reasoning (*logismós*) of *Dēmiourgós* in *Timaeus*, 30a-b, which stems out of His desire to create everything right and perfect. Accordingly the Demiurge impregnates the order of the cosmic reality in everything that is visible and stirred by a discordant and chaotic movement, thinking that order is altogether better than disorder. The Demiurge, therefore, decided that in the universe of the visible no achievement whose whole is spiritless would ever be more beautiful than an achievement whose whole has spirit (*noûs*), and that it was impossible for spirit (*noûs*) to exist in something without soul (*psychē*). That is why He built the universe putting spirit into soul and soul into body. For Heinrich Ritter<sup>11</sup>, who comments on this passage, the soul achieves, through the power of divinity, the difficult union between the “other” (spirit) and the “same” (matter). One can infer, in the larger framework of Plato’s system, that if *lógos* is the *ousía* of each thing, then it also designates the rational essence of the human soul, whose origin is in the Demiurge or, in other words, in the sphere of divinity which joins the sphere of materiality by achieving the difficult union between spirit, soul, and body.

One of the meanings that Aristotle gives to the word *lógos* is that of *hóros*, *horismós* (edge, definition), in *Metaphysics*, 1035b-1036a (where he defines *eídos*), 1039b (in order to postulate the impossibility of defining matter and sensitive individual substances), 1043b (in relation to the Cynics’ opinions that render the true definition impossible), and 1078b (regarding the

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<sup>11</sup> Ritter, *op.cit.*, II, p. 291.

use of the definition in the field of ethics, a Socratic philosophical innovation). But the term is also extended to include (one more time, so to speak, although particularly in the field of ethics) reason, rationality. For example, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 1134a: “This is why we do not permit a man to rule, but the law (...)”, where Ingram Bywater emphasizes *lógon* as compared to *nómos* and *orthós lógos*, just reason, which was to be used by the Stoics as *recta ratio*; *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1103b: “Now the formula ‘to act in conformity with the right principle’ is common ground and may be assumed as the basis of our discussion. We shall speak about this formula later, and consider both the definition of the right principle and its relation to the other virtues.”; and *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1144b: “A proof of this is that everyone, even at the present day, in defining Virtue, after saying that it is a habitual frame of mind and specifying the things with which it is concerned, adds that it is a disposition determined by the right principle; and the right principle is the principle determined by Prudence.” Although of Platonic origin, *orthós lógos* (see *Phaedo*, 73a, 94a, where, technically, it does not have the exact Aristotelian meaning) is identified with practical wisdom, a virtue able to condition the existence of any ethical identity, a norm that provided moral rectitude, a major premise of the syllogism of action and a formal cause – *eídos* – of what is good<sup>12</sup>.

Aristotle distances himself from Plato by converting the term *dialectics* into *logic*. In fact, by dialectics Aristotle designates the act of thinking, using the principles of similitude, “the similar knows the similar”, unlike Anaxagoras (c. 500-428 BCE) who claimed that “the similar knows the non-similar”. For Aristotle, thought (*nóēsis*) is supreme good in itself, the principle which the entire nature depends on and which moves nature through desire. God is intelligence and thought is the meaning of life. But God can think only Himself as He cannot think an exterior object or the “first object to come”. And God, by thinking Himself, defines Himself as *thought of thought*

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<sup>12</sup> Aristotelis, *Ethica Nicomachea*, Ingram Bywater (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1920, pp. 24-25, pp. 101-102, pp. 128-129; Aristotel, *Etica nicomahică*, Stella Petecel (ed.), Editura științifică și enciclopedică, București, 1988, pp. 118-119, pp. 32-34, pp. 150-152. See also Platon, *Opere*, I-VII, Petru Creția, Constantin Noica (ed.), Editura științifică și enciclopedică, București, 1974-1993, IV, p. 73, pp. 105-106, pp. 208-209, p. 267.

(*nóēsis noēseōs nóēsis*) (*Metaphysics*, XII, 9, 1074b)<sup>13</sup>. God is not practical reason, but theoretical reason. Commenting on the ancient theories on reason, Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles follow in the Aristotelian philosophy the trajectory of the spirit towards the intelligible, up to the stage in which, released from materiality, the pure act is identical with the divine. Without image there can be no notion (*Perì psychēs / De anima*, III, 7), but in order to become an element of thought, image should go through a first metamorphosis, that is to become *phantasía logistiké*, a capacity in which it does no longer reproduce sensations slavishly but stands for general, universal notions. This changed image is for the concept what a geometrical figure is for the truth it demonstrates. If thought needs to be supported by image, it is because the intelligible forms are included in the sensitive forms, thought (*noūs*) having the role to operate the separation. Divine thought (*nóēsis noēseōs nóēsis*) or *noūs* includes two parts in an intimate relation, just like matter and form: *noūs pathetikós* and *noūs poietikós*. *Noūs pathetikós* is passive understanding, a kind of *tabula rasa*, a white sheet of paper on which initially there is nothing written but which, at the same time, contains potentially all the intelligible forms, and which can accomplish the transition towards an act only by experience. General ideas (*eídos*) are established progressively in *noūs pathetikós*, just like the soldiers that run away from a lost battle and, one by one, stop and regroup. The induction exceeds sensation by reaching the universal, and in this manner the syllogism's elements (attributes and predicates) are defined. The deduction stirs the syllogism's elements into action, outlines the field of science (*epistēmē*) which is based on experience and is the work of reasoning (*lógismos* or *noūs pathetikós*). Complementarily, *noūs poietikós* is the form of the notional universe obtained through *noūs pathetikós*, the latter being in the same relation as reflected light to original light. *Noūs poietikós* is active intellect, the presence of divinity in the spirit, both the world and science being confined to an unintelligible state until they have reached the stage of divinity. Active intellect (intellect turned into thought) acts on passive understanding (either directly or by reflection) and determines the intelligible

<sup>13</sup> Ritter, *op.cit.*, III, pp. 53-54; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, John H. M'Mahon (trans., ed.), Henry C. Bohn, London, 1857, pp. 347-389.

forms to effectuate the transition from potential existence to active existence. Reasoning (*lógismos* or *noũs pathetikós*) can thus be understood, from an Aristotelian viewpoint, as a substitute to divine thought (*noũs poietikós*), both *noetical* hypostases making up the unity of *noũs*, which is God as *thought of thought* (*nóēsis noēseōs nóēsis*) (*Peri psychēs / De anima*, III, 4, 5)<sup>14</sup>.

In *Metaphysics*, 991b, Aristotle understands *lógos* as mathematical proportion, a meaning extended to the relation and proportion of mixed ingredients which are blended into a unitary substance. Sensation can be understood as an alteration in that it is the transition of one of the sensitive faculties from potency to act. While the description of sensation is done in purely physical terms, opposites can be seen as perceptible qualities of physical bodies: cold-hot, wet-dry. The subject that perceives is integrated in the world of the physical bodies, therefore there are opposites in it too, which the subject perceives through the organ (*órganon*) adequate to perception. In order for the subject to perceive the opposites existing in the same body, *órganon* should be in a state of balance as far as these extremes are concerned. The ability to perceive is thus identified with an average or proportional state, with a balance between the contraries, neither of the opposed qualities existing in act, both of them existing potentially, “in power”. The same idea was dealt with by Plotinus (c. 204-270 CE) in *Enneads*, IV, 4, 23, where *órganon* is the corporal or material organ affected by experience or sensation (*patheîn*), while the *páthos* of the organ is a proportional average between the sensitive object and the *noetic* subject. The average state (*lógos*) that is characteristic of the Aristotelian *órganon* possibly originates in the notion of numerical proportion (*lógos*). In *Peri psychēs / De anima*, I, 5, 410 a, Aristotle paraphrases the notion of numerical proportion attributed to Empedocles (c. 490-430 BCE): “For each is, not merely the elements of which it is composed, but those elements combined in a determinate mode or ratio (*lógos*), as Empedocles himself says of bones.” Fragments 96-98 attribute to Empedocles the words: “So arose white bones divinely fitted together by the cement of proportion (*lógos*). (...) And the earth (...) meets with these in nearly equal proportions (*lógoi*) (...)”, in order

<sup>14</sup> Paul Janet, Gabriel Séailles, *Histoire de la philosophie. Les problèmes et les écoles*, Librairie Charles Delagrave, Paris, 1887, pp. 115-124.

to explain the structure of beings constituted of flesh, blood and bones, in accordance with the divine attractions of harmony (*harmonía*), the joining of opposites<sup>15</sup>.

The origin of the Stoic concept of *lógoi spermatikoi* (seminal reasons, *rationes seminales*) lies in the Platonic and Aristotelian notion of *eídos* (appearance, constitutive nature, form, type, species, idea)<sup>16</sup>. Although, probably, of a Pythagorean origin, the Platonic ideas were initially versions of Socratic definitions (*lógoi*) referring to ethical qualities (see *Phaedo*, 99e: “So I thought I must have recourse to conceptions and examine in them the truth of realities”; in *Phaedo*, 100a, the study of “realities by means of conceptions” is stated in parallel with the direct study of the “facts of daily life”, the *lógos* slipping here to the meaning of hypothesis. The rational approach, the logical investigation, however, aims at identifying the *type of cause* (*Phaedo*, 100b: “I am going to try to explain to you the nature of that cause which I have been studying, and I will revert to those familiar subjects of ours as my point of departure (...)”), a cause of birth and death, meant to elucidate the issue of the soul’s immortality. The term *eídos* is used in *Lysis*, *Euthyphron*, and *Menon*, where its meaning becomes more abstract. In *Metaphysics*, 1078b, Aristotle states that Socrates “regarded neither universals nor definitions as existing in separation”, therefore he does not attribute a transcendent existence to *eídos*, which is somehow surprising due to the definition of ideas as elements of a supersensitive reality and conditions of any philosophical discourse. As the central item of Platonic metaphysics, the ideas become the cause of true knowledge (*epistēmē*), in accordance with *Phaedo*, 65d-e, *Parmenides*, 135b-c and *Republic*, 508c. The Platonic ideas are transcendent, eternal, indivisible, and the relation between them and sensitive things is best characterized by “participation”. They exist in a *tópos noētós* (intelligible place) and are organized within *zoon noētós* (the intelligible living), as shown in *Republic*, 508c (“the good is in the

<sup>15</sup> Peters, *op.cit.*, pp. 190-195; Aristotle, *Órganon I*, Mircea Florian (ed.), Editura științifică, București, 1957, pp. 125-137, pp. 169-190; Empedocles, *The Fragments of Empedocles*, William Ellery Leonard (trans.), The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago-London, 1908, pp. 45-46.

<sup>16</sup> Peters, *op.cit.*, pp. 216-221; André-Jean Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, I-IV, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2006, II – *Le Dieu cosmique*, pp. 75-341.

intelligible region”), 517b (“the soul’s ascension to the intelligible region”), and in *Timaeus*, 30c-d (“intellect”). Each human being is empowered with the virtue to acknowledge through *anámnēsis* a Platonic *eidos* for every class of things (ethics, mathematics, what is good, what is beautiful)<sup>17</sup>. For Aristotle, unlike his magister, *eidos* is not a separate subsistent, but a principle of complete substances, a formal reason for things (*Physics*, II, 194b), a correlative of matter in composite things (*Physics*, I, 190b), and the intelligible essence (*ousía*) of an Existent (*Metaphysics*, 1013a), the knowledge of things being relatively identifiable with the knowledge of their *eidos* (*Metaphysics*, 1010a)<sup>18</sup>.

The re-elaboration of the Platonic-Aristotelian *eidos* in early Stoicism generated the concept of *lógoi spermatikoí*. Émile Bréhier sees Zeno of Citium (c. 335-264 BC) as “above all a prophet of the *Lógos*”, because according to the system of thought elaborated by the founder of Stoicism the notions of God, Zeus’s soul, Reason, *Lógos*, necessity of things, divine law, and Fate are conceived as hypostases of one and the same ontological reality<sup>19</sup>.

For the Stoics, each body is considered to be the natural, intimate, indissoluble reunion of two elements that can be separated only at an abstract level: the passive principle, the indeterminate raw matter (*tò páschon – hylē*) and the active principle (*tò poioūn – lógos*), the force always in action, always “strained”, which penetrates matter to the smallest particles that make it up, at the same time moving and organizing it. The Stoic universe is axiomatized through a laconic enunciation: there is no force without matter, there is no matter without force. This double, nevertheless unitary logic of necessity is able to enliven, in the realm of matter, a principle of cohesion able to achieve the perpetual blending of the components and the dynamics of the living, and in the realm of force, a material receptacle, a corporal subject

<sup>17</sup> Peters, *op.cit.*, pp. 74-81; Russell, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-218.

<sup>18</sup> Peters, *op.cit.*, pp. 213-215; Jonathan Beere, *Doing and Being. An Interpretation of Aristotle’s Metaphysics Theta*, Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York, 2012, pp. 73-90.

<sup>19</sup> Émile Bréhier, *Histoire de la philosophie*, I-II, Félix Alcan, Paris, 1928, I, p. 298, p. 314. Zeno’s doctrine is also mentioned by Lactantius (c. 260-325) in *On True Wisdom*, chapter IX.

in which the reality of action and movement can express itself in the sensitive universe. Since it acts directly, reason is invested by the Stoics with a corporal existence. The Stoic materialism reveals itself here as a quasi-spiritualism: the breath (*pneúma*) that crosses and animates matter plays the role of a purely universal spirit embodied in the mass of the cosmos, whose movement, evolution, organization and activity are owed to it. The agent (reason, soul) penetrates the passive mass (matter, body) the same way as incense spreads in the air and wine in water, achieving the perfect osmosis<sup>20</sup>. That is why physical action can be conceived only due to the formal negation of impenetrability, Stoicism being defined as a physics of continuity and immanence, susceptible to successive semantic reinvestments at the ontological, gnoseological, metaphysical, theological and moral levels<sup>21</sup>. *Pneúma* (spiritual fluid, vital breathe, active principle) is the immanent principle of organization, manifesting itself in the realm of physical reality as universal *Lógos*, while the bivalent “expressiveness” of the *pneúma-lógos* type unveils itself, through unloosen universal “tension” (*tónos*), as the divinity’s utterance in the material cosmos. We should mention here that for Zeno of Citium the immanent active principle (*lógos*) exerts his *hēgemonía* (leadership) over the universe. He is *pneúma pyroeidés* (the fiery influx), the human soul, and Zeus, the soul of the world in a corporal universe in which the only non-corporal exceptions are *tópos* (space), *chrónos* (time), *tò kenón* (vacuum), and *tò lektón* (the expressible). It is only the gods and men that are endowed with thought or reason (*lógos*) as a hypostasis of the cosmic ruling power (*hēgemonicón*). The *Lógos*, whose fundamental characteristic is discursiveness (*eklaletiké*), manifests himself in a unitary way through a spiritual reality defined by the later Roman Stoics as *ratio et oratio* (thought and language)<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Janet, Séailles, *op.cit.*, pp. 977-978. See also Alexander of Aphrodisias (c. 150-215), Iulius Ludovicus Ideler (ed.), *Physici et medici graeci minores*, I-II, G. Reimeri, Berolini, 1841, I, pp. 81-106; Kevin L. Flannery, *Ways into the Logic of Alexander of Aphrodisias*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1995, pp. 10-169.

<sup>21</sup> Aubenque, Bernhardt, Chatelet, *op.cit.*, I, pp. 199-200.

<sup>22</sup> N. I. Barbu, Adelina Piatkowski (ed.), *Scriitori greci și latini*, Editura științifică și enciclopedică, București, 1978, pp. 190-194.

The Stoic *lógos* is one and multiple (*lógoi spermatikoí*). The active principle, as a rational force, works within matter (*hylē*) and generates the multitude of characteristic forms and qualities, the same way as the sun's tutelary action makes vegetable embryos give birth to plants. The seminal agents of the Rational Force (*lógos, Zeús, hēgemonicón*) are *lógoi spermatikoí*, immortal, paradigmatic and germinative powers that are the specimens of all individuals susceptible to constitute the sphere of the existing. Rational analogies of the vegetable and animal seeds, these individual *lógoi* are meant to survive the cyclical destruction of the universe by fire (*ekpýrōsis*), and make up the seed-bed of the next *kosmos*, being immanent to matter. Grains of divine rationality, disseminated throughout the amorphous matter as "centers" of spirituality able to govern universal creation, destruction and regeneration or renewal, *lógoi spermatikoí* are the origin of a fundamental theological outlook that will be rephrased over and over again in the neo-Platonic, Gnostic and Kabbalistic systems, being equivalent with Plotinus' *próodos* – emanation, procession, or communication of divinity – and to the Sephirothic emission, whose origin lies in *Ein Sof* or the "absolute infinite", in accordance with the early *Kabbalah* of the Gerona school, in the X<sup>th</sup>-XI<sup>th</sup> centuries Spain. Thus, the universe can be understood as a living personal reality in which all components vibrate in unison and react to each other, a whole which is dominated by *sympátheia* (common emotion, cosmic sympathy). This cosmic self is defined as complex, unitary and multiple at the same time, like an assembly made up of crystal parts in which the movement of an element causes a general bustle. In the universe conceived in this manner there is no causality of a non-corporal nature. The ultimate wisdom is integrated in the universal sphere of corporality and the living, consequently God governs and manages the world (*dióikesis*) through His reason, the unitary *lógos* multiplied in *lógoi spermatikoí*. His spiritual ruling power is spread everywhere, it penetrates everything deeply as the ontological and linguistic essence of all the constituent parts of the universe, the meaning of which is to "resurrect" and "enlighten" the whole of nature, defined as *philántropos*, "man-lover"<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Janet, Séailles, *op.cit.*, p. 978; Peters, *op.cit.*, p. 160.



In this context, fate is not a concatenation of causes and effects but the unique cause (*lógos spérmatikos*) in which lie all particular causes or seminal reasons (*lógoi spermatikoí, rationes seminales*) that every individual being develops from. This unitary and multiple world, based on *lógos / lógoi*, can be understood as a cosmos of forces or active divine thoughts able to substitute the Platonic sphere of the *eídos*. In a less abstract Stoic philosophical version, a number of *lógoi*, which govern the phenomena of the earth or the sea, are indentified with folk divinities, revealed through myths (Hestia, Poseidon, Gaia, Demeter). In his writings, Lucius Annaeus Cornutus (a Stoic philosopher from the I<sup>st</sup> century CE) preserves the Stoic sapiential tradition in order to explain the tiniest details of folk myths as allegories of certain physical phenomena<sup>24</sup>.

In a fragment preserved in the collection of texts of Joannes Stobaeus (a native of Stobi, in Macedonia Salutaris, c. 500 CE), God is described as the artistic fire that the world comes from and develops like a seed, a Stoic opinion the canonicity of which is guaranteed by the invocation of the three founders of Stoicism – Zeno of Citium, Cleanthes (c. 330-230 BCE), and Chrysippus (c. 279-206 BCE) (*Anthologium*, I). Previously, the passage includes a presentation of the cyclical conflagration or *ekpýrōsis*, in which the matter of the world is re-absorbed by fire before a new coming into being of the cosmos. The Stoic concept of *lógoi spermatikoí* is implicit here. Also in Stobaeus (*Anthologium*, I; a passage from Cleanthes) one can find an explanation of the notions of proportionality and rationality included in *lógos* and *lógoi spermatikoí*, stemming from the idea of natural development that originates in the seed. *Lógos spérmatikos* is, therefore, the spermatic relation that defines each thing and pinpoints the formative “equation” of each thing. From this viewpoint, God is the rational spermatic principle of the world and includes in Himself all the rational spermatic relations that exist in the world and cause development. The technical genius, creative thinking and artistic power belong with the active principle (*lógos*, fire, God) whose intrinsic, rational, cyclic movement can generate and destroy the cosmos<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Lucius Annaeus Cornutus, *De natura deorum*, Jean-Baptiste D’Ansse de Villoison (ed.), Libraria Dieterichiana, Gottingae, 1844.

<sup>25</sup> Ioannis Stobaei, *Anthologium*, I-V, Curtio Wachsmuth (ed.), Weidmannos, Berolini, 1884-1923; Ritter, *op.cit.*, III, pp. 488-490; Bréhier, *op.cit.*, I, p. 315.

The later Latin Stoicism – Seneca (c. 4 BCE-65 CE), Musonius Rufus (c. 20/30-100), Epictetus (55-135), Marcus Aurelius (121-180) – did not bring along important innovations in point of the Stoic outlook on *lógos*. Mention deserves here Marcus Aurelius’ paraphrase of Heraclitus of Ephesus in *Ta eis heautòn* or *Thoughts addressed to himself*, IV, 46, which postulates the perpetual paradox of communication, dialogue and misunderstanding or discord between people and *lógos*: “Men, though in an uninterrupted communication with the *lógos* that manages everything, are in discord with it, and the things they come across every day seem strange to them<sup>26</sup>.” This paragraph seems to indirectly postulate man’s loneliness in a strange cosmos, only relatively attenuated by the privilege of rationality, by the impermanent rational connection between being and the ultimate principle, which cannot annul the incomprehensible relation between *lógos* and nothingness: irreducible, impersonal and indifferent when it comes to the tribulations of human thought, to revolt and submission. The main later pre-Christian re-elaborations were provided by the neo-Platonic and Philonian synthesis.

Approaching Plotinus’ *lógos* involves a more detailed discussion of the Alexandrian Trinity. It seems that, to a considerable extent, the author of the neo-Platonic concept of Trinity (in the sense of the Alexandrian theology of the I<sup>st</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE) is Ammonius Saccas (III<sup>rd</sup> century CE), as much a magister to Plotinus (c. 204/205-270; founder of neo-Platonism) as to Origen (c. 185-252/254; Christian exegete and theologian, Greek Church Father), himself probably influenced by Philo of Alexandria, by the allegorical textual exegesis and the Greek-Semitic theological synthesis inaugurated by the latter. Initially raised in the Christian tradition, Ammonius Saccas later chose philosophy and shone as a school leader, without leaving written texts about his doctrine, which is supposed to have included the basics of neo-Platonism in general and of Plotinus’ in particular.

The School of Alexandria, therefore, accepts a triple God, made up of three principles or *hypóstaseis*: One, *noûs* (Spirit or Reason), *psychē* (Soul). The major difference between the Christian Trinity and the Alexandrian neo-Platonic Trinity lies in the fact that while in the former the three Persons have

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<sup>26</sup> Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *To himself*, Gerald H. Rendall (trans.), Macmillan & Co., London – New York, 1902, pp. 29-44.

an equal status and make up one God in three Persons, in the latter the three *hypóstaseis* are unequal and ranked according to the moment of their emanation from the preceding superior principle (Three out of Two, Two out of One)<sup>27</sup>.

The descent from One to *noûs*, and from *noûs* to *psychē*, a principle of divine development or emanation in neo-Platonism, is called *próodos* (procession, descending communication of inferior persons from superior ones). What is essentially characteristic, however, of the neo-Platonic procession is that, through its emanation from the superior to the inferior, the superior does not diminish at all, it does not lose anything substantial. In agreement with Plotinus, Origen claimed that the First Person in Christianity was superior to the Second, while the Second was superior to the Third, a view later on declared heretical by the Church<sup>28</sup>.

For Plotinus, One lies beyond the subject-object duality, being endowed with an “eternal super-intellect, *hypernóesis áei ousa*, a simple intuition of itself through itself”. From One’s self-contemplation (the identity between he who watches and he who is watched), *noûs* is born, from which *psychē* (soul) emanates through *lógos* (thought). The hypostasis thus generated does not absolutely separate itself from the generating hypostasis, to which it owes its existence, but contemplates continuously and nostalgically the higher perfection from which it emanated and aspires to being re-absorbed in it. Thus, the Son turns to His Father and the Soul to the Son, and everything in the universe is organized by the Soul and aspires to reunite with him. Therefore, in the best of all worlds (since Good is the principle governing the entire existence), the emanation from God corresponds to the orientation of all the elements of the whole towards God<sup>29</sup>.

*Noûs*, although similar to One, is inferior to it, in compliance with the general law that postulates the inferiority of the product to the producer (heat to fire, cold to snow). Although a principle of *noûs*, One is different from *noûs* (in *Enneads*, VI, 7, 20, 21, Plotinus resorts to Plato to argue that, if One is identical with Good, reason does not belong to the species of Good).

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<sup>27</sup> Janet, Séailles, *op.cit.*, p. 818.

<sup>28</sup> Russell, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>29</sup> Janet, Séailles, *op.cit.*, pp. 992-994.

Plotinus' view of One is relatively close to the Stoic view on *lógos spermátikos*. One threw out its substance (*Enneads*, VI, 8, 19), like a spring from which torrents gushed out, without changing anything, without diminishing anything, or like a seed, or a root that everything has to be born from (images that appear successively in *Enneads*, I, III, IV, V, VI). The multiplicity of ideas in *noûs* continues through the multiplicity of thoughts (*lógoi*) in *psychē*, according to the Stoic meaning of *lógoi spermátikoi*, the seminal reasons being in *psychē* the reason of movement (*Enneads*, II, 3, 14; IV, 3, 10; IV, 3, 15). On the other hand, *lógoi* include all the beings' details (*Enneads*, III, 2, 1), providing the reasons for the differences between individuals (*Enneads*, IV, 4, 12). They lack breadth but their individuality is achieved by the matter in which they dwell (*Enneads*, IV, 9, 5)<sup>30</sup>.

From *noûs* (the Second Person of the neo-Platonic Trinity) emanates the Third Person, *psychē* (Soul), through a genesis or rational expansion. In this context, Plotinus uses frequently and equivocally the word *lógos*. In *Enneads*, III, 8, 1, *lógos* is used with the same meaning as *noûs*, or as a particular idea of *noûs*. In *Enneads*, V, 8, 2, however, *lógos* is defined as an emanation of *noûs*, while in *Enneads*, III, 2, 16, the author distinguishes between *noûs* and *lógos*. In an attempt to synthesize Plotinus' emanative scenario regarding the Third Person (*psychē*), we should begin by underlying the instrumental, operational role of *lógos*, at the same time identical and non-identical with the Second Person or *noûs*. Thought (*lógos*) comes from reason, without the latter changing at all, because it carries thought in a potential state; *noûs*, therefore, is the origin of *lógos*. Thought (*lógos*) is at the same time soul (*psychē*), but the author does not point out which of the emanations (*lógoi*) of reason (*noûs*) directly make up the soul. Thought (*lógos*), which emanates from reason (*noûs*), is compared to the "word that emanates from the soul's thought" in *Enneads*, V, 1, 3, 6. On the other hand, thought or the idea of *noûs*, which is soul (*psychē*), includes all species of existence in order to imagine and form them in the sensitive world (*Enneads*, V, 9, 9; VI, 7, 12; III, 6, 28), the ontological ideas being equivalent here with *lógoi spermátikoi*. The multiplicity of thoughts (*lógoi*) descends from *noûs* to

<sup>30</sup> Plotin, *Ennéades*, I-VI, Émile Bréhier (trad.), Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1982-1997. See also Peters, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

*psychē*, and even lower, into the diversity of the material universe made up of the various species' organized agglomeration of things. The ultimate finality of Plotinus' philosophy being mystical, neo-Platonism has in view the union of man and God or One through *unio mystica*. Climbing up the steps of spiritual perfection, the individual soul, in Plotinus' opinion, needs to get rid of the memories of all prior experimental knowledge, even when it is about good deeds, the "traces" of such knowledge slowly disappearing, while the soul is ascending. From this viewpoint, Plotinus understands (logical consequences of a negativist mystic line of reasoning) intellectual speech and thought as being in close connection with these sensitive elements, and the condemnation of the latter acts as implacably on the former. In the sky, souls need no words: there is no intellectual thought there, as there is nothing rational (*lógikon*) in the senses which accomplish the sensitive perception in earthly existence. Human reason needs, in order to acknowledge its own self-sufficiency, the intellectual processes of reflection and understanding, thus proclaiming its inferiority (*Enneads*, I, 4, 10; IV, 3, 18, 32; V, 3, 2; VI, 7, 9). For Plotinus, on the one hand, man is a free being and freedom is the principle of his activity. On the other hand, every individual soul must play a certain role in the world, corresponding to the idea that orders his particular fate in the universal harmony of things. This determining idea (*lógos / lógoi spermatikoi*) governs every element of the material universe and highlights the last stage of the emanation which originates in One, in the neo-Platonic Trinity. In this context it is worth mentioning that, at the level of the super-sensitive existence, Plotinus annihilates the dual expression of *lógos* as thought and speech or inner *lógos* and outer *lógos*, a position characteristic of Stoicism and known to Philo of Alexandria. The *lógos* that exists as potentiality in *noûs* and stems from One (which is the Second Person of the Trinity) unveils himself as a paradigm in relation to the categories of individual, inferior *lógoi*, that make up the rational structure of the sensitive universe. Hence Plotinus' conclusion that the true man is always different from the individual soul (*psychē*): reason or true thought (*lógos*) resides forever, irreducible and identical to himself, in the sphere of the super-sensitive existence (*Enneads*, V, 1, 2; VI, 7, 5)<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Ritter, *op.cit.*, IV, pp. 503-511.

Defining *lógos* as a rational entity of a divine nature and a potentiality included in *noûs*, the first hypostasis that emerges from One, represents, at a theological level, the decisive step towards drawing near the Greek-Hellenistic philosophical tradition and the Christian tradition regarding *Lógos*. Although chronologically posterior to John the Apostle, neo-Platonism influenced considerably the writings of the Christian Apologists and those of the Church Fathers. In fact, the neo-Platonic influence is an element of continuity in the mystical theology and literature of the Abrahamic Middle Ages. Within the referential system of the I<sup>st</sup> Christian century, the two main trends in the Palestinian Judaism, the conservative-official-scholarly one (rabbis and elders, Pharisees and Saducees, members of the *Sanhedrin*) and the innovative-radical-apocalyptic one (Zealots, Essenes, Qumranites), were matched, although in a profoundly changed form, by two analogous trends in early Christianity. In this respect, the Council of Jerusalem (c. 48-50 CE) emphasized the dispute between the Judeo-Christianity defended by the Apostles Peter and Jacob, and the supporters of Gentile Christianity, preached by Paul the Apostle. A hypothetical reasoning asserts that the synoptic *Gospels* belong to the former trend, while the *Gospel according to John*, which mentions for the first time, in the Evangelical spiritual realm, the identity between *Lógos* and Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Son of God, belongs to the latter, pointing out the merging of the Hebrew religious thought and the Greek religious thought. In order to understand the historical dynamics of this spiritual harmonization, we will analyze the view on *Lógos* of one of the most famous authors of the Greek-Semitic theological synthesis, a contemporary of Jesus Christ's and John the Apostle's: Philo of Alexandria.

In Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles's opinion<sup>32</sup>, Philo of Alexandria (c. 13/20 BCE-50 CE) generalized the method of Biblical exegesis that had long been in use in the Jewish community of Alexandria (maybe even before the *Septuagint* was accomplished in the III<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), reuniting

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<sup>32</sup> Janet, Séailles, *op.cit.*, p. 991. See also the description of the four religious-political parties (Pharisees, Saducees, Essenes, Zealots-Sicarii) active in Jerusalem and Palestine at the beginning and during the Roman-Jewish War (66-73 CE), in Flavius Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum*, G. A. Williamson (trans.), *The Jewish War*, Penguin Books, London, 1981, pp. 133-221.

speculatively Moses, Plato and Zeno of Citium. Allegory became the main conceptual instrument for the hermeneutics of the *Holy Scriptures* and inaugurated the four levels of the exegetical approach to the Biblical text: *peshat* (literal meaning), *remes* (allegorical meaning), *derasha* (proto-Midrashic and Midrashic, proto-Talmudic and Talmudic, Halakhic and Haggadic interpretations), *sod* (mystical meaning). The use of this exegetical method within the extra-Palestinian Judeo-Hellenistic space revealed the symbolical outlook of the Biblical truth contained in the *Holy Scriptures*: Hagar and Sarah, for example, personify the encyclopedic knowledge and the superior ecstasy of knowledge, respectively; Jacob represents the reason that is generated by the senses, but is pre-eminent in relation to them. Thus the Biblical characters, events and precepts were re-signified according to a sapiential and semantic order extracted from the Greek philosophical systems which were, in their turn, re-invested with a Hebrew-Biblical hermeneutical identity, in order to allow the Greek-Semitic osmosis at the inter-textual and inter-religious levels. In order to characterize this particular syncretism, within the larger Hellenistic syncretism, the dictum of Numenius of Apamea, a neo-Pythagorean and neo-Platonic philosopher of the II<sup>nd</sup> century should be mentioned here: “Plato was nothing but a Moses who spoke the Attic idiom.” Numenius upheld the idea of a double structure of the *psychē*: a rational nature (*logikón*), which intellectual activity originates in, and an irrational nature (*álogon*), a source of sensitive representation. The soul takes part in Good to the same extent as it takes part in the divine reason. In his cosmopolitan system of thought, Numenius mixed the numerous Oriental traditions: Hebrew, Egyptian, Indian-Brahmanic, Persian concepts of the Zoroastrian Magi, and even corrupted fragments extracted from the *Gospels* and re-written according to his syncretistic views<sup>33</sup>.

A radical monotheism defined Philo’s intellectual profile within the all-encompassing syncretism of the Hellenistic milieu in which he indited his works. Philo believed that the omnipresent and omnipotent God of the Bible, revealed as the Pure Being through the mouths of the Hebrew prophets, is nevertheless incomprehensible to the human reason. The *Lógos* or Verb

<sup>33</sup> Numénus, *Fragments*, Édouard Des Places (trans., ed.), Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2003, pp. 10-220. See also Ritter, *op.cit.*, IV, pp. 513-522.

mediates between God and the world, dwells in God as *Sophía* – *Shekhinah* or God’s Wisdom, reveals the realm where the Son, God’s First-Born, and the Platonic ideas reside. *Lógos* is also the soul of the world, a principle that animates the universe and imbues it with divine wisdom. The spirit (*pneúma*) emanates from *Lógos*, while *Lógos* emanates from God, and it is verisimilar that the Philonian Trinity stands at the origin of the neo-Platonic Trinity. The Philonian syncretism delimits a textual and dogmatic *locus* where the Hebrew-Biblical theology is reconciled with the Hellenistic philosophical and theological notion of divine Trinity. In an emanative scenario that could be understood as proto-neo-Platonic, the Philonian Trinity is constituted of a system of three unequal divine principles, generated in a descending progression from One, the unknown and hidden God. There are these principles that generate, in their turn, a multitude of celestial, divine forces which are characterized by intense phenomena of spiritual luminosity<sup>34</sup>. Philo, therefore, distinguishes between the Supreme God and God’s Verb, while *lógos* is the instrument by which God created the world, identical with *noûs*. This doctrine strongly recalls the medieval conception of the Sephirothic emanations, incorporated in *Sefer ha-Bahir* or *The Book of Resplendence* and *Sefer ha-Zohar* or *The Book of Splendour*, the works of the Kabbalistic school of Gerona, in X<sup>th</sup>-XII<sup>th</sup> centuries Spain.

According to Philo, *Lógos* (God’s Word or Verb) is concomitantly the dwelling-place of the One supreme Divine Power and of the multiple divine forces, God’s servants or organs in the process of creation, invested both with beneficial and revengeful attributes. He is also the all-encompassing meaning through which the divine realm is identified with the super-sensitive world of the Platonic Ideas. The *Lógos* comprising the divine forces which are present and active both in the celestial sphere and in the sensitive world allows for the analogy with the Stoic conception about *lógos spérmatikos* and *lógoi spermatikoi*. God’s Word is invested with divine personality when Philo defines him as God’s eldest Son (the first-born), archangel, the first angel created in the angelic hierarchy. The angels themselves are identified as “God’s words” (*lógoi*) who constitute the angelic presence in the proximity of the Divine Presence. This theological syncretism highlights a significant

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<sup>34</sup> Janet, Séailles, *op.cit.*, p. 752, pp. 991-996.



religious osmosis between the Greek philosophical ideas and the Hebrew-Biblical mythological and spiritual heritage. The supreme attributes or powers that emanate from God are six in number, but they are generally reduced to two main powers which are ontologically unified in God and the *Lógos*: “creative goodness”, invested with a beneficial, rewarding agency, and “dominating force”, which manifests itself through authoritarian and revengeful qualities. *Lógos*, as mediator between God and the world, is conceived in concordance with the tenets of the Stoic system of thought by analogy with the relation between inner language and expressed language (*lógos éndiátetos*, *lógos proforikós*) as ontological fundamentals of the cosmic being and the human being. Consequently the communication of *Lógos* at the cosmological level as well at the anthropological level unveils itself as inner *lógos (ratio)* and outer *lógos (oratio)*. The descending trajectory of the Philonian emanation can therefore be outlined as follows: God – *Lógos* – *pneúma* – divine forces (ideas, *eidē* and words, *lógoi*). In the same manner as God is the paradigm of *Lógos* (the Verb is God’s image or shadow), *Lógos* is the prototype of all the beings and things in the universe, including the human beings. Since God is an infinitely bright light, the divine powers that constitute the celestial sphere share in this light, reflect and propagate it, substantiate the universe as a luminous presence derived from the Divine Presence<sup>35</sup>. The difference between Philo’s *eidē* and Plato’s *eidē* consists in the fact that, while the former are created, the latter are eternal. The intelligible universe (*kósmos noētós*), which is identical to *Lógos* or Divine Reason, is the sum of the Philonian *eidē*. Correspondingly, in the sensitive universe (*kósmos aisthētós*), the *Lógos* is eternally present as the “seal of creation” or the “binder of the universe”, and *heimarménē* (part, lot, fate)<sup>36</sup>.

The above description needs to be exemplified with passages from Philo’s writings. In *De Cherubim*, 27-28 (see also *De fuga et inventione*, 100; *De specialibus legibus*, 1, 307; *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, 59-60; *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim*, 1, 57; *De opificio mundi*, 21; *De plantatione*, 50; *De vita Mosis*, 2, 99), the Cherubim and the flaming sword

<sup>35</sup> Ritter, *op.cit.*, IV, pp. 340-400.

<sup>36</sup> Peters, *op.cit.*, p. 161, 163. See also Russell, *op.cit.*, p. 323, 327.

stand for the two powers of God (Goodness and Sovereignty), reunited in the Divine *Lógos*: “The voice told me that with the One God who truly is are two all-high and primary powers, Goodness and Sovereignty. Through his Goodness He engendered all that is, through his Sovereignty He rules what He has engendered, but a third uniting both is intermediating *Lógos*, for it is through *Lógos* that God is both ruler and good. Of these two powers, Sovereignty and Goodness, the Cherubim are symbols, but of *Lógos*, the flaming sword is the symbol. For exceedingly swift and of glowing heat is *Lógos*, and especially so the *Lógos* of the primal cause, for this it was that preceded and outstripped all things, conceived before them all, and before all manifest.” *Sophía* (Divine Wisdom, *Shekhinah*, God’s Glory) is identified with the Divine *Lógos* and with *pneúma* (vital breath, spirit), as a cosmological and ethical power, called by multiple names, which impregnates the entire universe (*kósmos noētós* and *kósmos aisthētós*). In *Legum allegoriarum* (1, 43, 45-46), Philo deals with the applicability of the term *polyonymus* (multiple names) to Divine Wisdom, understood as an archetype of earthly wisdom, through the allegorical interpretation of *Genesis*, 2, 8: “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.” The act of the Divine Wisdom’s multiple naming had been accomplished by *davar-Elohyim* manifesting the celestial realm into the earthly realm through the mouth of Moses the prophet: “Through the employment of many terms Moses has disclosed that the lofty and heavenly wisdom is many-named; for he calls it ‘beginning’ and ‘image’ and ‘vision of God’; and now by the planting of the paradisiacal garden He presents earthly wisdom as the copy of this as of an archetype.” *Polyonymus* was used by the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes as well, in order to designate Zeus as *Lógos*. *Sophía*, identical with *Lógos*, is also symbolized by flint (*Legum allegoriarum*, 2, 86) and by the Tabernacle (*Quis rerum divinarum heres*, 112-113 as an interpretation of *Leviticus* 16, 16). The Divine *Lógos*, although indivisible, divides things, at the same time reflecting itself in the receptacle of human rationality: “For the Divine *Lógos* is a lover of the alone and the solitary, never mixing with the crowd of things created and destined to perish, but accustomed to roaming the heights and taking thought to attend on the One alone. The two natures, then, that of the

reasoning power within us and that of the Divine *Lógos* above us, though indivisible, divide countless others (*Quis rerum divinarum heres*, 234-236).” As an instrument of creation (non-created and eternal), the *Lógos* achieves the cohesion of the universe and mediates between opposites like a vowel between two consonants, thus generating the literary harmony or music of the universe through its governing presence and the tutelary movement from the center to the most distant boundaries, and from the extremities to the center (*De plantatione*, 9-10). A point of equilibrium between the sphere of the created and the sphere of the uncreated, the *Lógos* delimits the creation from the Creator, mediates between man-world and God as a peace ambassador, a guardian of the world’s tranquility, appointed by God to put an end to wars (*Quis rerum divinarum heres*, 205), being at the same time origin of any form of instruction, learning, and wisdom, out of which the sapiential influx emanates continuously (*De fuga et inventione*, 137-138). The image of the sacred fluidity of the *Lógos* is included in *De somniis* (2, 249), where the Divine *Lógos*, God’s cupbearer, pours himself into the cups of the happy souls, an action that re-affirms the consubstantiality and communion between human reason and *Lógos* in a passage which enframes the old philosophical notion of *lógos* in the Hebrew-Biblical context, as a result of the syncretistic dynamics of the Hellenistic religious thought: “And into the happy soul, which holds out the truly holy chalice, its own reason, who is it that pours the sacred measures of true gladness but the *Lógos*, the cupbearer of God and toastmaster of the feast, who differs not from the draught he pours, but is himself the undiluted drink, the gaiety, the seasoning, the effusion, the cheer, and, to make poetic expression our own, the ambrosian drug of joy and gladness?”

During the creative process which led to the accomplishment of creation as the divine masterpiece, *Lógos* fulfilled the task of acting as God’s all-cutting instrument. In this capacity, he divided the cosmic being lacking in forms and qualities, the four elements of the world, as well as the beings and plants made up of these (*Quis rerum divinarum heres*, 134, 140; *Legum allegoriarum*, 3, 96; *De Cherubim*, 127-128; *De fuga et inventione*, 94-105). The intelligible realm or *kósmos noētós*, identical with the divine sphere (*De opificio mundi*, 24-25), throws into relief the hypostasis of *Lógos* as

craftsman and the hypostasis of *Lógos* as container of the six “cities of refuge”. *Numbers*, 35, 12 is thus interpreted allegorically as referring to *Lógos* and the five divine powers: power to create, power of divine kingship, power of grace, twofold legislative power (the latter being understood in its positive dimension of ordering to the rational entities of the universe what they ought to do, as well as in its negative dimension of forbidding to them what must not be done).

In *Legum allegoriarum* (1, 36-38), Philo understands *Lógos* as God’s “shadow”, and in *De confusione linguarum* (95-97), he describes *Lógos* as a “place of the constant, unchanging God” and as an “image” of God, while in *Liber allegoriarum* (3, 177-178), *Lógos* is defined as an angel that, through its subordinate *lógoi*, cures the evil and gives secondary divine gifts (the primary ones being given by God Himself). In this respect, *De somniis* (1, 71) includes an exegesis to *Genesis*, 18, 33 (“And the Lord went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.”): “When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, He left, and Abraham met with a place.” Philo understands “returned to his place” as “met with a place”, the replacement of the premeditated act of the human will with a spontaneous manifestation that, apparently, is accidental but behind which lies the divine will, the ontological presence of the divine will within the human will. “Place” is synonymous with *Lógos*, which reveals himself unexpectedly as a traveling companion for the saddened soul and fills it with joy, beyond all imagination<sup>37</sup>.

Philo of Alexandria epitomizes an epistemological evolution that covers approximately six centuries, and his system of thought highlights the end of an era, a change of eras, the beginning of an era. The Greek-Hebrew osmosis embodied in his writings reveals itself as a prerequisite to the emergence of the Christian theological understanding of the *Lógos* as Jesus Christ, Son of God, Second Person of the Trinity. The Christian theological history of the Divine *Lógos* concept is inevitably characterized by continuity with the past, even more so as the spread of Christianity was socially

<sup>37</sup> The Philonian extracts are quoted from Philo of Alexandria, *The Contemplative Life, the Giants and Selections*, David Winston (trans.), Paulist Press, New York, 1981, pp. 75-298. See also Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, I-IV, II – *Le Dieu cosmique*, pp. 521-585.

circumscribed by the presence of the previous spiritual architecture of the *lógos* within the collective memory, the collective imagination and the horizon of religious expectation defining the urban communities of the Roman Mediterranean region during the I<sup>st</sup>- III<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE. In the period that followed Philo's lifetime, John the Apostle and the sect of the Christians founded the history of the ante-Nicean and post-Nicean Christianity. The canonical Christian authors, as well as many of the illustrious heresiarchs of the first half of the I<sup>st</sup> millennium, relied on well-articulated outlooks on the *lógos*, with powerful, profound thought-structures, beautifully expressed in literary form, and of an exquisite spiritual refinement. The former, as Church Fathers, became the artisans of the Christian dogma, while the latter devised Church-threatening and creed-generating heresies with regard to the union of the human with the divine in the Person of Jesus Christ, as well as to the theological relationship of the Second Person to the First and Third Persons of the Christian Trinity.

As a necessary link, in the history of religious ideas, between polytheistic and monotheistic establishments, a remarkable concordance, sapiential continuity and epistemological harmony characterize the pre-Christian philosophical positions on *lógos*, a transcendent principle that actively assist the supreme power of divinity in the making, organizing and governing of the spiritual universe, being at the same time immanent to the material universe, as an intelligible and causative determiner.