

# Remembrance and Recognition in Plato, Abhinavagupta and Proust

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It is agreed that myth is a solidified memory of (metaphorical) occurrences, and situations that existed in *illo tempore* (primordial time). Myth-telling and, later, recital and drama help man to recollect and remember these occurrences, and also to recognize the same pattern repeating in his life, in actual time. It is a process of double recognition: in myth and drama he recognizes the pattern of happenings which he remembers from his life, or those of other people, and in his life, or those of other people, he recognizes the pattern exemplified in myth or drama.

## 1

With Plato's theory of *anamnesis* (remembrance, recollection) we leave aesthetics and approach epistemology, we part with poetry and drama, and enter philosophy. In the former case, remembering meant keeping in memory what has been told and retold in tradition. With Plato, remembrance and recollection refer to a special faculty and proto-history of the soul, "recollection of the things" (i.e., ideas) formerly seen by our soul when it traveled in the divine company" (*Phaedrus*, 249 b.). This means that the soul (*psyche*) has seen and known something before birth, and after birth it has forgotten this knowledge. But, why?

There are two reasons: one is prenatal and the other postnatal. In *The Republic* (620) Plato explains in the myth of Er, that before the souls are reborn (incarnated) each has to drink from the River of Forgetfulness (*Lethe*). As they drink, they forget everything they have seen and known in the world beyond.<sup>1</sup>

New oblivion or forgetfulness adds to this after birth.

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<sup>1</sup> This differs from the later interpretation, by Vergillius (Aeneis), who says that the souls forget the suffering borne in former lives, and then are willing to live again under the sky (i.e. to be reborn).

"Because every pleasure and pain has a sort of rivet with which it fastens the soul to the body and pins it down and makes it corporeal, accepting as true whatever the body certifies" (*Phaedo*, 83).

However, under the guidance and help from philosophy, the willing soul can remember its knowledge (*noesis, episteme*), and recognize its true identity, and independence from the body. The main point is that this knowledge is actually nothing new for the soul—it is potentially there, all the time, but obscured by ignorance which is oblivion. The same goes for the independence and identity of the soul. It is pure and free from becoming and decay. But, obscured by emotions, it accepts "as true whatever the body certifies," and is excluded from the

"fellowship with the pure and uniform and divine." The main task of philosophy is, therefore, not to impart some new knowledge, really unfamiliar to the soul, but to help it to remember. Ignorance is oblivion, knowledge is recollection, "learning is just recollection (*anamnesis*)" (*Phaedo*, 72–76).

Without help the "pregnancy" of the soul with this memory is only a potential, because, under oblivion, the soul is the willing prisoner of the body.

"Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over his soul is a helpless prisoner... and wallowing in utter ignorance. And philosophy can see that the imprisonment is ingeniously effected by prisoner's own active desire, which makes him first accessory to his own confinement" (*Phaedo* 82).

The possibility of liberation from this confinement rests upon three factors. The one is *anamnesis*, the other is philosophy, or guidance by a philosopher; and the third are sensible objects. The third factor is important because, in the dualism of his idealism, Plato ascribes a double role to the sensible world. On the one hand it deludes the soul, keeps it in ignorance and bondage, as a source of pain and pleasure of the body, on the other hand it serves as help in recovering knowledge.

"...We acquired our knowledge before our birth, and lost it at the moment of birth, but afterwards, by the exercise of our senses upon sensible objects, recover the knowledge which we had once before..." (*Phaedo*, 75).

However, only few people retain an adequate remembrance of that, and

“when they behold here any image of that other world, are rapt in amazement, but they are ignorant of what this rapture means, because they do not clearly perceive. For there is no radiance in our earthly copies of justice or temperance or those other things which are precious to souls... But of beauty. I repeat that we saw her there shining in company with the celestial forms: and coming to earth we find her here too, shining in clearness through the clearest aperture of sense” (*Phaedrus*, 250).

So, the easiest and most accessible way to *anamnesis* is by way of sight and love for beauty. Giving this special credit to beauty, Plato is not willing to single out art as a primary source in remembering the idea of beauty. In *Symposium*, Diotima explains that the ascending course to beauty starts with the perception of beauty in forms, than in souls and deeds, institutions and sciences.

“He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love... when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty... a nature which in the first place is everlasting, knowing no birth or death, growth or decay...” (*Symposium*, 210–211).

For Plato, aesthetic experience is, therefore, not exclusively related to art. Beauty is first perceived (*aisthesis*) by the sense of sight and later only by *noesis*. Love (*eros*), on the other hand, is not exclusively an emotional relation between the sexes (or between man and man, in homosexuality), but an instinct or drive which leads to the recollection of the idea of beauty through cultivation and contemplation.

## 2

These rich metaphors and imagery would serve as inspiration for Platonism and Gnosticism. Being born, man “falls” or is “thrown” into the world the body. The soul forgets her original habitation and identity. She is overwhelmed with desires and worldly cares, being engaged and involved more and more. Gnosticism speaks of “sleep”, “drunkenness” and “oblivion”. Man is dispersed, and divided by cravings and cares. He is engulfed by the noise of the world, by the fear, hope and disappointment. This is the world of darkness utterly full of evil...full of falsehood deceit... A world of turbulence without steadfastness,...a world in which the good things perish and plans come to aught” (in Jonas, 1963:57). In Gnostic dualism the opposition between “this world” and “the other world” is greater than in the philosophy of Plato. The duality of light and darkness, of good and evil, corresponding to the duality of the two worlds, is greater than the Platonic duality of ideas and “shadows”,

since darkness is the essence and power of *kosmos*. There is no mediation and resemblance which one can find between the ideas and the “shadows”.

Even the light in this world is really darkness, “black light” (Jonas, p.58). In such a world there is no beauty; if there is, it is not there to remind of the idea of beauty, but to keep man in oblivion and ignorance, to show its ugly back at the end. In order to regain and remember knowledge, *gnosis*, man needs help and a “call from without.”

“The call is uttered by one who has been sent into the world for this purpose and in whose person the transcendent Life once more takes upon itself the stranger’s fate: he is the messenger or Envoy—in relation to the world, The Alien Man” (Jonas, 75–6).

This redeemer was in Christian Gnosticism identified as Jesus Christ.

*Gnosis* is insight, immediate vision of truth. Man who has *gnosis* knows from where he comes and where he goes; he can remember his true identity and understand his present condition. Jonas (1963, p.81) summarized contents of the call (or *gnosis*) as follows:

“the **reminder** of the heavenly origin and the transcendent history of man; the **promise** of redemption,... and finally the practical **instruction** as to how to live henceforth in the world...”

This call has to help man, or initiate his self-recognition as (or through) remembering. This knowledge (*gnosis*) is effective in the sense that it is sufficient for salvation and the ascent of the self (*pneuma*) back to its origin (Divine light).

To be reminded means to be reawakened for the knowledge of oneself, to regain, through remembering, the forgotten knowledge of one’s true identity, to recognize that man in the world is not at home, because he is not of this world. He is an alien, a stranger, unprotected, who does not understand the ways of the world, nor does the world understand him.

“The stranger who does not know the ways of the foreign land wanders about lost; if he learns its ways too well... the distress has gone, but this very fact is the culmination of the stranger’s tragedy. The recollection of his own alienness, the recognition of his place of exile for what it is, is the first step back; the awakened homesickness is the beginning of the return” (Jonas, pp. 49–50).

For Gnosticism, suffering in the world is not expiation for sins but a reminder<sup>2</sup> that the man has been thrown to the world, and a thrust toward recognizing his *pneuma* (self) and otherworldly origin.

Among modern writers, Marcel Proust had the feeling that man is either reincarnated, or that he is other-worldly. He sees that the obligations of moral life, or strivings toward perfection, are hard to explain if we consider only this one life. Contemplating after the death of Bergotte, he says it seems that we enter life under a burden of obligations already fixed in some previous life. There is no reason, he says, that we should be kind and good-hearted, and there is no reason for the artist to be obliged to start or polish his work for the twentieth time, since—once he is dead—the admiring his work would arouse will mean nothing to his dead body. All these obligations, he adds, are not sanctioned in this life, and seem to belong to a different order, some other world completely different from this one. And we have these laws in ourselves, without knowing who has inspired our being with them (Proust, *La Prisonnière*, 1.246).

However, in Gnosticism we find extreme dualism. There are not only two worlds, but two gods and two selves, as well. One God is the creator God, responsible for this world, the other is the unknown God yet to be recovered at the end of time. One self is the self of the world (*psyche*), the other self (*pneuma*) is not from here and it is not of this world. The transcendence of the other world and the unknown God do not stand in any (positive) relation to the sensible world, and the pneumatic self has no relation to the psychic self. Therefore, Jonas called this teaching “acosmism”—the main values being beyond cosmic origin and significance. Every culture must confront itself with the principal relation of man with the world, and the relation of past, present and future, in individual existence and in cosmo-historical time. These are basic questions which also determine the possible answer to the question: what is the meaning of life, how is man supposed to use his time and power available in this life. Gnosticism proudly announces

“the knowledge of who we are, what we become, where we were, where into we have been thrown, where to we hurry, where from we are redeemed, what birth is, and what rebirth” (Clement of Alexandria: *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 78. 2, in Jonas, 1963:334).

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<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Gnosticism could explain the suffering of the innocent, and the good life of the vile. If Dostoyevsky were a Gnostic and not an Orthodox Christian, he would have found an answer for his question: why the suffering of an innocent child?

### 3

Thrownness, forlornness and homelessness can be found as subjects in Existentialism, especially in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.<sup>3</sup> Also, the theme of the alien, stranger and emigrant can be found in the writings of the XXth century authors, like Camus (*The Stranger*) and M. Crnjanski (*Migrations, The Novel on London*). The best description of the world (as if) made and governed by the bad god *Demiourgos*, can be found in Kafka's novels and novels of dissident writers from Eastern Europe (Solzhenyitsin, Shalamov, Kundera). While in Gnosticism the man is thrown into a *kosmos* as nature (*physis*), here man is thrown into a *kosmos* of social and political relations (state, *polis*). Both are governed solely by power.

However, in Gnosticism there is still *gnosis*, the other world, and an assumption, that man can save himself and return to real, eternal light and life. In modern literature there is no call (save to the trial or prison), no open doors, no meaning, no promise, no faith, no knowledge, only absolute contingency.

"This makes modern nihilism infinitely more radical and more desperate than gnostic nihilism could ever be... That only man cares, in his finitude facing nothing but death, alone with his contingency and the objective meaninglessness of his projected meanings, is a truly unprecedented situation" (Jonas, 1963:339).

There is neither Gnostic knowledge (*gnosis*) or Christian faith (*pistis*) neither possibility of ascent,<sup>4</sup> nor salvation; only will to power and class struggle.

Among the modern writers, Nietzsche<sup>5</sup> and Proust proclaimed that only aesthetically world and life can be justified. For them, art and aesthetic experience were important as *gnosis* was in time of Gnosticism.

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<sup>3</sup> Jonas (1963:320-340) gives an extensive comparative analysis of gnosticism, existentialism and nihilism in the concluding section of his book. Tanbes (1954:155-172) has written a comparative study of Gnostic and Heidegger's notions from *Sein und Zeit*.

<sup>4</sup> Metaphors of ascent have been changing: for Plato "wings of the soul;" in Gnosticism, ascending through the spheres of the seven planets; with John Climacus, climbing the ladder. Now ascent only means becoming rich or powerful, or having a successful career.

To be saved by or through art, was a life credo of some modern artists. Since aesthetic values do not need any transcendental support, it seemed that art can survive the downfall of the “intelligible world” of philosophy and the “death of the God” of religion.<sup>6</sup>

Art was not calling upon knowledge or faith—aesthetic wonder was sufficient—its message was valid even when philosophy and religion were corrupted. Even when man lost faith in ideas and gods, he still could wonder—being in front of a work of art, in a meadow full of flowers, meeting a creature, or being in love, could perhaps, be a sufficient reason to live (even if one is without hope, faith, or meaning).

#### 4

“I pay my homage to Śiva the omniscient poet, who created all the three worlds, and thanks to whom people are able to attain aesthetic bliss by watching the spectacle of the play that is our life in this world,”

says Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Indian aesthetician. In Trika Shaivism, we find an original contribution in the “aesthetic way”, a possibility to attain liberation not only through purification and perfection in ethic, noetic, ascetic or devotional values, but through aesthetic contemplation: in peace (*śānta-rasa*) and wonder (*camatkāra*). However, this was not a result of nihilism, of a downfall of religious or philosophical order, but a contribution beside them; it was introduced out of plenty, not because of want. With Proust we see that art and aesthetic experience were a last refuge in the wasteland—for Abhinavagupta and his predecessors it was a matter of choice. For Gauguin and Van Gogh art was the last resort—something to hang on after everything else has failed.

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<sup>5</sup> In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche says that only art can overcome the terror and absurdity of life; only with the help of art can man endure the absurdity of existence; life and world are justifiable only as aesthetic phenomena.

<sup>6</sup> Even if art cannot survive, we can be sure that soap operas will survive. If soap operas would have existed in the time of the Purāṇas, Indians would have known that it is the only thing that would survive between the *kalpas*. Even Hegel could not predict such a vital form (of what?). Anyway, in the Hegelian system the death of art is predicted, while the opposite is true: the Idea is dead, long live the Art.

Abhinavagupta often quotes the *Vijñānabhairava*, a work which can be considered as one of the best expositions of the aesthetic (or should we say “ecstatic”) way of Trika Shaivism. In the *Vijñānabhairava* there is no principal difference between aesthetic experience related with work of art and experience of relish, joy, or expansion in front of a beautiful landscape. The same continuum of the “aesthetic way” we have already found in Plato’s gradual ascension to the idea of beauty, through contemplation of beauty in art and other domains) including erotics. The same principle is present in the Chinese and Japanese “aesthetic way”, exemplified in the tea ceremony,<sup>7</sup> in the cult of plum and cherry blossoms (contemplation in front of the tree, or contemplation of a picture, with a poem on the margin) or in garden contemplation, of a garden which is “not real”, but an abstract (sometimes even without flora), and is therefore a work of art and, at the same time, an object of *natura naturata*.

In India, this principle was extended to performing arts as well. Cosmic play (*līlā*) in Kashmir tradition includes the drama of life and drama as a stage performance; therefore, aesthetic bliss is possible while watching the play in life and on stage.<sup>8</sup>

However, to look upon life as (a part of cosmic) play, is possible for most people only after meditative training. It is easier to obtain this experience through poetry or drama. Abhinavagupta and other aestheticians from Kashmir explain this factor—in modern parlance known as aesthetic distance—in a similar way: by generality (*sādhāraṇya*) of the presentation in art. This presentation creates beyond the space of personal interest and concern, and at the same time gives the recipient an opportunity to remember his personal

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<sup>7</sup> The tea ceremony is a sophisticated aestheticization of an ordinary event, blending ordinary (preparing and drinking tea) and non-ordinary (highly stylized manners and conversation), integration of life with ritual, slowing down and becoming attentive to details, leaving aside the hustle, cares and anxieties of everyday life in order to open the mind and heart to the mystery of the eternal now and to the ineffable meaning that “lies beneath the surface (*yugen*). For further analysis of *yugen*, especially related with the rock garden of Ryōanji, see Deutsch (1975:24–35).

<sup>8</sup> However, this does not mean that the autonomy of art is obscured. “Abhinava likes to insist on the autonomy of a work of art, on the fact that it is *sui generis* and need have no object corresponding to it in the real world” (Masson and Patwardhan, 1969: 51).

experiences and moods, to recognize them in events of drama, and to identify with the main personalities.

“Generality is thus a state of self-identification with the imagined situation, devoid of any practical interest...of any relation whatsoever with the limited self, and as it were impersonal” (Gnoli, 1969: XXII).

The aesthetic experience is, therefore, an invitation to the recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of the higher, impersonal self (*ātman*), it points to the same goal as meditative experience,<sup>9</sup> which can also be realized in an aesthetic setting beyond art.

## 5

However, this happens under certain conditions, which also explain why people, generally, do not attain liberation during or after aesthetic experiences. Plato said that the aesthetic experience governed by *eros* should lead gradually to the recognition of the idea of beauty. To this, Gnoli (1968:XLVII) adds citations from *Theologia Platonica* of Proclus, where the wonder<sup>10</sup> that appears in aesthetic and mystic experience and the astonishment of the soul in front of the beautiful and the sacred are compared. The cessation of the ordinary world, of the limitations of everyday, experience and practically oriented functional consciousness is related with wonder and amazement. We cannot say what is the cause and what the effect—the non-ordinary or non-worldly (*alaukika*) and wonder (*camatkāra*) are in a synchronic relation: without wonder everything is just worldly (*laukika*) and in the ordinary we cannot recognize the non-ordinary without wonder. According to Abhinavagupta, *camatkāra* is consciousness without obstacles (*vighna*). It is the consciousness of a subject “who is immersed in the vibration (*spanda*) of a marvelous enjoyment (*adbhuta-bhoga*)”

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<sup>9</sup> Masson and Patwardhan (1969:21) state that Bhaṭṭanāyaka was perhaps “the first person to make the famous comparison of yogic ecstasy and aesthetic experience.” He comments on the opening verse of *Nāṭya-śāstra* (a classic on art of drama, ca. VIth century A.D.) and states that drama should help people to understand the insubstantiality of worldly objects.

<sup>10</sup> The notion of wonder (*ekplekseos*) in the writings of Plato and Proclus seems to be different from the wonder (*thauma*) that is for Aristotle the beginning of philosophy (*Metaphysic*, 982b).

(*Abhinavabhāratī*, trans. by Gnoli, 1968:60). This consciousness cannot be intentional and it is the result of tuning in, or resonance with a certain vibration. This is possible for the *sahṛdaya*, (“one with a heart”) who is sensible and possesses the consent of his own heart. These traits we also find in the blissful moments (“*moments bienheureux*”) of Marcel Proust: bliss and wonder, cessation of obstacles, non-intentionality and tuning of the personality to the ecstatic, extemporal vibration. These blissful moments for Proust were not related (for the most part) to the works of art, but to the superposing of remembered and actual impressions. Of the eleven principal moments listed by Shattuck (1964:70-74), one is related with works of art (septet by Vinteuil). This puts them close to *dhāraṇās* from *Vijñānabhairava*. For example, with *dhāraṇā* 49 we are reminded, of the first blissful moment (*madeleine* sequence, Proust, 1934:1, 34–36) related with the taste of tea and cake and the exquisite pleasure:

“When one experiences the expansion of joy of savor arising from the pleasure of eating and drinking, one should meditate on the perfect condition of this joy; then there will be supreme delight” (*Vijñānabhairava*, verse 72).

For Proust, blissful moments are generally a blending of past and present. However, there is one exception—the moment related with “the steeples of Martinville” (Proust, 1934: I, 138–140) does not include any memory. The sequence begins with the enigmatic “call” from various impressions to decipher the meaning of happiness related with them. While riding to Martinville, on one of the turns the two steeples appear glowing in the sunset. Full of joy, Marcel feels that this glow seems to contain and to conceal some meaning. This reminds us of *dhāraṇā* 51:

“Wherever the mind of the individual finds satisfaction, let it be concentrated on that. In every such case the true nature of the highest bliss will manifest itself” *Vijñānabhairava*, verse 74).

The prevalent pattern of Proust’s blissful moments is the superposing of past and present, while *dhāraṇās* are mostly related with the present. But the difference is superficial—the means are different, the goal is the same: to tune in with pure time (eternal now, paradox of time without transience), and recognize one’s extemporal being. In *Time Regained* Proust says that he could not contemplate solely on actual experience, since he could not apply his imagination—his only faculty for enjoying beauty—in actual situation. In order to apply imagination he needed the superposing of present with past experience.

Thus, connecting past experience (remembered and imagined) with present experience, he could immobilize and isolate pure time, he could recognize this being (*cet être*) that feeds upon the “essence of things.”

Blissful moments are based on non-intentional, involuntary remembering<sup>11</sup> while voluntary remembering is governed by some (practical) aim.<sup>12</sup> The common feature of blissful moments and *camatkāra* is overcoming time and obstacles. This brings bliss.

“The so-called supreme bliss, the *lysis*, the wonder, is therefore nothing but tasting... of our own liberty,” says Abhinavagupta (*Abhinavabhāratī*, in Gnoli, 1968: XLIV).

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<sup>11</sup> It is strange that Shattuck (1963:69–75), who made a careful analysis of these moments, underestimated the importance of involuntary remembering in blissful moments. He makes a summary of their pattern as follows. First, “Marcel is always in a dispirited state of mind; bared, even tired at the time of their occurrence. Second, “he experiences a physical sensation, which comes unexpectedly...” Third, “the sensation is accompanied by a clear feeling of pleasure and happiness which far surpasses anything explained by the sensation alone.” Fourth, all these “lift Marcel steeply out of the present,” and the past event is “remembered, recognized and assimilated into the same binocular field of vision with the present event.” Fifth, “the first three components reach out to form a link not only with the past but also with an event or development **in the future**.” The sixth element is a variable response to the experience that follows it. Shattuck (1964:40) mentions the distinction between involuntary memory and conscious recognition, but in a different sense. He puts this involuntary memory of the blissful moments in opposition to the conscious recognition of Marcel’s vocation as a writer, and his task of writing. This recognition is - for Shattuck - not the recognition of the extemporal self (which makes death indifferent), but recognition of the vocation and task awaiting him (in the time left) before death.

<sup>12</sup> Free association in psychoanalysis combines involuntary remembering with a practical aim. The patient has to remember some past experiences (emotional conflicts) in order to recognize their conversion into present symptoms; this frees him from past (conflicts) and from present (repetition of symptoms). The same pattern can be found in Indian meditative traditions. One is to remember previous lives in order to recognize the relationship between unresolved tendencies and his present life. With that he is liberated from *karma* and the necessity of (further) repeating incarnations.

Through lengthy volumes Marcel is repeatedly challenged to solve the enigma of happiness related with blissful moments. In the last volume (*Time Regained*) he understands that these moments are blissful because he is free from the anxiety and doubts concerning his future (will he be a writer, is he “losing” time). He gains time free from transience and certainty which makes him indifferent to death. Finally, he recognizes in himself this being (*cet être*), which belongs to the extempore order, the common source of the past and the present. That being is also beyond the anxiety related with future, represented by transience and death. Beside wonder, recognition of this other self is the second precondition for attaining liberation through aesthetic experience.

## 6

Colpe (1980:40–41) related Proust’s idea of liberation from time with the Gnostic notion of immortality, and the recognition of everyday self and the extemporal “this being” (*cet être*) with the recognition of the psychic and the pneumatic self in Gnosticism. However, Proust has a greater affinity for this world than any Gnostic. He accepts as genuine its call to confront the mystery of beauty and destruction, love and pain, wonder and despair, being and death. For him, these are not distractions, or a negative hint for a “call from without.” Mostly, the call to solve the enigma is received from the beauty of the world: the steeples of Martinville, the three trees in Hudimesnil, the azure sky of Venice, or the sound of a spoon striking against the plate. But, how should we understand the concluding part of *Time Regained*, the *matinée* at Guermites which follows the last blissful moment? After a long intermission Marcel meets his aged friends, and recognizes them only with considerable effort, realizing the destructiveness of time. Beckett (1978:57) and Shattuck (1964:38, 111) consider this as proof that blissful moments have failed, that death is not indifferent “because it sets limit to one’s human capacity to create,” that time was not regained or recovered, but only obliterated (for a while), and now strikes back with the load of years, and the powder covering hair and faces of his acquaintances. Confronted with this dance macabre Beckett and Shattuck gave up the meaning and importance of blissful moments and were willing to surrender to oblivion (*oubli*) the hardly won recognition (*reconnaissance*) of the extemporal self (*cet être*). Perhaps Abhinavagupta would have understood this better. For him, the essential nature of the self (*ātman*) is hidden owing to

the innate forgetfulness (*moha*). The purpose of Pratyabhijñā<sup>13</sup> (recognition, *reconnaissance*) is to remove this forgetfulness concerning *ātman*.<sup>14</sup> In *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī* he says that recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) is the unification of the two experiences: remembrance (*smaraṇa*) and perception (*anubhava*)—quoted by Kaw, 1967:145. For Abhinavagupta and Proust the power of remembrance (*smaraṇa-śakti*) supports the view that *ātman* (*cet être*) is permanent and extemporal. There is some basic agreement between Plato, Gnosticism, Abhinavagupta and Proust, that forgetfulness is inborn and due to the relation with the body, to the cares, the anxieties, and the hustle of life. For Plato, remembrance and recognition enable us to regain the perceptions from the world of ideas, and for Gnostics, to acknowledge otherworldliness. Did Proust understand the “dolorous synthesis of survival and annihilation,” or did his bliss fail him at the end? Perhaps he would have found familiar the following lines: “In this way, if the aspirant imagines that the entire world (or at least Guermantes world - D.P.) is being burnt by the fire of *Kālāgni* and does not allow his mind to wonder away to anything else, then in such a person the highest state of man appears”

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<sup>13</sup> A separate school in Kashmir Shaivism developed around the notion of *pratyabhijñā* (recognition, self-awareness). Kaw (1964:49) considers Somānanda (9th cent.) as a founder of Pratyabhijñā school (with his *Śiva-dṛṣṭi*), his disciple Utpaladeva as a systematizer (with *Pratyabhijñā-Śāstra*), and Abhinavagupta (10th-11th cent.), a disciple of Utpaladeva’s disciple, as the expounder and commentator of the ideas and works of this system (with two commentaries on *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā*, second chapter of *Tantrāloka*, etc.).

<sup>14</sup> *Ātman* in Pratyabhijñā school slightly differs from *ātman* as understood in Vedānta. In Pratyabhijñā *ātman* is a synonym for Maheśvara (Great Lord, ultimate reality) and an individual self, while in Vedānta *ātman* is an individual self-identical with *brahman*. In Vedānta ignorance (*avidyā*) is twofold: a confusion of the self (*ātman*) with empirical existence (*anātman*) and, therefore, ignorance of the ultimate identity of *ātman* and *brahman*. *Mokṣa* (liberation) is attained through insight or knowledge (*vidyā, jñāna*). In Pratyabhijñā, *moha* (oblivion, delusion) and *āṇava-mala* (ignorance) conceal the real nature of the self and its power of knowledge and action. Recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of the real nature of the self and its identity with Maheśvara makes one aware of faculties ordinarily hidden and is actually *mokṣa* (liberation).

(*Vijñānabhairava*, verse 53). Perhaps *Kālāgni*, the personification of total conflagration at the end of time, presided at Guermentes *matinée*, even though Lilian Silburn translated this verse some sixty years after.

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