

**MICHEL FATTAL, DU LOGOS DE PLOTIN AU  
LOGOS DE SAINT JEAN. VERS LA SOLUTION  
D'UN PROBLÈME MÉTAPHYSIQUE?**

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Michel Fattal is a well-known philosopher, a specialist on logos from the Pre-Socratics to the mediaeval period, passing through Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics and beyond. He puts together classical philosophy and Christian epistemology in innovative ways, as is the case in his new volume on Logos in Plotinus and in Saint John. The book gathers a series of lectures, starting with a keynote speech, or *lectio magistralis*, at Rome in April 2011, followed by several others. Fattal lectured on a related topic in Brasília, 2016, at a Archaï Unesco Chair meeting. Fattal started to explore Logos in ancient Greek thought as early as 1977 and continued doing so in his PhD dissertation (1980) and

Habilitation (2001), publishing overall 19 books and dozens of papers and chapters. This volume is the 17th in a series on the Logos, and it deals with the relational logos in both Plotinus and Saint John, particularly the relationship of the sensible and possible to understand, earth and heaven, humans and God.

Logos as a philosophical concept implies putting together (*function rassembleante et unifiante*). Legein derives from the root \*leg-, meaning putting together and choosing. Logos thus means relating, and so speaking, a discourse as composition (*sunthesis*). Parmenides considers the Logos as the critical reason, capable of splitting up being and non-being, what is true and what is false, krinai logo, to judge or split up by reason (Parmenides B7, 5D-K). Plotinus and his rivals, the Gnostics interpret differently Plato, as the former are dualists and pessimists, whilst the latter is a monist and an optimist in relation to the universe and its production.

Plotinus rejects and warns his followers against the temptation of multiplying intellects, hypostases and intermediaries. Plotinus however considers that the Logoi are energies, dynamic powers, trying thus to mediate humans and the Gods. The relationship of logos and logoi is thus a complex one, in his attempt to preserve monism. Saint John in his Gospel introduces a different monist interpretation of logos (John 1, 1-5):

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος. 2 Οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. 3 πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. 4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. 5 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

### **NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION**

The Christian logos has the unique feature of being conflated to love (*agape*), as Christ (John 13, 1):

Πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῆ ἔκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα, ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς.

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

### **NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION**

The Christian logos draws not only from the Greek root, but also from the דָּבָר, *dabar*, of the Hebrew tradition, meaning at the same time word and deed, as in Isaiah 55, 10-11, and Psalm 147, 15:

He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.

## **NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION**

It also is *logos tes zoes*, word of life (1, 1-4). Behind the Greek *zoe* (life), there is a Semitic מַיִם, *haiim*, both life and salvation (*salut*). It is also the way דֶּרֶךְ, *derekh*, *hodos* in Greek, implying the physical and metaphysical senses of the word. In the end, Michel Fattal relates the Greek and Hebrew roots of the Christian thought and shows its debt to two different but perhaps complimentary epistemologies. Michel Fattal has thus produced a fine argument for a deeper understanding of the intricacies of first century ideas about life and society.