Chapter I. Logos Identified

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I. Logos Identified

It is generally recognized that the years leading to the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. in Greece were years of dramatic change. These are the years of the discovery of reason, and of the development of secular canons of thought. Parmenides invites us to “judge by reason (logos)” the argument he provides in Fragment 7, and thus for the first time we find explicit reference to the new Greek instrument. Reason exists in all forms of thought whether pre- or post-logical, but the ability to articulate it, to single it out as a specific and valuable mental process is another matter. There is a certain consciousness of it, and a certain profile, implicit in such a statement.

The emergence of reason is widely recognized within the scholarship in the area: thus Snell, The Discovery of Mind, and his chapter “From Myth to Logic”; Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy; Nestle, Vom Mythos zum Logos; and Burnet’s chapter, “Science and Religion”. The titles tell the tale. It is the purpose of these books, however, to trace another and later transition, from the discovery of logos to the discovery of the inefficacy of logos. This transition spans the twelve hundred year life of Greek thought; it begins with the Presocratic thinkers and ends with the closure of the Athenian Academy in 529 A.D. The story begins with Parmenides’ exhortation to logos, and ends with Damascius’ advocacy of its abandonment, approximately twelve hundred years later. Not that Greek philosophy ended in collapse, but it is certainly true that the peculiar vision of the Greek enlightenment of the sixth and fifth centuries did come to its term.

There is no absolute concept of reason, as we may have been tempted to believe by some of the writers on the early Greek period. Reason is always present in human discourse, whether primitive or advanced: the question is to define its canons. This will be the issue of the following pages: how did the Greeks understand their logos?

It will be argued that eventually the Greek development of “logical” thought reached the limits which had been present as limitations from the outset: the Greek understanding of what reason was constituted a tool for the human intellectual enterprise, but at one stage only. Like all tools, its usefulness was limited to certain specific tasks, and like all tools it was superseded. One of the curious aspects of human intellectual progress is that it takes place through constructing on the basis of foundations which appear completely insecure in the light of later development. The amazing cosmological fantasies of the Greek philosophers enabled a progression towards scientific truth, and it is a paradox of human progress that it occurs by the development of superior tools and instruments through the use of inferior instruments. Every technology which supersedes another technology is de-
dependent on that inferior technology as its cause. The Greek deployment of reason is one such inferior and superseded instrument. After the confident appeal to logos in the fragments of Heraclitus and Parmenides in the sixth century B.C., we voyage to the sixth century A.D. claim of Damascius that logos “founders” in its attempt to formulate the ultimate principle of reality, and that principle is a much-travelled version of Parmenides’ “One”.

What is the meaning of logos? It is a major term in Greek intellectual history, and part of its importance is acquired through the prologue to John’s Gospel, since in this way it is adapted and modified in the subsequent Christian tradition. The question to be raised here concerns the original insight into the word, and an important issue throughout the book will be the relationship of logos to speech, since in its progress Greek thought comes to emphasize silence as the characteristic of true thought. It is not however until the Stoics that the relationship of logos to discourse is dealt with, since the Stoics formulate the idea of an internal (endiathetos) and an external (prophorikos) form of the logos.

Deriving from legein (to say), logos has some suggestion of collecting or gathering: the verb occurs in this sense quite frequently in early Greek, and is used of gathering quite down to earth objects, such as building materials, or wood (Odyssey 18,359) for example. It can also mean “gather together”, that is, “assemble”. In the abstract it suggests gathering material together to make some sort of whole out of the selections made, and in this case the whole constructed is speech. Like logos, lego contains the sense of “listing”, “counting”, “enumerating”, or “describing”. The gathering aspect of logos is not so clearly attested, though it is probably present.

Logos is sometimes translated as “account”, and this is not unlike the sense just described, since listing facts is part of giving an account. Homer especially uses logos in the sense of narrative, and here it comes close to mythos, “myth” or “fable”. The tendency to draw a sharp distinction between mythos and logos springs from the desire of scholars to illustrate the transition from myth to reason through the use of appropriate Greek words: it is helpful however to dwell on their similarities as well as their dissimilarities. The mythos is a fable, a collection of material which is as much a narrative as the logos, though its content is different and its premisses are different. As the forerunner of the historical account, myth constitutes a collection of data about alleged reality, presented in the form of a story. Logos has this same characteristic: it provides a story about people and things. Herodotus, in discussing the myth of Helen outlines the Egyptian version (II.119), including the detail whereby Menelaus was said to have sacrificed two local children in order to provoke the change of wind which would permit his departure.

This is what the Egyptian priests told me. I myself believe their tale (logos) about Helen, since I consider that if Helen had been in Ilium, she would have been given back to the Greeks with or without the consent of Alexandrus. (II.120)
It should be noted that the myth of Helen is here referred to as a logos; Herodotus is not averse to making the two concepts interchangeable, and it is clear that no radical opposition existed between the terms mythos and logos.

Snell (The Discovery of Mind 224) warns against polarising myth and logic in this early period, claiming that “myth refers to the content of thought, logic to its form”. This statement does not appear to clarify the issue, but it is at least right in its warning against rigorous differentiation between the two. The mythical consciousness and the rational consciousness are closely allied. G. E. R. Lloyd’s work Polarity and Analogy may also be cited in support of the idea that modes of reasoning existed before the development of formal logic in Plato and Aristotle: Lloyd dwells on the use of reasoning through opposites and through analogies in ordinary and common-or-garden thought, both prior to and including the classical philosophical period. Ordinary literary expressions are examined with a view to establishing that a form of reasoning was available and being employed in pre-philosophical literature. The “mentalité pré-logique” (Lévy-Bruhl) turns out to have a logic of its own, which is not in any way random or bizarre, but which is recognizable in terms of later developments.

That Herodotus should refer to a myth as a logos is not in any way surprising, and what he means by logos is a sequential and coherent tale, capable of being grasped by the rational mind. Dictionaries show that “logos” develops a technical use in economic contexts, where it means “account”, “reckoning” or “calculation”, and it is the idea that logos lists, or gives an account of the elements of a situation, which should be retained when one is considering the central meaning of the term. As an account rendered itemises all the elements of a given financial transaction, so logos lists the elements of a matter in their proper and coherent order. Coherence, together with listing, are the prime elements in the idea of logos, and for this reason mythos and logos are compatible. The mythical table has all the elements of rationality in this sense, since its account includes a variety of elements laid out in a comprehensible sequence.

The mythos has the twofold characteristic of sequence and coherence, and it therefore has logos as well. In a myth there is no experimentation on the order of events: time may be suspended in some sense, but that things proceed developmentally is an uninfringed rule of Greek myth. A situation can only ever be that which follows and which renders obsolete a preceding situation: one thing must grow out of another. The sequence which emerges out of the developing tale contributes to its coherence, which is the overall fitting together of all its elements.

Both mythos and logos have these characteristics, and the progress from myth to logic is therefore not an easy one to identify. Snell’s rather muddled observation does not help, but what can be said is this. It is change in respect of what is held to be credible which underlies the progress from mythos to lo-
gos: the structure of the tale remains the same, but a new demarcation line makes its appearance, distinguishing the credible from the incredible. The word “myth” becomes identified with the incredible, and so “logos” is the term used to describe the new philosophical tales. These could not be called myths, and so the alternative term was brought into service. The stumbling-block was a new idea of what was natural and of how the cosmos operated, and the suspension of belief required by the myths was no longer permissible. The new tales of philosophy were rational tales, not mythical ones.

Heraclitus provides a good example of this: he was about twenty years older than Parmenides, and was at his most active towards the end of the sixth century; in what remains of his work, there is a considerable and quite special use of the word logos. Heraclitus was called the “obscure” (skoteinos: Etymologicum Magnum, under bios), no doubt because of his deliberate use of paradox to convey ideas. This tendency was scrutinised by Lloyd, in Polarity and Analogy, since it would appear to contribute to the view that reasoning was carried out through the use of contradictions prior to the development of a more rigidly controlled logic. However most of Heraclitus’ antinomies turn into paradoxes upon examination (as Lloyd notes), and they seem to be intended to draw attention to actual similarities lying beneath a mask of difference. His whole philosophy embraces the paradoxes, and Heraclitus describes it as a “logos”. The intended meaning has been subject to much discussion; and rightly so, for Heraclitus dominates Stoicism, which has a prominent logos doctrine, and his fragments in general enjoy a considerable posterity in the ancient world. Heraclitus writes:

Of this Logos men always prove uncomprehending, both before they hear it and once they have heard it. Though all things happen according to this Logos, they are like people lacking experience, despite their experience of the words and matters which I set forth, distinguishing each thing according to its nature, and declaring how it is. For what they do escapes the notice of the vast majority of men when they are awake in the same way as it does when they are asleep.

I have used G. S. Kirk’s translation at some points (Heraclitus. The Cosmic Fragments 33) and diverged at others. Heraclitus’ complaint is of an ignorant populace, incapable of appreciating his account of reality, and he was clearly suffering the same kind of problem with philistinism as Parmenides was to experience a little later. Both men speak in contemptuous tones of the inability of the masses to appreciate their wisdom. What is the logos which fails to be understood?

Kirk has a useful discussion (37) of the various points of view on this, and much ingenuity has been expended on this very difficult first line. Burnet (133) thought that logos should be translated by “word”, and considered it the “discourse” of Heraclitus. Kirk (37), and others, argue that Burnet’s
comparison of it with the Word of a prophet is inadequate, because Fr. 50 explicitly warns people not to listen to Heraclitus himself, but the logos. It is fair to take this point since there is an explicit differentiation between Heraclitus and the word: he is not the vehicle for, or the owner of, some particular revelation. He is the exponent of a word which is independent of him; of which he offers a description. (Socrates will later speak of logos as functioning independently of his own volition, offering a similar differentiation between himself and logos: Prot. 333C, Euthyph. 11d.)

One of the most interesting aspects of the first fragment is the claim that Heraclitus’ method involves distinctions between things: “distinguishing each thing according to its nature, and declaring how it is”. It seems to me that this is the characteristic feature of Heraclitus’ logos, that it engages in an activity of division, an activity which was consecrated in the Sophist and Theaetetus of Plato. Dividing things from each other, and adding up a list, are activities which are closely related, and it is this sense of logos which brings it close to the concept of myth. Heraclitus’ logos, like a fable, is a selection and compilation of material, presented to the hearer or reader. Like a mythos, the logos is in no way the personal possession of its retailer, but it is something to which he directs attention, like an object which is available to all. The logos, however, is a different and new kind of fable, which is unfamiliar and which provokes disbelief or apathy. There is no radical difference between myth and “word”, but rather a similarity. As Nestle observed (Vom Mythos zum Logos 9), myth is only one half of the Greek creative achievement: the other is Logos, the completion of myth. Whilst it is true, as Nestle also says, that myth gradually weakens and allows Word to replace it, it should be reiterated that Word does bear this proximity to myth. Myth creates a form to which Word is indebted: both are narratives, and both purport to describe the things of the universe. Plutarch will later say:

The mythos endeavours to be a false logos, which resembles a true one. (On the Fame of the Athenians 348A)

Plutarch here makes myth a certain kind of logos, and continues to describe logos as a tale which is a “likeness and image of actual fact”, whereas myth is a likeness and image of such a logos. The two are seen as similar, though logos is distinguished by its closeness to reality. Heraclitus is offering a tale about reality, and he says that this tale distinguishes things “according to their nature”. Separation and division are the hallmark of Greek rationality, and they provide the different elements which constitute Heraclitus’ tale.

Fragment 2 comes from Sextus Empiricus (Adv. Math. VII. 133):

Wherefore it is necessary to follow the common, but although the Logos is common, the many live as though they had a private understanding.
Sextus Empiricus comments that common (κόινος) means general or universal (κοινος), and this fragment gives a second characteristic of Heraclitus’ Logos, namely that it has some universality, despite individual and particular modes of thought. One may draw the conclusion, as does Kirk (59), that the logos is said to be somehow part of all things, but this interpretation is partly the result of juxtaposing Fragment 2 with Fragment 114:

Those who speak with intelligence must rely on what is common to all things, as a city relies (and to a much greater extent) on its laws. For all human laws are nourished by one law, the divine. For it has as much power as it desires, is sufficient for all, and is still abundant.

Heraclitus points to two levels of commonness: in the first place the law which is common to a city, and in the second the Law which is common to all civic laws. It does seem fair to compare these two fragments, and to conclude that Heraclitus’ logos is not simply common, or universal, in the same way as a myth, in that it has an objective existence and is available to all, but rather in the sense that it is applicable to all things. It is that in which a variety of things find their unity, and just as one should “follow” the law, so one should follow the common logos. What is left open by these cryptic relics of Heraclitus’ philosophy is whether the logos is understood to be an inherent principle, which is in things and has some kind of reality as an underlying common factor, or whether it is an external factor, a construction of mind, like law. In later Greek thought there is a clear tendency to give it some substantial reality, and it is fairly clear that Kirk is thinking along these lines for Heraclitus, since he emphasises (69) the corporealist tendencies of Presocratic Thinkers, and denies that Heraclitus’ logos is merely “a truth about things, determined by human analysis” (69). It is held that Fragment 114, cited above, refers to law in materialist terms, thus permitting us to conceive of its analogue, logos, similarly. It is to be thought of as corporeal, as “some substance which makes things behave in a particular way”. Kirk admits the speculative character of his reasoning here, but he endeavours to shore it up by reference to the meaning of cosmos (Fr. 30), which is identified with fire in one of its mutations. He concludes that it would be fair to associate logos, as the common essence of things, with this fundamental element of fire.

Kirk’s arguments constitute a reasonable extrapolation from the evidence, if we accept the possibility of a corporealist interpretation of logos. This, however, is a crucial issue, and the tendency to treat logos as some kind of substance, however ethereal, is on the whole a late Greek phenomenon, and it requires a considerable leap to portray it as such in this early period. Fragment 114 is an inadequate basis on which to establish such a case, partly because the fragment is only about the law, and the comparison with logos must be mounted through other arguments. Even if the comparison is held to
be valid, as I believe it should, there is no warrant for transferring all the characteristics of the law to the logos: in other words, it is not clear that Heraclitus would have personified logos to the same extent as law, if he had been talking about it, which he was not. Even if it is conceded that Heraclitus meant, in discussing law, to develop a comparison which would be applicable to logos in all respects, a vast leap of the imagination is required to move from the personification of law to the equation of logos and fire. The personification of law might conceivably provoke one to imagine a personification of the word, but the essence of this is the universality of both concepts. The law is said to have "as much power as it desires" to be "sufficient for all, and ... still abundant". The language of personification simply serves to highlight the fact that the divine law can cater for all things, and is never found without a response because of its complete universality. One could imagine such an image for Heraclitus' logos.

Kirk proceeds to identify the logos further as the source of unity. Fragment 50 reads as follows:

Listening not to me, but the logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one.

Having rendered the logos substantial, Kirk (70) proceeds to identify it as the source of unity: the logos "results in the fact that 'all things are one' in two ways: they are 'one, first, in that they all have a common component, part of their structure; and secondly because they all connect up with each other because of this common structure". Whilst it may be conceded that, if the logos could be identified with fire, then it might be regarded as a source of unity, insofar as it would be a common factor throughout the various existents. However arguments have already been advanced against the identification with fire, and in respect of the second point, it seems clear that Fragment 50 does not say what Kirk wants it to say. We are merely told that we learn from the logos that all things are one, and not that they are one "because of the logos", which phrase would surely have been within the range of Heraclitus' Greek. In short, all the evidence points to the meaning of "account", or "tale" for logos. Heraclitus' logos is a kind of mythos, a tale of a different type, with a different subject and different canons of belief.

M. L. West (124) emphatically dissociates himself from the idea that Heraclitus had a Logos doctrine, as opposed to an ordinary pre-fifth century use of the word logos. In other words, there was no cosmic entity envisaged by Heraclitus, but this Logos was manufactured by his later exponents. It is also claimed that Ionian writers habitually refer to their writings as if they were "self-activated autonomous beings" (124). The examples cited seem to fall somewhat short of this assertion, since the evidence is drawn mainly from Heraclitus and Herodotus, but other passages (from non-Ionian writers) are adduced, and it is indeed striking that there was a generalized tendency to
treat the logos as if it had a life of its own (West 127, n.2). This is an interesting point, and it undoubtedly contributes to the explanation of the later tendency to hypostatize the logos.

However it would appear that there is no great mystery. If one understands the logos as a kind of myth, it is clear that it would have a life of its own, since myths did have such a life, outside the minds of their individual exponents. Thus can one of the passages cited by West (127, n.2) be explained, where Aristotle refers to Heraclitus' logos which states that everything is, and is not. It might be thought odd that Aristotle refers to his logos rather than to Heraclitus himself, but the explanation no doubt lies in the fact that Heraclitus made such a distinction in Fragment 26, when urging his hearers not to listen to him, but his logos. A number of scholars seem to feel that a contrast between the speaker and his logos is odd in the extreme, and this fact itself is odd in the extreme. The tendency to identify an individual and his opinion is a function of an individualist view of society, in which the formation of individual and private opinion is encouraged. We tend to foster the illusion that thinkers own their ideas, and that they create them ex nihilo. The Greeks were unaware of the private ownership of ideas, and for them the distinction between the individual and his teaching was not bizarre. In Heraclitus' case, if logos is understood as meaning a "rational tale", then it is not unnatural that he should draw attention to the fact that such an account is larger than himself. The logos, like a myth, was considered as a body of necessary and uncontrovertible notions which were an objective part of the cosmos, to be sought by a philosopher, rather than created by him. For West, the advice "don’t listen to me but to what I’m saying" is puzzling, but it is quite understandable if a deliberate attempt is being made to objectify one's discourse as being apart from one's own state of mind. This is precisely the myth-like aspect of logos, in that it does stand as a body of knowledge which is available to all, and which belongs to all.

This is the notion which explains Fragment 2: "Wherefore it is necessary to follow the common, but although the Logos is common, the many live as though they had a private understanding". It is emphasised that the logos has a kind of universal authority and presence, which goes beyond individual perceptions, and for this reason it is doubly odd that the many live according to their own, private way of thinking. Heraclitus expresses a bewilderment like that of Parmenides in the face of the fact that his account, though it has a universal validity, goes unrecognised. Against Guthrie (I. 428), there is no evidence at all that Heraclitus' logos is "both human thought and the governing principle of the universe". In respect of the first claim, Guthrie proceeds on the basis of an elementary logical fallacy, as follows. Fragment 2 tells us that the logos is common, and Fragment 114 (by means of a word-play involving ξόν vóq and ξύνq) tells us that intelligence is common, and the conclusion is drawn that the logos may therefore be identified with intelligence.
This is incorrect: if a chair is brown, and a table brown, we do not therefore conclude that the chair and table are identical. The two fragments ought to be interpreted as meaning that the intelligence is common. Guthrie draws a further unwarranted conclusion when he claims that the logos represents Heraclitus' closest approximation to the *arche* of his predecessors, whereas fire ought clearly to be reserved this place, as was thought to be the case by the doxography. Theophrastus, in Simplicius’ *Physics* (23.33) claims that he made Fire the *arche*, and this conclusion may be confirmed by Plato (*Cratylus* 413 B–C), though Heraclitus is not in fact mentioned. In short, there is no reason for concluding otherwise than that Heraclitus’ logos is anything more than a rational tale.

One finds this usage in Parmenides. In Fragment 2 he refers to discussion of existence and non-existence as a *mythos*, inviting us to “listen” to it, as did Heraclitus for his logos. Fragment 8 has the same usage of *mythos*, and line 50 has logos employed in much the same sense. Logos is contrasted with the opinions of mortals, and Parmenides presents his own views as a “trustworthy logos and conception”. Thus for Parmenides myth and word can be virtually interchangeable: both *mean account*, or *tale*, and we may surmise that logos differs in that it can signify a *reasoned* account. However Parmenides has one significant and different use of logos in Fragment 7: he invites us to “judge with reason (logos) the much contested argument which has been given by me”. Tarán has little to say on the significance of logos, but Guthrie (II.25) rightly emphasises the importance of the notion used by Parmenides. “Here for the first time sense and reason are contrasted, and we are told that the senses deceive and that reason alone is to be trusted. It is a decisive movement in the history of European philosophy, which can never be the same again”. It is one of the earliest cases where logos must indubitably mean “*reason*”, rather than “account”, or “explanatory tale”, and does indeed constitute a striking confirmation of the growing tendency to contrast old ways of common-sense and religious thinking with new ways of thought. It is probably true that the impetus for this arises out of cosmology, rather than from any initial concern with epistemology. In other words, problems of knowledge are the legacy of thinking about nature and its constituents: when once it has been thought that things are in fact different from the way they appear, then there follows a number of questions about the senses, which are the means of registering what appears. If the fundamental substance is said to be air, or fire, or water, or oneness, then one must call into question that which tells us otherwise namely the evidence of our senses. As a general rule, early Greek philosophy was characterized by its inattention to epistemological questions, and by its indulgence of ontological questions. The desire to discover the essence of reality was given priority over the problem of how such a fundamental substance might be known. Some tendency to show interest in the problem of knowledge will be found in Pythagorean writings, but it is
worthy of note that it was not a major subject of discussion prior to Plato, and only with him did epistemology become a necessary part of the philosophical curriculum. This is odd, since the assertion that variations in perceived reality constituted manifestations of one single substance entailed a departure from the plain evidence of the senses. Yet it is true in general that ontology takes priority over epistemology in Greek philosophy, from its origins to the end of antiquity. What exists is determined in the first place, and how it is known is determined in consequence. For these reasons we may concur with Guthrie that Parmenides’ confrontation of reason with the “heedless eye, sounding ear and tongue” was a major step in Western thought, and Fragment 7 gives a striking statement of the new consciousness which was unfolding.

Plato will later take up the issue of the meaning of logos, and give a conscious analysis of its significance. This is a noteworthy step, since it indicates that the word has reached the status of a technical term for the philosopher, and that it is now regarded as an acquisition of thought, of which some explanation must be given. By the stage of Plato’s Theaetetus, the Greeks have developed some self-consciousness about their possession of this thought. In 206D it is noted that the claim has been made that the most complete knowledge derives from the addition of logos to true opinion, and the need to investigate the meaning of this logos is stated. The passage concerned amply illustrates the ambiguity of the term, since it scrutinizes three possible meanings for it. The goal of this part of the Theaetetus is the definition of knowledge, and it is in relation to opinion (doxa) and knowledge (episteme) that logos is determined. Socrates and Theaetetus work from the suggestion that right belief becomes knowledge when logos is added to it. What is this ingredient, which is added? What quality enables logos to transform belief into knowledge? Socrates inherits the question posed by the Presocratic transition from mythos to logos, and he first puts forward the idea that it refers to the ability to express one’s thought in speech, through connecting verbs and nouns in a stream. The image of the thought would thus be “mirrored” in speech. The difficulty with this is clear enough, since most people have the capacity to speak; “right opinion” and knowledge would in this case be incapable of differentiation. Knowledge must be something more than the expression of one’s thoughts in speech, and logos must be more than verbalisation.

The second understanding of logos brought forward emphasises the ability to give an account of something in terms of its constituent elements (stochêia), as when a wagon is defined as containing so many pieces of wood. It was argued earlier that Heraclitus seemed to be using logos in this sense, since he spoke of “distinguishing each thing according to its nature”. Crombie (II. 113) finds it a matter of curiosity that this definition should occur here, but recalls the role of dialectic in the Republic, noting that part of its
function is to analyse into component parts. In view of Heraclitus' statement that his logos sought to distinguish things according to their nature, the present attempt to define logos similarly does not seem surprising. (Any cosmology, which is roughly what the first logos were, has as its goal an account which gives a true analysis of reality, discovering and naming entities.) Yet this definition of logos does not satisfy, since Socrates points out difficulties. Taking the letters of a name as the constituent elements, it would be possible to get the order right by accident, and so knowledge would not be involved. Further, a complete account of the elements would have to be given for knowledge to have been acquired, but this appears to lead to ridiculous consequences. Can we be said not to know the wagon if we cannot give a complete account of every plank in it?

Socrates and his respondent turn to the last possibility, that the logos is the account of a defining characteristic: that characteristic which is specific to an entity and is not held in common with others. Being able to state the difference in a thing would be that which makes right opinion become knowledge, and this stands as the last attempt to show that knowledge is right opinion accompanied by logos. Yet this possibility is rejected because an entity must be known in order for its difference to be able to be stated: knowledge is prior to differentiation, so that the latter cannot constitute one of its contributing factors. The dialogue ends on this note of failure, and thus ends the attempt to define knowledge as opinion with logos. Yet the attempt to try out the term in this context shows us how much a part of the armoury of Greek philosophical vocabulary it had become. The fact that Plato is unable to define it clearly is simply a part of the debate, but it clearly emerges that logos is a rational faculty. In each of the cases discussed, it is seen as a discursive rational faculty, because in each case an account is either given or able to be given. Even in the last case, which involves focussing on the specific, an account is involved, since the specific is defined in relation to other factors. The attempt to make a scientific discursive faculty essential to knowledge was unsuccessful, but in the process we have at least been told what logos might mean.

At this time the sophists, the purveyors of argument and discourse, were coming into prominence. Gorgias was the chief proponent of the power of language, and he treats logos as a mighty force, capable of bringing divine blessings, powerful enough to release from fear, grief and to excite pity (DK 251, B11, 8). Rhetoric and sophistry were quite close, and sophistry did not always enjoy a bad reputation: indeed, even in the time of Plato, who vilified it and was chiefly responsible for the stigma which subsequently attached to it, sophistry was regarded by many as a legitimate branch of education. But both Socrates and Plato were concerned with educators who brought the art of logos into disrepute, and who tended to create a class of logos-haters in whose existence we may readily believe on the basis of Aristo-
Phanes’ Clouds. The danger of becoming a “misologist” is referred to in the Phaedo (89D), and ascribed to the repeated undermining of one’s arguments. The constant experience of constructing an argument, only to see it collapse, produces the condition of hatred of reasoning. It is somewhat similar in origin to misanthropy, Socrates says, in that dislike of one’s fellow man can follow the undermining of one’s faith in him. The intensity of debate and disputation in Athens must have been such that there were many aching heads, and reeling former devotees of the philosophical art: it thus became Plato’s concern to define a proper approach to argument. He endeavours to define a proper type of rhetoric, and a proper type of sophistry. Despite his general vilification of sophists, Plato does concede that there is a possibly correct genre of sophistry: “The noble art of sophistry” (Sophist 231B).

The rhetoricians and the sophists introduced an understanding of logos which was new and doubtful, from the philosophical point of view, since it conceived of speech as a means of persuading people, for whatever good they might choose. Socrates (according to Xenophon, Memorabilia 3.3.11) had noted the importance of speech in learning how to be human.

... the best teachers make particular use of speech, and those with the deepest knowledge of the most significant matters are also the best speakers.

Rhetoric was seen by Plato as being concerned not with fact, but with appearances and more probabilities (Phaedrus 267A). It was an art which flourished owing to the particular circumstances of the Greek democratic states. The art of speech-making became essential for participation in that mode of government, and the circumstances of the assembly made effective oratory a prime condition for effective political activity. Rhetoric became the prime training for a career in politics, and thus was ushered in a period in which rationality and speech were put to the task of persuasion rather than demonstration. It is in this context that we must place Gorgias’ statement that the logos has supreme power, capable of bringing release from fear and grief, and of exciting joy and pity. Logos is now seen as an instrument for psychic manipulation, and seeming rationality replaces the concern for a “true account”. It is therefore plain that the discussion of this development should have been of concern to philosophers and philosophy, since in some way the discovery of reason had led to a distortion of reason. It was the very rationality of rhetoric that made it convincing: it endeavoured to speak plausibly, yet with some sleight of hand. It was directed at the rational faculty, but its goal was to produce an emotional decision. This art of persuasion could convince judges in court, councillors in Council, the people in Assembly, or any other gathering of citizens... (Plato, Gorgias 452E)
Gorgias had less of a philosophical position than Protagoras, but nevertheless shared the philosophical quandary engendered by the new relativism. Speeches were his mode, on subjects like the myth of Helen, and he foreshadows the kind of superficially learned disquisition that we find in Plutarch, centuries later. Plato tells us that Gorgias repeatedly stated that logos was a "mighty despot" (Philebus 58 A–B), and he uses the power of the word as an explanation for the behaviour of Helen and her adultery. It is an irresistible force against which we cannot prevail. Gorgias thus gave himself to the teaching of rhetoric, writing a number of manuals (Technai), which purported to give instruction in the art. Plato tells us that he did not claim to be able to teach virtue (arete), but laughed at those who claimed to do so (Meno 95C). Not only did Gorgias repudiate the pretensions of men like Protagoras, who did claim to give instruction in virtue, but he also thought that their proper business was teaching skill in public speaking. This appears to be a claim that the proper task of a recognized class of sophists was to be education in rhetoric. Following this reference to Gorgias, the dialogue continues:

Socrates: Then you don’t think that the sophists are teachers (of virtue)?
Meno: I can’t say, Socrates. I have the same view as everybody else: sometimes I think they are, sometimes I don’t.

Gorgias took a specific view of his profession, then, which consisted in teaching the young how to use logos in a certain way. This was clearly teachable (unlike virtue), and Plato did not criticise Gorgias on that score. Yet his view of rhetoric came with a philosophy of a well-defined kind, and it was this which was most provocative. Gorgias recognized that skill in the use of logos could lead to deceitfulness, but deceit was widely practised in arts which were held to be edifying. The poetic or dramatic artifice was a kind of deceit. Gorgias saw as his role the function of teaching people how to persuade, but not that of teaching them how to distinguish between right and wrong. All one person can offer another is opinion (doxa), and there is no soundly based truth which can be passed on (Helen 11, in DK B11, p.252). Since opinion is all that can be offered the mind, then one must set about making it as compelling as possible: the logician is no longer judge of ideas, and so the orator may come onto the field as a kind of combatant, ready to persuade, since opinions can always be swayed by persuasion. One can easily see why the distinction between true and false belief must have become very urgent for Plato, for he wished to safeguard objectivity in matters of ontology and epistemology. There is a kind of immoralism about Gorgias’ view formulated in its most radical form (though he himself lived an “exemplary” life), since for him the efficacy of a speech counts for more than its content.

The philosophy of reality which lay behind this was appropriate. We have seen that logos can mean the ability to detail the true nature of a thing: that
seemed to be the case with Heraclitus, and Aristotle also has this usage. In Metaphysics 1024a17, Aristotle deals with falsehood, and claims that a false logos is of something which does not exist. Conversely the true logos specifies an existent. This has been referred to elsewhere as “naive rationality”. Gorgias seeks to undermine such an understanding of logos by arguing against the notion of an absolute existence, which alone could guarantee knowledge, on the view obtaining thus far in Greek thought.

Gorgias’ ontology broke the nexus between logos and reality, and his logoi were aimed at effect rather than the categorization of reality. In a fitting piece of sophistry, the sophist devotes himself to the question of nothing. On the basis of Sextus Empiricus (Against the Logicians I.65) and the treatise On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias (attributed to Aristotle), it is possible to reconstruct his argument as consisting of the following propositions: that nothing exists, that if it did it would be incomprehensible, and that if it were comprehensible, it would be incommunicable. That this discussion is dictated by Parmenides’ poem is clear, though Gorgias’ intention is not so clear. It seems that he is taking one aspect of Parmenides’ discussion and deliberately trivialising it in order to destroy its claim to be seriously accepted by anyone. Gorgias sought to undermine the idea that there was any abiding substance of reality, and in this way struck a blow at the “naive rationalism”, characteristic of Greek thought up until his time: the function of logos was not that of designating truly some aspect of reality, but in the absence of an essential reality, it had the function of altering opinions about things, in a system where each opinion was as valid as the next. Sextus Empiricus saw this as denying the kriterion, or touchstone, whereby all opinions might be tested for their truth or falsity. In the absence of this, rhetoric became the mere deployment of persuasive force. Gorgias had produced, to the non-Sceptic at least, an alarming caricature of the new intellectual tool.

In the post-Socratic era, it is natural that Plato saw such a view as a trend to be resisted, waves of irrational feeling having been responsible for the trial and death of Socrates. He did so with great vigour in the Gorgias, a dialogue in which that sophist submits to the Socratic cross-questioning. As with the Protagoras, it is the pretension of the sophist which is to be punctured:

Socrates: So we have come too late for a feast, as the proverb says?
Callicles: Yes, and a most elegant feast; for Gorgias gave us a rich and varied display a short while ago. (Gorgias 447A)

Gorgias’ proneness to giving such displays of logos will be put to the test in the dialogue: he declares his art to be “about logoi” (449D), and with his customary use of the analogy from other skills (~&xvdwv), Socrates finds this to be a non-specific characteristic, since it is true that all the skills are concerned with speech (logoi). Gorgias considers the power of persuasion to be the greatest good, a source of freedom and personal power.
It is a thing Socrates, which is genuinely the greatest good; a cause of freedom to man in general, and a cause of the individual sway of others, in their several cities. (452D)

After more discussion comes the vitriolic reply of Socrates that rhetoric is not a form of art, but a type of flattery. Like cookery, it is not a skill (τέχνη), but a kind of knack. Rhetoric is merely a semblance of political activity (463D). Gorgias appears aghast at this suggestion, and Socrates consistently refuses the term "art" to such an activity, indicating as much about his high view of τέχνη as he does about the major issues being discussed.

Gorgias' view is situated within the general debate over nomos and physis, and the thrust of it appears to be an extreme emphasis on the former, and apparently a complete denial of the latter. Like other sophists, he emphasised the contribution of education and culture to the formation of the personality, and minimised the endemic natural factor. The Sophists provided a remarkable challenge to the mainstream Presocratic tradition, and raised important questions about its foundations. It was earlier argued that Greek philosophy began with questions about reality, and that epistemological questions arose out of changes in the understanding of reality. The need for reason manifested itself, as Parmenides' Fragment 7 indicates, when conflicting reports of the nature of reality were given and the function of reason was that of specifying reality as it truly was. Now the Sophists focussed a critique on the very factor that had brought reason into existence, namely the real reality underlying appearances. Non-manifest reality was declared not to exist by them, or at least not to be knowable, and in consequence the newly crowned prince of human faculties, reason, had neither object nor foundation. Plato's reply to this idea, and to Gorgias, is simply a continuation of the mainstream Presocratic tradition, that there is an underlying reality, and that the function of reason is to deal with it. His metaphysical system aims at formulating what the objects of reason are.

Aristotle's philosophy was not developed in the context of the sophistic critique, and it seems to express more confidence about the meaning of logos in the Greek tradition. He is in no doubt about its value, importance or meaning: not only does he believe in an objective physical world, but at times he seems to see logos as rooted in nature itself.

Aristotle's use of logos provides a bridge between the Classical and the Hellenistic usages. On the one hand, it shows that the identification of logos with the rational was now complete, and commonly recognised. On the other hand however, there are some passages which tend towards the kind of hypostatization of logos which we find in the late Greek cosmic force, Logos. One of the classic passages is Politics 1332b4, where man is distinguished from the animals by evidence of his possession of the faculty of reason. Men are said to be virtuous through three things, namely habit, nature and reason. Animals, it is said, live chiefly by nature, but also by habit to a certain extent:
“For he alone possesses reason ... For men often act contrary to their habits and their nature because of reason, if they are persuaded that another course would be preferable.”

Logos as man’s distinguishing feature is also referred to in Politics 1253a, where in a teleological perspective, man’s existence as a city-dwelling animal is stressed. The reason for man’s particularly “political” characteristic is his faculty of logos, but how to translate the term here is not so clear. In the first passage it clearly means reason, since it is the faculty pitted against nature and habit, but in the second logos is confronted with φωνή (voice).

For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; man alone of the animals possesses logos. The mere voice can signify pain and pleasure, and therefore is to be found in the other animals as well ... but logos is designed for indicating the advantageous and the harmful, and consequently the just and the unjust as well.

Though the passages are very close in certain respects (“man alone possesses logos”), the latter contains a completely different understanding of logos. To this faculty is attributed the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, and this is the essence of city-dwelling in Aristotle’s view. But it is to be noted that logos means more than the power to express the difference between right and wrong; it is also the power to discover it. There is here an interesting connection between thought and speech, and logos contains both ideas, as Aristotle shows in the Posterior Analytics 76b25, where a distinction is drawn between the internal and the external logos (πρὸς τὸν ἐξὸς λόγον). Demonstration and syllogism are said to belong to the logos in the soul, and not that which is directed towards the outside. In this the way the Stoic distinction between the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and the λόγος προφορικός (to which we shall return), is foreshadowed. The point to be made here, however, is that logos is understood to have two aspects, which though separate, are part of the same faculty of rationality: in the first aspect it appears as what we should call the capacity for reasoning, and in the second as the capacity for discourse.

A different passage in the De Anima 424a31 employs the word as meaning something like “the appropriate system of functioning”. The logos (in this sense) of a sensory faculty can be destroyed if that faculty is overstimulated, just as the tuning of a lyre can be distorted if it is struck hard. The logos is also man’s specific mode of functioning: The Nicomachean Ethics 1169a1 ff. notes that we feel that our reasoned acts (τὰ μετὰ λόγου) are especially our own. They are voluntary, rather than compelled by the forces of nature. For this reason the good man has self-love: the reasoning faculty is his true self. There is, Aristotle concedes, a pejorative sense of the word φιλαντρός, but this is based on the understanding of self-love as being governed by the pas-
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sions. There is another sense of self-love, which derives from the practice of living according to reason. The λόγος as a specific function is confirmed in the On the Parts of Animals 639b15, where the final cause is equated with "that for the sake of which the thing is formed". In this teleological perspective, a thing has a purpose. The "for the sake of which" of a thing, is its logos...

"and the logos is always the beginning point (ἀρχή) for things arising from nature, as well as those which spring from techne."

Logos has thus a meaning which looks quite close to the idea of function. We could translate by the term "rationale" but this would be less than adequate, since a thing's reason for being there lies not in some plan external to it, but very definitely to its own characteristics. Its logos is the specific design which it carries within itself. The equation of λόγος and ἀρχή is quite an extraordinary feature of this passage, since the latter term formed the object of investigation by the philosophers of the Presocratic period. The original principle of the Milesian monists now finds itself identified with logos, a concept which at that time meant little more than a "reasoned tale". It should also be noted that Aristotle makes logos the original principle both in the case of objects which result from skill in production, and objects which spring from nature. This is an important extension, since one might normally have associated logos with art (τέχνη) only, reason and creative skill seeming to be associated: however logos is also made the original principle of brute nature, and it here takes on an entirely different aspect. It is dissociated from human intention and capacity in the first case, and it thus becomes a characteristic of all nature, including that which has been subjected to human skill. The Nicomachean Ethics (1140a10) had made λόγος a part of the definition of τέχνη (skill): the architectural skill is defined as a "making state with reason", and all arts are defined in this way, but the two passages are in fact quite different. The passage just cited concerns the rational element in creative skill, whereas elsewhere Aristotle tends to hypostatize logos as a principle present in cosmic reality. It is an important shift in the direction of the hypostatized logos of the Hellenistic period. A most important passage illustrating this movement is found in the Ethics (1180a23), where logos is presented as a principle descended from wisdom (φρονήσεως) and intelligence (νοης). Law is said to be a logos which has a compelling power (ἀναγκαστικὴν ἔχει δύναμιν). Unlike a father, law has the capacity to compel obedience: Aristotle thus gives a capacity to logos, which had hitherto been thought of as a mode. Such passages are indications of the origin of the hypostatized logos.

Those meanings of the term which have already become familiar may also be found in Aristotle: μόθος and λόγος are treated as partners once again in
Politics 1336a30, where the responsibility of educators is said to lie in the selection of the kind of "myth" or "rational tale" which children are permitted to hear. In Rhetorica 1393b8 logos is used in a way in which we would normally use "myth", since it is used to designate a legend used by Stesichorus and Aesop. In the same work it is used in the context of mathematicians to mean mathematical "discourses" or "arguments". These are examples of the use of logos to describe extended pieces of reasoning, or rational thought, which might well be covered by the general term discourse, which is a recognized and distinctive human capacity: so the πρακτικόν λόγος (the "theory" of practice: Nicomachean Ethics 1104a3). In his discussion of choice, Aristotle posits two conditions which are necessary for choice to occur, namely desire and reason. Choice causes action, and choice is caused by a combination of desire and reasoning being directed towards some end. Thus choice involves the exercise of reason through intellect or thought, and disposition (ἐξίς: Nicomachean Ethics 1139a32). In this case "reason" (λόγος) clearly refers to a capacity, rather than a formulated set of principles.

Logos elsewhere means reason in the sense of rational propositions, as in Nicomachean Ethics 1179b27 where the man who is living according to passion is described as he who will not listen to reason (logos) from the person who seeks to deflect him from a course of action. The rational part of man is referred to as being twofold (Nicom. Ethics 1098a4), and in 1103a2 the rational part (τὸ λόγον ἐξίς) is again alleged to be twofold (δύττόν). In both cases the two levels of this rational part are defined as the capacity to obey reason, as a child obeys its father, but the other level constitutes rationality properly speaking, for it is the capacity to exercise intelligence: to indulge in reason, as well as obeying it. The passage first cited from the Ethics has some significance because it dwells on the idea of man's function, which has a great importance in Aristotle's teleological view of reality.

Just as the carpenter and shoemaker have specific functions and businesses, and the eye, the hand and the foot all have a function of their own, so does the human being have some specific function. Various possibilities are entertained here, but each is rejected as being non-specific. Living is common to plants as well as man; sentient living is shared by animals; there remains the practical life of the rational element in man. Aristotle thus defines man's function as the active exercise of the soul's faculties in accordance with reason. This confirms other statements about the specific quality of man's reasoning capacities, which constitute a defining characteristic. (It is interesting to pursue the posterity of Aristotle's bifurcation of the logos-capacity. The two types of reason surface later, in Christian philosophy, as the Father and the Son. R. P. Casey has traced the importance of the διεσοτά λόγος in early Patristic philosophy, and Clement of Alexandria distinguishes between the paternal logos and the immanent logos, which is incarnate, in a fragment listed by Stählin III, p.202. This distinction is generally held to have contributed
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to Arianism, in which a substantial difference between the Father and Son was claimed, by offering a means of prising apart two sides of the logos. The Arians leapt upon such justifications, and in this way Aristotle seems to have played an unwitting part in the trinitarian disputes which divided the late Roman Empire.

An important qualification is placed on the role of logos in Metaphysics 1059b27, which will be seen to have a future in Neoplatonism and also Patristic Philosophy. The question under discussion is the object of science (episteme), and the idea that science is concerned with the ultimate elements is rejected.

"It would seem rather that the science being sought is to do with universals, for every reasoning (logos) and every science concerns universals rather than ultimate (species); and so it must deal with the primary genera. These would be Being and Unity."

The proper concern of reason, then, is not to do with particulars, but with the broad bases of reality, being and unity. This point of view is confirmed in the Physics 189a:

"... the universal is known by logos, and the particular by sense-perception. For logos grasps the universal, and sense-perception the partial (κατ' έρεις). Thus great and small are known by logos, whilst thick and thin are known by perception."

Such an assessment of the epistemological function of reason demonstrates its claim to be the highest faculty possessed by man, since it is that part of him which deals directly with the essence of reality. The Neoplatonic use of this will do more to highlight the difference between the universal and the particular, and will give a transcendent significance to the One and Being, said by Aristotle to be the primary genera, or the proper objects of logos. In keeping with its focus on the general, logos is closely connected with definition (ὀρισμός). We are told that every definition is a logos, and that the definition indicates the essence of a thing. The idea of definition contains the idea of limit, and thus the essence of a thing is contained by reason (see also Meteorologica 378b20).

Aristotle's logos marks the full flowering of the concept in the classical era, since its great variety of meanings is fully exploited, and fully accepted as part of the technical language of rationalism. He is heir to all the tendencies discovered in the use of the word prior to him; logos appears as the defining characteristic of man; it is contrasted with "voice", and therefore appears to mean the faculty of making rational sounds; yet it is defined as having an internal aspect, as well as an outward, articulated aspect; it is the characteristic of man which is chiefly responsible for his being a city-dweller; it has an exploratory and expressive power; it is the essence of man, and the basis of his
voluntary acts, and therefore of his freedom; it is the design which inheres in both natural objects and artefacts; it is the original principle (arche) of reality; it is the twofold capacity of the human soul; and it is the science which grasps and specifies the essence of reality. The definition of logos as a φωνή σημαντική (On Interpretation 16\(b\)26) is of great importance, though it only refers to the externalised form of logos, since it emphasizes the idea of meaning: it is that which lends a sound, or group of sounds, meaning. Logos is that which informs human communication.

It has been suggested that Aristotle provided a bridge between the classical and hellenistic understandings of logos, and several passages were noted in which he saw reason as inherent in nature itself. This is a prominent theme in Stoic thought, and late Greek thought generally: describing the views of Chrysippus, Posidonius, Zeno and Boethus, Diogenes Laertius (VII.149) gives as their definition of fate, the following.

Fate is defined as an endless chain of causes of the existence of things, or the reason by which the world proceeds.

In Stoic thought such a guiding principle would not be considered to be outside nature, since the latter is understood as the principle of the cohesion of things. Diogenes in fact gives us two possibilities for the meaning of nature, the one being the idea of that which holds nature together, and the other that which causes things to spring up from the earth (VII.148). Nature is conceived of as an energetic, energising force, and reason is associated with it.

Perhaps the best known of the Stoic usages of the logos concept is concerned with its seminal function in the realm of the cosmos. According to the evidence of Diogenes Laertius (VII.136; SVF II.179.35), the seminal power was considered by direct analogy with human generation.

(Zeus) is called by many other names: he turned the whole of being into water through air, and just as in procreation the seed is enveloped, God, who is the seminal reason (σπερματικός λόγος) of the universe, remains behind in the moisture making matter manageable for the next stage of creation.

The seed is thought to be secreted in moisture, which acts like the shell of a nut, and the seminal reason principle acts similarly: encased in moisture it engenders the various stages in the formations and mutations of matter. The seminal logos has a function which begins with the very material origin of the universe, and is not constricted to the endowment of other-worldly essences in the soul. Aëtius (Plac. 1.7.33) records a similar view, attributing it to the Stoics, although here God is said to embrace "all the seminal principles ... as he goes on his way towards the generation of the cosmos". There is envisaged a plurality of seminal logos included in the divinity, which is also made
The stoic seminal logos

equivalent to a “creative fire”, creative being understood in the sense of being able to design and make (τεχνικόν). Proclus, in his commentary on Plato’s Parmenides (V, 135 ed. Cousin) also refers to the seminal principles in the plural, as a group of eternal forces, combining them with the Platonic ideas in an effort to guarantee the stability of “the entities which participate in the idea”, and this later use of the Stoic notion gives a good example of the Neoplatonic deployment of concepts native to Stoicism.

In general the ancients report the Stoic doctrine in the context of matter and its generation, rather than that of the soul or mind. But of course Stoic philosophy is materialist and any attempt to accommodate such entities must be carried out within the limits of physical reality. The status of the seminal principles is not quite clear because they appear to exist alongside matter, as things “according to which” matter takes its quality and shape. In this way, according to Galen (Defin. Medicae 29: SVF II.218, line 1), the Stoics defined the soul as “a body composed of small particles moving out from itself in accordance with seminal principles”. This notion is clearly quite different from the later Christian use of the seminal logos, since the soul has no special status, and like all other reality, evolves from matter shaped according to seminal principle.

There subsists some ambiguity in the causative value of the seminal logos. The first passage cited from the Stoics has God as seminal reason, and reality is held to grow out of him as plants grow from the seed. Other passages speak of reality emerging “in accordance with” (κατά) the seminal principles, as if they are merely an agency for shaping reality as it emerges. Yet even in D.L. VII.136 there is an ambiguity, since the seed is presented as both the origin of reality and a force which exists alongside matter, accommodating it to itself. Such a dualism in the originating principles of the cosmos is characteristic of Greek philosophy, since from Plato’s Timaeus onwards there is held to be a certain given set of factors, Nature or Matter, sometimes described as Necessity, and in tandem with Necessity some kind of designing and constructing force, called in the Timaeus the demiurge. The logos spermatikos of the Stoics comes close to this artisan God of Plato’s, even though it is intended to unite both aspects of the dualism outlined above in a single function. Any dualism is an embarrassment in Stoicism, which holds that reality is constituted out of a single principle, namely matter: and so the originating logos has the character of something out of which reality grows rather than that of a controlling force standing above it.

Of course logos has its ordinary meanings of “speech” and “reason” in Stoicism. In a definition which smacks of Aristotle, logos is defined as a semantic vocal sound proceeding from the intelligence (D.L. VII.56), and here Diocles Magnus is being reported on the subject of speech, which term provides the best translation for logos in this context. An interesting argument is ascribed to Diogenes of Babylon by Galen (SVF III.215, line 30) according to
which voice comes through the pharynx. Speech proceeds from the intelligence, and is voice in a certain form: the intelligence is not therefore located in the brain, since its product in the form of speech would not pass through such an indirect route as the pharynx if this were the case. The understanding of logos/speech here appears to be that vocal sounds are formed into a semantic structure by the intelligence, thus yielding speech. The Greek word *semantikos* comes from *sema*, meaning “sign” or “omen”, and is thus similar to our “significant”: the “semantic” is that which contains recognizable signs; that which is interpretable.

The Stoics recognized the capacity for silent thought, which seemed to be speech-like, though without the articulation of sounds. Their terminology allowed for silent discourse. A distinction was drawn between the *logos prophorikos* and the *logos endiathetos*, uttered and internal reason respectively. The internal logos is that by which we know the connections between things, argument, division, synthesis, analysis and demonstration (SVF II 43, line 14). These are all the forms of reasoning which make up the armoury of Greek logic. Sextus Empiricus (Adv. Math. VIII 275; SVF II 43, line 18) gives us the Stoic view of the uttered word: Aristotle’s famous definition of man as being distinct from the animals by his capacity for speech, that is vocal sounds which possess significance, is now refined by virtue of the Stoic distinction. Sextus reports the Stoic opinion to be that man is distinct from animals not by virtue of externalised discourse, but the faculty of internal discourse. His ability for silent reflection places him apart from the animals: that this should be the case is an interesting development, since one might have considered the ability to utter sounds possessing significance to be an adequately distinguishing feature. Clearly the idea that thought could take place without words was a striking fact to the Stoics. The dominant part of the soul is that from which reason springs. Logos and intelligence have the same origin: the spring of such higher faculties lies with the heart.

Logos as reason is amply attested. Chrysippus spoke of the rational being as guided by the faculty of reason (SVF III.95, line 11). Galen reports him (SVF III.113, line 21) as stating that the rational being is moved according to reason, rather than the soul. The emphasis on nature is important, since it establishes reason as a part of the ordinary functioning of reality. The connections between things and the ability to grasp these connections are rooted in the same physical process as the rest of reality: reason is not considered to be a transcendent entity, hovering above the real world upon which it must sit in judgment. According to the Stoics, virtue is a disposition of the soul, springing from reason, which was held to be a stable and immutable power (SVF I.50, line 2). Diogenes Laertius VII.54 attests the Stoic understanding of right reason as the “*kriterion*”, or standard of truth. This notion of an intellectual touchstone was a common subject of discussion among Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics, and Diogenes reports a variety of views among Stoics on
The Sceptics... and the failure of logos

the subject of the kriterion. Some argued that the genuine and indubitable apprehension of a real object constituted the means of testing concepts: others, for example Boethus, advocated several standards, namely intelligence, sense-perception desire and knowledge. Chrysippus advocated sense-perception and "prolepsis", a term which is usually translated by the word preconception, by which the Stoics meant a naturally endowed and innate system of thought involving universal concepts. Posidonius, we are told, made right reason the kriterion, and he also considered it to be a faculty endowed by nature. Chrysippus (D.L. VII.128) claimed that both law and right reason exist by nature and not by convention. Right reason is said to be common to gods and men (Cicero, De Legibus 1.7.22).

In conclusion then, the Stoics stress the idea that logos/reason is rooted in nature, and it consequently looks like an arche, or the first principle familiar from the Presocratics. Reality grows out of seminal reason, which is both its source and its designer: both mind and physical reality share in reason, which is inherent in them. Logos has an embodiment in speech, which is the production of significant sounds (logos prophorikos), but it does not need this vocal incarnation in order to exist. Reason is also an innate capacity, like a disposition enabling the comprehension of rational procedures.

Scepticism is a crucial ingredient in the development of later Greek philosophy. Its prime concern was the kriterion for distinguishing truth from falsehood, and its exponents were more doubtful about finding such an instrument than the Stoics or Epicureans. They emphasised that what we acquire is manifestations of reality, and that reality itself is either difficult or impossible to apprehend. Scepticism is extremely important for this study in particular, because of this thoroughgoing concern with epistemological issues. In many ways its contribution is negative, since it strikes at the foundations of the edifice built around and upon the advances of the Presocratics by Plato and Aristotle. These thinkers are now seen as dogmatists, and ripe for intellectual pruning; such movements occur regularly in the history of Western philosophy, following hard upon periods of intellectual confidence and theoretical construction. Once philosophy departs from questioning, from the Socratic inquiry, and moves to the statement and the theory, it overreaches itself, and its hubris brings the critical vengeance of the Sceptics, of William of Ockham, of Husserl.

The Sceptics, then, pay particular attention to the earlier and most fundamental acquisition of Greek philosophy, the idea of reason/speech. One of the most perplexing things about reason is that it brings different results. This in fact had been a failing in sense perception and the thought of ordinary mortals, and the antidote seemed to lie in reason, which provided a stable and disciplined account of reality. The Presocratic understanding of reason presents it as canonical and unambiguous: yet those deploying it differed from each other. This was a terrible failing in the new tool, and one
which the Sceptics triumphantly exploited. The story of Carneades' speeches for and against justice, delivered in Rome on successive days in 155 B.C., is well-known and it is a good illustration of the Sceptical method of pitting logoi against each other. Conflicting arguments (ἀντικειμένων λόγων) were brought together in order to illustrate the inefficacy of reason. Sextus Empiricus outlines the Pyrrhonian approach to this (Outlines of Pyrrhonism I.8), and notes the ethical value of opposing ideas. The conflict thus generated will show us that many such judgments possess "equipollence" (ἰσοθέντες), or that they are equal in strength: as Sextus says (I.10), they are equal in respect of their probability and improbability. The knowledge of the real status of arguments will have a psychological effect, relieving us of tension and bringing us to a state of intellectual suspension of judgment, which will in turn yield imperturbability of mind (ataraxia). In the first place one opposes the sensibles to the intelligibles, but one may also oppose intelligibles, that is intellectual judgments. None of the conflicting arguments (τῶν μαχομένων λόγων) will take precedence over any other. An example of this type of procedure at work may be found in the same work (II.130), where the question of the existence of the "sign" (σημείον) is discussed. The Stoics had argued for the existence of such a logical indicator in argument, whereby the conclusion is permitted. The sign is that which allows and brings forward the conclusion, and is itself apprehended before the thing signified. Sextus first argues against the sign, and then proceeds to argue in favour of it, in order to demonstrate the "equipollence of the conflicting arguments (ἀντικει-μένων λόγων)".

It was claimed that to every argument (logos) an equal argument could be opposed: Sextus qualifies this statement by saying that it refers to arguments for which the hypothesis has been tested, so that it is limited to one's personal investigation of arguments and their counter-arguments. The concern here is to avoid the charge of dogmatism, to which the whole Sceptical enterprise was opposed. The view is therefore reformulated as follows:

To every argument examined by me, which establishes something dogmatically, it seems to me that there is another argument opposed, which establishes a point dogmatically, which is equal to it in credibility and incredibility. (Outlines of Pyrrhonism I.203)

The emphasis on the subjective aspect is included to avoid giving the proposition a dogmatic form, but rather to make a claim about one's own state of mind. This particular strategy is not wholly successful in avoiding dogmatism: it is true that Scepticism was defined in a passage quoted earlier as the ability to place arguments in opposition to each other (I.8), and the emphasis pretty clearly lies on the psychological disposition. Yet the claim about the capacity for opposing arguments must be more than a psychological or sub-
subjective one, since for it to have any importance there must be a presupposed claim that the construction of such antitheses is a possibility in the world of discourse; that argument lends itself to this treatment when properly examined. Self-contradiction is thus a characteristic of argumentation, irrespective of the manoeuvres of the philosopher.

Scepticism wishes however, to lay stress on the subjective experience of the antithetical character of argument. Sextus tells us that the basic principle (arche) of Scepticism is the hope of attaining quietude (op. cit. I.12): nevertheless there does appear to be a dogma involved, despite the desire to avoid this charge, and that is the view that many propositions have equipollence: none of the conflicting arguments takes precedence over any other. For this reason Scepticism stands at a crucial point in the progress of Greek rationalism, which it reduces not to absurdity, but to impotence: and it is held that the failure of logos to produce unambiguous answers does not result in anxiety, but peace. It does not interest itself in the dogma of physics per se but only in the possibility of establishing contradictions within its dogma, with a view to reaching quietude (I.18). The word argument (logos) is understood as that which establishes something dogmatically, a point which is not evident in itself, but acquired through the reasoning process: it is ratiocinations of this kind which are to be opposed to each other (I.202). Sextus differentiates between his school and that of the Cyrenaic school on the question of the logos of external objects. This school was founded by Aristippus of Cyrene, and had ethical goals similar to those of the Epicureans: pleasure, the greatest good, consists of an internal state whose cause is unknown. Truth is measured subjectively, rather than by reference to the external world. Sextus comments here (I.213) that external objects have an “inapprehensible nature” in this view, whereas members of his school suspend judgment on the logos of external objects, which appears to refer to the account of them which is to be given. So Protagoras is said to have believed that the logoi of appearances reside in matter. In this way matter is the appearance (I.218), and this, according to Sextus, gives us the meaning of his claim that “man is the measure of all things”. Protagoras’ statement means that man is the kriterion of all things: he is the kriterion of all existence, since logos is in matter, and things which appear to man therefore exist. Protagoras thus, somewhat oddly, becomes a realist: but we note the idea of logos as signifying the meaning of an object. For him the object contains its meaning; for the Cyrenaic, the nature of the object cannot be known; and for the Pyrrhonian, the meaning of the object is a matter for suspended judgment. (The Sceptic has the appearance as kriterion, since that is not open to question, like the issue of whether the appearance has a basis in reality: I.22.)

The appearance has a certain validity, for one can be certain of having it, whatever its provenance. Against the idea that the appearances can be undermined through reasoning, is pitted the argument that if reason were held to
be such a trickster as "to snatch away appearances from our eyes"; then it can hardly be relied on in the case of non-evident notions which are acquired by thought. As Bury, the Loeb editor notes, this seems to be an a fortiori argument, since the discrediting of appearances by reason is much harder to achieve than the discrediting of the objects of thought by reason, appearances being the possession of which we can be most sure. Appearances have certainty, and it is reason which is self-defeating (I.19–20).

Sextus undertakes a complete review of logos in the history of Greek philosophy, and associates it with the question of whether there is a kriterion of truth. Gorgias is quoted against the position that things thought have existence, on the ground that the mere fact that one thinks of a man flying does not mean that this is an existent fact: thought does not imply existence, therefore (Against the Logicians I.79). Even if the existent (τὸ ὃν) is apprehended, it cannot be communicated to another person: if the thing apprehended is visible, then it is received by sight.

How then can it be communicated to another person, since the faculty for communication is speech (logos), and speech is not itself the real and existent things in question? The thing seen becomes a thing spoken of, and it is speaking which is preferred to the interlocutor. Speech results from external objects (on Gorgias' view, as interpreted by Sextus). The incidence of colour causes speech about colour, and so the external object provides the key to speech, rather than the reverse: speech is logically secondary. Speech is not capable of manifesting colour; one existent does not manifest another. (Whether speech has the same status as physical objects is raised but left open.) In this way, says Sextus, the idea of a kriterion of truth was swept away by Gorgias. For Sextus, the physicists from Thales onwards initiated discussion of the kriterion, since they needed reason to compensate for the now recognized untrustworthiness of reason. A story about Anaxagoras is quoted on the fallibility of the senses: if, he said, we take two colours, say black and white, and pour one into the other drop by drop, we will in fact be unable to observe the change of colour in all its gradual stages, even though we know full well that it is taking place. In this way he concluded that reason was the kriterion whereby the truth of the situation could be judged. The Pythagoreans added the idea that it was not reason in general, but that which stems from the sciences (mathemata) which ought to be held to be the kriterion. This form of reason is held to have some kinship with reality, and since like is known by like, reason knows the truth of reality: the principle that reason has some kinship with nature is attributed to Posidonius in his exposition of Plato's Timaeus (Against The Logicians I.93). This view we may note, is close to that of the Stoics but also to that of Philo, which is shortly to be examined.

Xenophanes is quoted (op. cit. I.110) on the distinction between cognitive (epistemonike) apprehension, which is inerrant, and opinionative (doxastike),
and Parmenides said to have espoused cognitive and inerrant reason as the criterion. This chapter began with Parmenides' emphasis on reason, and Sextus says that Parmenides gave up belief in the senses in order to posit reason as the *kriterion*.

This man himself, as is evident from his statement, declared cognitive reason to be the canon of truth in things existent, and gave up paying attention to the senses. (I.114)

The Against the Logicians reviews the whole history of Greek philosophy in the light of the problem of the canon of truth, and arrives finally at the Sceptical view that there is no such *kriterion* (I.440). Without going into the arguments for and against such a position, we may note how fundamental an issue this is. The Sceptics were able to perceive the basis of the Greek scientific revolution as clearly as if they were standing completely outside it, and they take the disjunction between the senses and reason as the essential feature of the claim that truth can be acquired. There is something intellectually courageous in their willingness to go back to the starting-point of their tradition, and declare the route taken to have been incorrect: the Sceptics are the first stage in the growing sense of the inadequacy of Greek rationalism, which we will see culminating in Damascius.

The trenchant character of the Sceptical attack on reason is well illustrated by an argument in the Outlines of Pyrrhonism (III.50). On the subject of incorporeality, it is argued that it is either sensible or intelligible. If sensible, it cannot be apprehended because of the variety among the sense receptors of animals and men (the attack on sense-perception had been developed along these lines in I.36). If intelligible, it is subject to the same difficulty, since sense-perception is held to be the starting point of the move towards conceiving of the intelligibles. Alternatively, it can be maintained against the idea that the incorporeal is apprehended by sensation, that sense-perception proceeds by way of impression. Emissions or images given off objects touch some organ for sense-perception to occur: the incorporeal is unable to set off such a process. Can it be apprehended by reason then? If reason itself is incorporeal, then it makes nonsense of such a claim: reason would therefore belong to the class of things which are under consideration. For reason to be employed, it would have to be apprehended in the first place: otherwise the prospective instrument would be unknown. Yet the means of apprehending the incorporeal is precisely the question, which is not answered if reason is defined as incorporeal. If it is considered to be a body, then it is subject to all the difficulties which beset sense-perception, as previously outlined; further, on this hypothesis it is involved in the problem about the stability of physical objects. Given the flux process attributed to the physical world by Plato in the Timaeus (and prior to him, Heraclitus of course), it is impossible to conceive of objects having a durable and identifiable existence. It is therefore im-
possible to conceive of reason, whatever its nature, and incorporeals therefore remain inapprehensible.

Thus ends the first stage in the progress of logos. It had been thrust forward as a word which was not tainted with the fanciful and the incredible, and therefore became the preferred term of the philosophers, for the description of their new philosophical myths. By the time of Plato it had become a matter for analysis: it had been noticed and isolated as the key concept in the new scientific approach. With Aristotle and the Stoics it begins to be reified, and thus begins its voyage towards hypostatization. And with Gorgias and the Sceptics we have the beginnings of the epistemological pessimism which will be so much a part of the undermining of logos in the Neoplatonic tradition. The Sceptics perceived with absolute clarity the nature of the transition from mythos to logos, and with equal clarity demonstrated the failings of the newly acquired Greek rationalism. Like the other Hellenistic schools, Scepticism emphasised the capacity of philosophy to produce a desirable state of mind: curiously enough, it is the failure of logos which is held to produce peace. This is a position not unlike that of the Neoplatonists.