

Madness into Memory: *Mania* and *Mnēmē* in Greek Culture¹

Yulia Ustinova

*Les choses les plus belles sont celles que
souffle la folie et qu'écrit la raison*
André Gide

The term *μανία* covers a fascinating range of multifarious conditions, which the words 'madness' or 'frenzy' used in modern English translations fail to encompass: in Greek *μανία* also implies divine inspiration or revelation. Any deviation from an ordinary baseline state of consciousness, whether achieved voluntarily or involuntarily, deliberately sought or resulting from a disease seen as a god-sent blessing or a curse, could be dubbed *μανία*. This variety of meanings reflects a wide range of experiences, each of them determined by both cultural factors and neuropsychological causes.²

The word *μανία* derives from the Indo-European root *men-*, meaning 'active mental force' which includes in its scope: thought accompanied by effort; excited thought, raving, or being in a special or differentiated state of consciousness; and finally the action of remembering or reminding.³ In Greek, madness and memory, *μανία* and *μνήμη*, are cognate words.⁴ The main thesis of this paper is that in Greek culture madness and memory were related not only etymologically, but also phenomenologically. I will focus on three spheres: poetic inspiration, mystery initiations, and the Platonic theory of recollection. My aim is to demonstrate that the poet's creative activity, the initiate's appreciation of his participation in a mystery rite as a life-changing experience, and the philosopher's search for true knowledge, involved various facets of the age-long connection between remembrance and alteration of consciousness.

Memory and Mania in Poetry

For the Greeks, as for many other Indo-European peoples, poetic activity, especially that of traditional bards, was related to recollection. Composing or reciting a poem requires

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² For an analysis of madness-related words see Padel 1995: 14-22.

³ Giangrande 1987; cf. Watkins 1995: 68; Simondon 1982: 19.

⁴ Frisk 1973-79; Chantraine 1983-84, s.v. *μαίνομαι*; *μινήσκω*; Pokorny 1994: 726-728; Simondon 1982: 19.

an effort of memory: the poet brings forth what he already knows.⁵ The last line of many Homeric hymns is: ‘I will remember you and another song as well.’⁶ It is the Muse or Muses who cause the poet to recollect.⁷ The truth sung by the archaic bard, ἀλήθεια, is primarily the negation of oblivion, λήθη: the memory of the great deeds is the pledge of their eternal glory.⁸

Greek Muses are unique; there are no corresponding figures in other Indo-European traditions.⁹ The word μουσα has a double meaning: as an appellative, it designates song or music, while as a proper name it indicates the divine patron of these activities.¹⁰ The Muses are the daughters of Mnemosyne, Memory,¹¹ and Hesychius indicates that Μοῦσαι may be also called μναμονόου and μνηστῆρες, while on Chios, Muses were called Μνεΐαι.¹² In Pindar’s view, ‘the Muse loves to remember.’¹³ Since the word derives from the root *men-*, meaning ‘mental force’ which includes ‘perceiving’ and ‘remembering,’¹⁴ the association of the Muses with memory seems clear. However, as mentioned above, this root designates three spheres, including ‘frenzy’. In fact, more than a century ago it was suggested that the etymology of the word μουσα was related to

⁵ Watkins 1995: 69, 73; West 2007: 32.

⁶ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἀλλή μνήσομ’ αἰοιδῆς: *Hom. Hymn. Dem.* 495; *Ap.* 546; *Her.* 580; *Aphr.* 21; *Dion.* 59; *Pan.* 49; *Ath.* 18, etc. Cf. Simondon 1982: 55-59. For the negative powers of oblivion and the mythology of Λήθη see Simondon 1982: 131-140.

⁷ *Il.* 1.1, 2.484-492, 11.218-219, 14.508-509, 16.112-113; *Od.* 1.1-8; cf. *Od.* 8.73, 479-481; *Hes. Th.* 30; Empedocles, *DK* 31 fr. B3; Pind. *Nem.* 7.11-16; Duchemin 1955: 296-299; Minton 1960; Lanata 1963: 4-5; 8-11; 26-28; Maehler 1963: 37-39; Harriott 1969: 42-43. Requesting the aid of the Muses is also appropriate at the beginning of an inspired speech in prose: Plato *Phdr.* 237a, with Hackforth 1972: 37.

⁸ Starr 1968: 349; Detienne 1996: 39; Cole 1983; Lada-Richards 2002: 72; Simondon 1982: 112-122; Adkins 1972; Pratt 1993: 17-22. Furthermore, in the end it is the truth that is remembered forever, as Bacchylides asserts: ‘Truth loves to win: ἀ δ’ ἀλαθεία φιλεῖ νικᾶν, Bacch. *Epinicia* 13.167-168; Pind. *Ol.* 10.53-55; Bowra 1964: 32-33.

⁹ West 2007: 94; Harriott 1969: 10. For the Muses, see Harriott 1969: 10-33.

¹⁰ Detienne 1996: 40.

¹¹ *Hes. Th.* 53-62, 915-917; *H. Herm.* 428; Pind. *Nem.* 7.12; *Isth.* 6.74; Notopoulos 1938; Murray 1981: 92; Harriott 1969: 18-21; Simondon 1982: 103-112. For the relationship between the memories of the poet and those of his audience, and the psychology of memorization, see Havelock 1963: 146. For the sacral domain of memory in the Greek culture, see Vernant 1983: 75-105.

¹² Hesych. s.v. μναμονόου; Plut., *Quaest. conv.* 743d. Paus. 9.29.3 cites the names of the Muses in Ascrea: Melete, Mneme and Aoide. For the early origins of this cult see van Groningen 1948; Camilloni 1998: 28-29; Detienne 1996: 41; 151, n. 151; for reservations, see Simondon 1982: 104-105. For the meaning of the verb μνησθαι and the emphasis on ‘recalling’ rather than ‘mentioning’ see Benveniste 1954; Detienne 1996: 150 n. 3.

¹³ Μοῦσα μεμνήσθαι φιλεῖ (*Nem.* 1.12)

¹⁴ Watkins 1995: 73; Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 1: 152, 713; West 2007: 32; Setti 1958: 129-130; Lanata 1963: 3; Frisk 1973-79, s.v. μουσα; Chantraine 1983-84: s.v. μουσα; Walde 2000: 511. Some authorities maintain that the etymology of the word μουσα is contentious: Duchemin 1955: 26; Murray 1981: 89 n. 16; Simondon 1982: 106; cf. Camilloni 1998: 5-8, 20, 36-37.

μαίνομαι¹⁵ and that the activities of the Muses included *μανία* and *μαντική*. This would imply that the Greek usage preserved the polyvalent undivided semantic field of the Indo-European root.¹⁶ Is this in fact the case?

‘Memory’, as conferred by the Muses upon the poet, is not just factual remembrance. Homer praises the Muses as goddesses who know everything, contrary to mortals who hear rumors and know nothing; in the same passage he claims that they ‘called to his mind’ (*μνησαίαθ’*) all those who came to Troy.¹⁷ Noteworthy is Odysseus’ reaction to Demodocus’ story of the wooden horse: since the bard has never been to Troy, Odysseus assumes that either the Muse or Apollo taught him his song.¹⁸ The poet is recalling what admittedly he cannot know: his ‘recollection’ does not belong to him, but is rather instilled in his mind by the will of the Muses. The function of his memory is evocation of the past, comparable to consulting oracles; the ability to establish mental contact with the world of the beyond is the privilege that Mnemosyne bestows upon the poet.¹⁹

A combination of knowledge of the past and of poetic talents, in other words, of memory and inspired vision, was indispensable for the composition of epic poetry. For Hesiod, the knowledge of past and future was part of his poetic investiture.²⁰ In his *Theogony* the Muses ‘breathe into (the poet) the divine voice (*ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι ἀυδὴν θέσπιν*) to celebrate future and past’.²¹ In E.R. Dodds’s words, ‘such visions, welling up from the unknown depth of the mind, must once have been felt as something immediately “given”, and because of its immediacy more trustworthy than oral tradition’.²² The moment of inspiration may be envisaged as an initiation into the Muses’ mysteries.²³ The poet therefore is compared to seers, who were distinguished by their divinely inspired knowledge of the past, present and future.²⁴

¹⁵ Bie 1894-97: 3238; Compton 2006: 173, n. 37.

¹⁶ In German mythology, Mimir (Memory), a wisdom figure, had a well under the roots of the world tree; its spring water was in fact mead, and through drinking it Odin, the war god-magician-poet, was endowed with the poetic gift. In this myth, memory, intoxication and madness are closely interwoven (Compton 2006: 255-256). Cf. Chadwick 1942: 13; Sperduti 1950: 217. It is reported that Aeschylus wrote his plays while drunk (Athen. 10.428f; Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 715e); this tradition supposedly reflects his intimate association with Dionysus and the intoxicating inspiration by the god (Compton 2006: 131, cf. Sperduti 1950: 222; contra Harriott 1969: 91; Tigerstedt 1970: 174, interpreting these passages literally).

¹⁷ *Il.* 2.485-492; cf. *Od.* 8.44-45; 73; 479-481; Lanata 1963: 3-7; Snell 1960: 136; Murray 1981: 90-91; Simondon 1982: 108.

¹⁸ *Od.* 8.488, cf. Webster 1939: 175.

¹⁹ Vernant 1983: 80; Simondon 1982: 114.

²⁰ On memory as inspired vision see Vernant 1983: 76; cf. Murray 1981: 93; Maehler 1963: 19; Detienne 2007: 68.

²¹ *Th.* 36-39; Murray 1981: 95.

²² Dodds 1959: 100, note 116.

²³ Hes. *Th.* 36-39; Ar. *Ran.* 356; Lada-Richards 2002: 88-89; Ustinova 2009: 169. For initiation imagery in Pindar see Duchemin 1955: 39-41; Garner 1992.

²⁴ Chadwick 1942: 2-3; Morrison 1981: 93; Havelock 1963: 105; Garner 1992; Vernant 1983: 76.

Later poets assume the role of μάνταις in their poetry, and Pindar even refers to himself as ‘a prophet of the Muses in verse’.²⁵ Even if προφήτης means ‘announcer’ rather than ‘seer’, Pindar is clearly dependent on the uttering of the Muses.²⁶ Theognis describes the poet as a messenger, ἄγγελος, of the Muses.²⁷ In Plato’s *Laws*, the poet is compared to the Pythia: when he is seated on the Muses’ tripod he is no longer in control of his senses.²⁸ According to Plutarch, the Muses were ‘assessors of prophecy’ at Delphi.²⁹ Apollo the divine patron of prophecy and poetry was frequently called Mousagetês. In the Indo-European world, poetic diction is often associated with special knowledge, attained through alteration of consciousness: the Latin word *vates* means both inspired poet and prophet, while in Scandinavian and Germanic traditions, poets, such as Suibhne, were often portrayed as mad and/or mantic.³⁰

In Greece, poetry was inseparable from music. Incantations had magic power, and those who knew how to employ that power were believed to be endowed with superhuman abilities. Pythagoras healed with spells, and Socrates admired the power of Thracian chants.³¹ Music was believed to heighten the listeners’ emotions, drive them to temporal insanity,³² or alternatively, cure mental disorders.³³

Hesiod’s Muses who dwell on the Helicon are reminiscent of the Nymphs who live in the wild and capture mortals who visit their realm.³⁴ Similarly to the nympholepts, ‘those seized by the Nymphs’, who are prone to prophecy, Hesiod is chosen by the Muses to sing his poetry, both the prophetic nympholepts and the poets obtain their knowledge, hidden from other mortals, from divine maidens who summon them,³⁵ and Plutarch even

²⁵ ἀοίδιμον Περίδων προφάταν, fr. 52f Maehler; Dillery 2005: 185; Bowra 1964: 6-8. In fr. 150 Maehler (μαντεύεο, Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ’ ἐγώ) Pindar asks the Muse to prophesy, and states that he will serve as her prophet or announcer. Cf. Duchemin 1955: 32-33; Simondon 1982: 110-111.

²⁶ To quote C.M. Bowra, Pindar knows that ‘he must receive their messages and then make them understood by putting them into proper shape’ (Bowra 1964: 4).

²⁷ *Eleg.* 1.769; Murray 1981: 97.

²⁸ Pl. *Leg.* 719c.

²⁹ Plut. *Mor.* 402c; Cornford 1952: 77; Ustinova 2009: 131 n. 481.

³⁰ West 2007: 28-29; Compton 2006: 173, n. 34, 233-241, 247, 254-255; Sperduti 1950: 218-219; Setti 1958: 135.

³¹ Linforth 1941: 170; Vicaire 1963: 82. For Socrates’ praise of spells, see Pl. *Chrm.* 156b; van der Ben 1985: 11-19; Ustinova 2009a: 267-274. For the use of music for magical purposes by the Pythagoreans, see Boyancé 1937: 100-131; Dodds 1973: 154; Detienne 1963: 47-48; Hermann 2004: 105.

³² Strabo 10.3.9-19; Pl. *Grg.* 501e-502d. Orpheus epitomizes the power of music over the souls: West 1983: 3-7; his spellbinding performance is depicted on a series of fifth-century vases: Bundrick 2005: 121-124, fig. 74-76.

³³ Linforth 1941; Jeanmaire 1970: 131-138; Ustinova 1992-98; Rouget 1990: 364-375; Pelosi 2010: 26-27.

³⁴ It is suggested that similar to the Nymphs, the Muses were originally water deities (Walde 2000; Otto 1956: 30; Duchemin 1955: 52), worshiped near water streams (Camilloni 1998: 25-28). In this connection, it should be observed that in Greece, water was considered an important instrument in the mechanism of prophecy-giving (Ustinova 2009: 131).

³⁵ Snell 1960: 138; on the nympholepts see Ustinova 2009: 61-64; 169-170.

describes a poet as μουσόληπτος.³⁶ Plato depicts inspired poets as seized by the Graces or the Muses: Χάρισιν καὶ Μούσαις ἐφάπτεται.³⁷ The grotesque portrait of Aeschylus in the *Frogs* as a madman rolling his eyes ‘in a terrible frenzy’³⁸ reflects the popular opinion on the behavior of a poet possessed by the Muses.

Modern scholars disagree as to the ancient interpretation of the nature of poetic creativity. Some assume that the Greek poets, from Homer on, regarded themselves as divinely inspired.³⁹ Others maintain that the poets believed their talent to be an enduring gift, and consider the idea of poetic *μανία* to be a fifth-century or Plato’s invention.⁴⁰ In fact, from the fifth century on, Greek writers are quite explicit about the divine nature of poetry. Good poetry, it was believed, derived from the gods, both because the poet’s talent was perceived as an inborn divine gift, and because the creative process had to be initiated and sustained by the will of the Muses. Democritus says: ‘Everything a poet does with enthusiasm and divine πνεῦμα, is very good’ — the most ancient occurrence of the word ἐνθουσιασμός in the extant literature.⁴¹ For Plato, ‘the poetry of the sane man vanishes into nothingness before that of the inspired madmen’.⁴² Socrates, discussing the blessings which come to men through divine madness), cites prophetic, telestic (initiatory), erotic, and poetic *μανία*.⁴³ Evidently the τέχνη versus inspiration dichotomy was widely discussed before Plato’s day.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the image of the possessed bard had already gained currency in art many decades before Democritus and Plato: the demeanor of bards on some fifth-century vases resembles that of raving Maenads. For instance, the kitharōdos on the amphora

³⁶ *Mor.* 452b; Otto 1956: 31.

³⁷ *Pl. Leg.* 682a; Delatte 1934: 7, 57-58, 68; Tigerstedt 1970: 164; Motte 2004: 250-251. For the association of the Muses and the Charites see Simondon 1982: 129.

³⁸ *Ar. Ran.* 816-817: *μανίας ὑπὸ δεινῆς*; Lada-Richards 2002: 85.

³⁹ Chadwick 1942; Sikes 1931: 68; Moutsopoulos 1959: 17-22; Vicaire 1963: 75; Duchemin 1955: 31; Webster 1939: 174; Sperduti 1950; Bowra 1964: 13-14; Vernant 1983: 76; Detienne 1996; Lada-Richards 2002.

⁴⁰ Harriott 1969: 50, 78-91; Tigerstedt 1970; Havelock 1963: 155-157; Morgan 2010: 49; for the controversy on the applicability of Plato’s remarks to pre-Platonic views of poetry see Murray 1981. Dodds emphasizes the association of poetic *μανία* with Dionysus, and tends to date its emergence earlier than the fifth century (Dodds 1973: 82). An altogether opposite point of view is that the cultural transformations of the seventh and sixth centuries brought about secularization and rationalization of the attitude to poetic creativity (Spentzou 2002: 6).

⁴¹ *Democr. DK* 68 B18; Delatte 1934: 28-79; Vicaire 1963: 75; Lanata 1963: 256-258; Smith 1965: 420; Harriott 1969: 86-87. Cf. *Democr. fr.* B21 where Homer is described as having divine nature, *φύσεος λαχῶν θεαζούσης*.

⁴² *Pl. Phdr.* 245a; Linforth 1946; Cornford 1952: 66.

⁴³ *Pl. Phdr.* 244; Linforth 1946; Hackforth 1972: 60; Rowe 1986: 168-173. Delatte (1934: 21-25) suggests that Empedocles was the first to distinguish between two kinds of *mania*, physical illness and divine inspiration. This idea is based mainly on a fifth-century AD medical treatise referring to Empedocles, *De morbis chronicis* by Caelius Aurelianus (1.5; *DK* 31 fr. A98), which is insufficient to support this inference: Vicaire 1963: 74; Hackforth 1972: 58.

⁴⁴ Wright 2010: 166-167.

attributed to the Berlin Painter (ca. 490) and on the amphora by the Brygos Painter (ca. 480), as well as Orpheus playing for the Thracians on a mid-fifth century crater, are portrayed with lifted heads abandoning themselves to the Muses, like the ecstatic Maenad on the amphora by the Kleophrades Painter (ca. 500-490), whose raised head conveys that she is in the grip of the god (figures 1-3).⁴⁵ In the light of this evidence, Democritus and Plato can hardly be credited with the invention of the poetic *μανία*: they rather articulated the ideas which were initially expressed in epic poetry.

The most thorough explanation of the nature of inspired poetic manticism is given in Plato's *Ion*:

... the Muse herself seizes men; and from these possessed persons a chain of other persons is suspended, who are divinely inspired ... The poet is a light and winged and holy being,⁴⁶ unable to create until he has been seized and is beside himself, and the mind is no longer in him: before he has attained this state, the man is incapable of doing anything and of uttering oracles ... These beautiful creations [poems] are not human and do not belong to men; they are divine and belong to the gods; the poets are no more than interpreters of the gods, each one possessed by the god who has seized him.⁴⁷

In Socrates' opinion, good poems are divinely inspired, and poets create them only when seized by gods, *κατέχεται*.⁴⁸ Like prophets, they utter what the gods make them pronounce: they are mediums in a state of possession, messengers of the gods.⁴⁹ This contact with the deity is the guarantee of the truthfulness of the poet's creation.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *Kitharōdos*: the Metropolitan Museum, Inv. 56.171.38, Beazley 1979: 197; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Inv. 26.61; Beazley 1979: 383; Anderson 1994: pl. 1, 4; Bundrick 2005: fig. 3, 8; Orpheus: the Altes Museum in Berlin, Inv. V.I. 3172; Beazley 1979: 1103; Bundrick 2005: 122, fig. 74; the Maenad: the Antikensammlung in Munich: Inv. 2344; Beazley 1979: 182. Dionysus is portrayed playing the lyre and lifting his face on a cup by the Brygos Painter (ca. 490-480), Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Inv. 576, Beazley 1979: 371; Bundrick 2005: fig. 62.

⁴⁶ Comparisons of the poet to a bee: Bacchyl. 10.9-10; Pind. *Pyth.* 10.53-4; Ar. *Av.* 748-750; Harriott 1969: 84-85. On honey as a symbol of both poetic and prophetic vocation, see Ustinova 2009: 59-60.

⁴⁷ Pl. *Ion* 533e: οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἡ Μοῦσα ἐνθέουσι μὲν ποιεῖ αὐτὴ διὰ δὲ τῶν ἐνθέων τούτων ἄλλων ἐνθουσιαζόντων ὄρμαθὸς ἐξαρτᾶται ... 534b: κοῦφον γὰρ χρῆμα ποιητῆς ἐστὶν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν, καὶ οὐ πρότερον οἶός τε ποιεῖν πρὶν ἂν ἐνθεὸς τε γένηται καὶ ἔκφρων καὶ ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῆ: ἕως δ' ἂν τουτὶ ἔχη τὸ κτῆμα, ἀδύνατος πᾶς ποιεῖν ἄνθρωπος ἐστὶν καὶ χρησιμωδεῖν. 534e: ὅτι οὐκ ἀνθρώπινά ἐστιν τὰ καλὰ ταῦτα ποιήματα οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ θεῶν καὶ θεῶν, οἵ δὲ ποιηταὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ ἑρμηνῆς εἰσὶν τῶν θεῶν, κατεχόμενοι ἐξ ὅτου ἂν ἕκαστος κατέχηται.

For the interpretation of these passages see: Flashar 1958 54-77; Murray 1996: 112-125; Cavarero 2002: 52-54. Even if these words are taken 'half-seriously', as suggested by S. Stern-Gillet (2004: 178), who emphasizes Socrates' sarcastic attitude to the poet's knowledge, there is no doubt that 'Plato's poet can achieve greatness only intermittently and through the agency of some divine being' (Stern-Gillet 2004: 182, 194).

⁴⁸ Pl. *Ion* 536b.

⁴⁹ Pl. *Leg.* 719c, and see above.

⁵⁰ Vicaire 1963: 80.

Socrates therefore solves the Homeric paradox of the poet ‘recalling’ what he cannot know: the poet’s memory is instilled in him by the deity that uses him as a mouthpiece, thus causing his heightened state — in Socrates’ words, his *μανία*.

This understanding of the poet’s inspiration is congruous with modern studies of the creative process, showing that ‘although the initial inspiration appears to come to the poet as if from some source other than himself, the subsequent composition of the poem depends on conscious effort and hard work’.⁵¹ Most notably, Rudyard Kipling sums up this process in his autobiography: ‘When your Daemon is in charge do not try to think consciously. Drift, wait and obey ... Walk delicately, lest he should withdraw’.⁵² This does not imply that the poet, ancient or modern, regards himself as a passive instrument: in the poetic activities we find a delicate interplay of personal and cultural memory and commemoration, on the one hand, and estrangement from everyday reality, together with mental exaltation and unique insight, on the other hand — in a word, an interplay between *μανία* and *μνήμη*. Both belong to the Muses.

Initiations and Memory

Mystery rites had to be remembered by the initiated for their entire lifetime; the souls of the initiated supposedly sustained the ability to remember them even after death. Life-long memory of the initiation rites was exceptional and, as we shall see shortly, was created by special methods, above all by inducing telestic *mania*.⁵³ The post-mortem memory of the souls was believed to be acquired by magic means.

Several Bacchic (or Orphic) gold tablets refer to the work or gift of memory which are essential to the dying *mystēs*, and to the request to drink from the lake of memory when one arrives in the netherworld.⁵⁴ In one case, the initiate is called ‘the hero who remembers’ *μνημημένος ἥρωσ*.⁵⁵ The tablet from Hipponion, dated around 400 BC, which was found lying on the chest of a female skeleton, addresses a person who is about to die. This ‘work of Mnemosyne’ contains a fascinating set of instructions and promises.⁵⁶ Having descended to Hades, the soul is to choose the right spring — not the one that the other souls, that is, the uninitiated, drink from. Having reached the lake of Mnemosyne, the soul is to announce its half-earthly, half-heavenly origin.⁵⁷ Then it will be introduced to the King of the Underworld and allowed to drink from the lake, and having drunk, it will join the sacred road of other *bacchoi* and glorious *mystai*.

⁵¹ Murray 1981: 88; Stern-Gillet 2004: 196; Bowra 1955: 1-25, esp. 19. Cf. Ustinova 2009: 177-178, on illumination and rational development of scientific ideas. On stages in the creative process see Hadamard 1945; Rugg 1963.

⁵² Rugg 1963: 45.

⁵³ Plato’s term: *Phdr.* 244e.

⁵⁴ *Μνημοσύνας τὸδε ἔργον*, 3; *δῶρον*, Graf and Johnston 2007: No. 9; *λίμνη*, Graf and Johnston 2007: Nos 1, 2, 8, 25. Mnemosyne: Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 15-19.

⁵⁵ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: L. 3

⁵⁶ Graf and Johnston 2007: No. 1; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: L1.

⁵⁷ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 40-43

Mnemosyne is mentioned no less than four times in the sixteen lines of the tablet: once Μνημοσύνας τὸ ἔργον and thrice Μνημοσύνας λίμνη.

This and similar texts demonstrate the remarkable significance of memory for the initiated. It is noteworthy that in Greece water was considered the carrier of prophetic power.⁵⁸ In view of the close similarity between prophetic knowledge and magic memory, the role of water from a special source in endowing the *mystēs*' soul with a gift unavailable to the uninitiated would appear natural.

The gift of Mnemosyne is crucial, because generally, the soul tends to forget — like the dead souls depicted in the *Odyssey* Book 11. Death is the Field of oblivion, Λήθης πεδίον:⁵⁹ its essence is the loss of memory, that is, the loss of identity. In Homer, the opposition between the memory of the living and the oblivion of the dead appears as a major element of the human condition. A soul that forgets is bereft of its consciousness and therefore doomed; it needs magical means, such as drinking from the source of memory prescribed in the Hipponion tablet, to sustain itself and acquire immortality.⁶⁰

Here we turn from the memory received or preserved by the soul in Hades to the memory of the still living initiate, preparing for the soul's adventures after death. Why were mystery initiations so important? Success in earthly affairs was of course desirable, but it could be attained simply by proper worship of the gods. The initiated obviously could not hope to avoid death by means of resurrection; physical death of the body remained the only perspective known to the Greeks. Their status in the world remained unchanged. The unique gifts conferred by mystery initiations were joyful existence, peace of mind, and readiness to accept death. Cicero knew that in Eleusis the initiates 'get the idea not only how to live in joy, but also how to die with hope for the better'.⁶¹

'Hope for the better' concerned the world of the beyond. In order to enjoy harmony and happiness in this world, the initiated had to preserve the knowledge imparted by participation in a mystery rite. Actually, the impact of a mystery initiation was lost if the initiated forgot the sensation itself and the resulting illumination.⁶² To preserve the

⁵⁸ See n. 34.

⁵⁹ Ar. *Ran.* 186

⁶⁰ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 17.

⁶¹ Cic. *Leg.* 2. 36: *neque solum cum laetitia uiuendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi*. Initiates are often described as 'happy and blessed', μάκαρ καὶ εὐδαίμων or ὄλβιος (E. *Bacch.* 72; Pl. *Phdr.* 250b; Graf and Johnston 2007: No. 5). This dual designation seems to indicate two distinct kinds of happiness which they obtained due to the initiations: Riedweg 1987: 53.

⁶² In contrast, the impact of participation in festivals, sacrifices, and other rites enacted inside the community and directed towards the deity, was determined not by the participant's memory of his or her feelings at the event, but largely by the mere fact of attendance. In his analysis of Roman mystery cults, D.L. Gragg (Gragg 2004) follows the distinction between 'special-agent' and 'special-patient' rituals, put forward by R.N. McCauley and E.T. Lawson (McCauley and Lawson 2002). According to this theory, the latter rituals, characterized by passivity of the superhuman figures that remain recipients of regularly-performed actions, do not have a long-term impact on the worshipper, whereas the former, involving active participation of supernatural figures, are rare or once-in-a-lifetime events for the worshipper, and typically feature high levels of sensory pageantry. Gragg suggests

memory of the rite, the initiated learnt cryptic σύμβολα or συνθήματα⁶³ of their distinction; in some cases they kept material tokens of it.⁶⁴

We will never know exactly how the blessings mentioned by Cicero were obtained. The objects, words and actions known to us do not seem to contain any life-changing or otherworldly revelation. Moreover, stripped of their secrecy, mystery rites appeared dull and bleak. Even the frightening and/or obscene rites of Eleusis,⁶⁵ when divulged in the streets by the atheist Diagoras, lost their gripping force.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, these ceremonies were believed to lead to future bliss, particularly after death. Plutarch⁶⁷ restates the ancient idea expressed in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*,⁶⁸ and reiterated by Plato in the *Phaedo*: those who arrive in Hades uninitiated would wallow in the mud, while those initiated (into the Eleusinian mysteries) would dwell with the gods.⁶⁹ The same notion is repeated time and again in the texts inscribed on gold tablets which accompanied initiates, Dionysiac or Orphic, to the grave and were believed to guide their souls on their final journeys.⁷⁰ The *mystēs*' destiny underwent so dramatic a transformation that it could be perceived as an apotheosis: 'Once human, you have become a god', is the inscription on one of the gold tablets.⁷¹

that while traditional Roman cultic practice belongs to the special-patient category, mystery cults, with their permanent effect on the life of the initiated, would be special-agent rituals, hence the sense of their extraordinary importance and popularity.

⁶³ Plut. *Mor.* 611d; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 151-160; the σύνθημα of the Eleusinian Mysteries: Clem. Al. *Protr.* 21.2, followed by Arnobius 5.26. The mysterious phrase, occurring in many gold tablets, 'Kid (or ram, or bull), I fell into milk' (ἔριφος/κριὸς ἐς γάλα' ἔπετον, Graf and Johnston 2007: Nos. 5, 26) was perhaps one of these formulae.

⁶⁴ Burkert 1987: 46, 150 nn. 83-84. The peculiarities of their behavior could also serve a sort of reminder: the Mithraists would not put on crowns, the Orphics did not eat eggs, and Eleusinian initiates avoided red mullet (Burkert 1987: 47).

⁶⁵ Their contents remain an educated guess. Even if the hinted-at animal sacrifice, initiation by fire of a boy, and sacred marriage between the hierophant and the priestess did actually occur (see the reconstruction in Burkert 1983: 279-285), all these rites were enacted publicly on other occasions.

⁶⁶ Craterus *FGH* 342 F16 (Schol. Ar. Av. 1073).

⁶⁷ Plut. fr. 178 Sandbach, discussed below.

⁶⁸ *Hom. Hymn. Dem* 480-482, cf. S. fr. 837 Radt, Isoc. 4.28; Pind. fr. 137 Maehler; other sources: Scarpi 2002: 1: 207-219 with comm.; Cole 2003: 194.

⁶⁹ Pl. *Phd.* 69c; cf. Clinton 1992: 85.

⁷⁰ Sources: Scarpi 2002: 329-333; 421-429; cf. Zuntz 1971: 277-393; Cole 1980; Cole 2003: 207-208; Graf and Johnston 2007. Identification of the mysteries associated with the gold tablets is controversial: Price 1999: 119-121. On salvation promised to those initiated into the Isiac mysteries, see Dunand 2000: 138-140.

⁷¹ *IG* XIV 642, cf. 641. 1; Graf and Johnston 2007: Nos. 3, 5; Zuntz 1971: 301, 329; Cole 2003: 207; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: L. 8

The most fascinating description of the mystery experience from the point of view of the initiate is given by Plutarch. He refers to the 'great mysteries', probably meaning the Eleusinian mysteries:⁷²

At first there was wandering, and wearisome roaming, and some fearful journeys through unending darkness, and just before the end, every sort of terror, shuddering and trembling and sweat and amazement. Out of these emerges marvelous light, and pure places and meadows follow after,⁷³ with voices and dances and solemnities of sacred utterances and holy visions (σεμνότητος ἀκουσμάτων ἱερῶν καὶ φασμάτων ἁγίων ἔχοντες). Among these the completely initiated (μεμνημένος), walks freely and without restraint; crowned, he takes part in rites, and joins with pure and pious people; he observes the crowd of people living at this very time uninitiated and unpurified, who are driven together and trample each other in deep mud and darkness, and continue in their fear of death, their evils and their disbelief in the good things in the other world. Then in accordance with nature the soul stays engaged with the body in close union thereafter (ἐπεὶ τό γε παρὰ φύσιν τὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα τῆ ψυχῆ συμπλοκὴν εἶναι καὶ σύνεργον ἐκεῖθεν ἂν συνίδους).

This account depicts an unending flight through the darkness with a marvelous light in its end, visions, happiness and meetings with kindly people as well as the soul's reunification with the body, which implies that they were conceived as temporarily separated during the experience. In modern terms, the report is a description of the initiate's alteration of consciousness, comprising an out-of-body experience. For the Greeks, this was the *τελεστικὴ μανία*.

Modern research demonstrates that altered states of consciousness often generate a subjective sensation of contact with a transcendent spiritual world.⁷⁴ Those experiencing altered states of consciousness feel that they are in contact with a higher reality, and everything in the world appears to them salient, deeply meaningful, and much more real than their perceptions, feelings or thoughts when in an alert state.⁷⁵ Individuals, who have experienced profound alterations of consciousness, repeatedly claim feeling renewed hope, rejuvenation, or rebirth.⁷⁶ They also insist that the core of the event is ineffable.⁷⁷ Altered states of consciousness create 'an enhanced sense of reality',⁷⁸ often change the experiencer's attitude to life. It is this particular intensity which renders the experience unforgettable. The consciousness can be shifted away from its ordinary state by means of self-inflicted mortification, such as fasting, exhaustion, fear, pain, sensory deprivation, as well as rhythmic noises and uproar.⁷⁹ Altered states of consciousness vary

⁷² Plut. Fr. 178 Sandbach. On Eleusinian mysteries, see Meyer 1987: 8; on similarity between mystic initiation and near-death experiences: Seaford 2006: 53; Bonnechere 2003: 214-215; Ustinova 2009: 226-229.

⁷³ For the meadows of the Bacchic gold leaves, land of the pious and the Elysian fields see Cole 2003: 212.

⁷⁴ Ludwig 1972: 11; Ludwig 1968: 69.

⁷⁵ D'Aquili and Newberg 1998: 195; Ellwood 1980: 20; Shanon 2002: 264-266; Streng 1978: 146.

⁷⁶ Ludwig 1968: 81-82; Persinger 1987: 38-39.

⁷⁷ Geels 1982: 52; Ustinova 2009: 27

⁷⁸ Shanon 2002: 265.

⁷⁹ Lewis 1989: 34; Ludwig 1968: 74; Wulff 1997: 70-75

in their intensity, ranging from deep unconsciousness to a less dramatic state, which still may be responsible for visions or hallucinations. These states can be cultivated, and their intensity controlled.

The interaction between τελεστική μανία (i.e., alteration of the initiate's consciousness) and μνήμη can best be understood through examination of the impact of a mystery rite on its participants. The knowledge they acquired was illumination; it appears to have been very different from an array of myths or prescriptions, a range of information of any kind. Instruction, often called παράδοσις, covers the intellectual part of the preparation and entails acquaintance with myths associated with the particular mystery rite.⁸⁰ This *sacrorum traditio*⁸¹ provided the contents for the rites and was intended to prepare the mystai for the acquisition of a different kind of knowledge. In contrast, hidden or true meanings of images and rites were revealed to them as a living experience shared with the deity rather than perceived as a result of systematic teaching.⁸² The extant sources suggest that the purpose of the mystery rites was the attainment of a special awareness. Aristotle states that 'the participants in initiations into mysteries do not have to learn anything, but rather to experience and to be inclined (οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι), that is to say, to become fit (for the purpose, ἐπιτηδεῖους)'.⁸³ Aristotle was obviously referring to generic mystery experience, disregarding particulars, such as divine patrons of cults or places of ceremonies. In his view, the most important objective of the Greek initiations was to make the participants live through a certain experience, which brought about an ineffable feeling of enlightenment and hope.

The initiates had to make efforts to become 'fit for the purpose'. Although the secret was revealed to them by another person or persons, the *mystēs* was neither an observer nor a conscious learner; his or her state of mind was an important pre-condition for achieving a sense of contact with the divine. Age-old techniques of conscious manipulation were known to the Greeks, and many were used in preparation for and during mystery rites.⁸⁴ Only when well-prepared for the tremendous experience, that is, acquainted with the myth, and most significantly, exhausted, tense with anticipation and over-reactive, was the initiate admitted to participation in the central rites of a mystery cult. The fact that the ability to reach a state of trance varies among individuals was not unknown to the Greeks: Plato notes that 'many bear the Bacchic rod, but few are Bacchantes'.⁸⁵ Although the depth of the individual's experience during mystery rites could vary, even mild exaltation was perceived as τελεστική μανία. Due to alteration of

⁸⁰ Athen. 40d; Diod. 3.65. 6; Cic. *Tusc.* 1.29; Clem. *Strom.* 7.27.6; Plut. *Mor.* 422c; Riedweg 1987: 6-14 with refs.; Burkert 1987: 69.

⁸¹ Apul. *Met.* 11.29.

⁸² Diotima clearly dismisses as insignificant all those myths and interpretations she has disclosed to Socrates at the beginning of their conversation, her equivalent of a παράδοσις: Pl. *Symp.* 211a.

⁸³ Arist. Fr. 15 Rose, preserved in Synesius (*Dion.* 8); cf. Meyer 1987: 12; Burkert 1987: 69; Schefer 2000: 60; Riedweg 1987: 128.

⁸⁴ Uproar and noise: Clinton 2003: 64; dancing: Pl. *Leg.* 815c; fasting: Burkert 1987: 77; flagellation and pain: Hesych. s.v. καθαρθῆναι· μαστιγωθῆναι; Burkert 1987: 102-104.

⁸⁵ Pl. *Phd.* 69d.

their consciousness, the *mystai* perceived simple actions as imbued with endless significance, and preserved vivid memory of the new awareness long after the rite: the illumination was bound to be unforgettable.

The connection between teletic *μανία* and *μνήμη* was twofold. The profound emotional involvement was the reason for and guarantee of the persistence of its memory and, conversely, the awesome experience was rendered worthwhile solely by its perpetual memory: in order ‘to live in joy and to die with hope’ after the ceremony, the initiate had to remember it every moment of his life. This was the part of *Μνημοσύνης ἔργον* during one’s lifetime. The other part was believed to begin after one’s death: the soul’s ability to remember bestowed immortality.

Mania and the Philosopher’s Memory

Greek sages and philosophers cherished the ability to remember.⁸⁶ Pythagoras is reported to have instructed his disciples ‘to train the memory’;⁸⁷ among the gifts offered to him by Hermes he chose the memory of everything that had happened to him, in life and after death.⁸⁸ Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans were credited with the ability to recollect their previous lives.⁸⁹ It is noteworthy that the tradition ascribed to Pythagoras the claim that in his previous incarnations he had been Aithalides and Hermotimus — both renowned as ecstasies whose souls traveled to Hades.⁹⁰ The Pythagorean teaching was closely affiliated with mystery rites, and it valued dreams and visions as ways of attaining revelations. The methods used by the Pythagoreans to obtain these visions, that is, to manipulate their consciousness, are suggested in the master’s biography.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Vernant 1983: 106-123; Simondon 1982: 150-169. Plato (*Phdr.* 275a) praises using one’s own memory rather than writing which leads to forgetfulness.

⁸⁷ D.L. 8.23; Iamb. *VP* 166; Diod. 10.5.1; Cameron 1938: 53; Burkert 1972: 213.

⁸⁸ D.L. 8.4.

⁸⁹ Iamb. *VP* 63; Procl. *In Ti.* 124; Porph. *VP* 30-32; Simondon 1982: 154-157. Empedocles, who was considered Pythagoras’ pupil (D.L. 8.54, 56; Verdenius 1942: 20, 69; Lloyd 1979: 33; Wright 1981: 5; Burkert 1972: 137; Inwood 2001: 22-33; Trépanier 2004: 125, 129), also claimed to have undergone various incarnations (D.L. 8. 77, *DK* 117), presumably remembering them.

⁹⁰ D.L. 8.4-5, Aithalides: *DK* 7 B 8; Hermotimus: Apollon. *Hist. mirab.* 1.3; Plin. *HN* 7.174; Lucian. *Musc. Enc.* 7; Plut. *Mor.* 592c (Hermotimos’ name misspelled ‘Hermodoros’; Tert. *De anim.* 44; Rohde 1925: 300, 331; Burkert 1972: 137-138). Bremmer regards Hermotimos’ story as a late invention (Bremmer 2002: 39)

⁹¹ Empedocles (*DK* 29, Porph. *VP* 30-32; D.L. 8.54, cf. Trépanier 2004: 124-125), when praising Pythagoras’ ability to see ‘all the things which are in ten or twenty human lifetimes’, refers to the philosopher’s *πραπίδες*, with which he ‘reached out’ or ‘stretched’ (*πάσῃσιον ὀρέξαιτο πραπίδεσσιν*) to ‘great (spiritual) wealth’. *Πραπίδες* is ‘diaphragm’, which was deemed to be the seat of mental powers, and it is suggested that Empedocles was referring to techniques of breath control which induced trances interpreted as visions of past lives (Gernet 1968: 415-430; Vernant 1983: 86-87, 114; Detienne 1963: 76-85). However, *πραπίδες* occurs in poetry, meaning ‘mind’ or ‘understanding’ (*Il.* 1.608, 18.380, 24.514; Hes. *Th.* 608, 656; A. *Ag.* 380, E. *Andr.* 480, etc.), and Empedocles’ choice of this word is

One of the popular techniques used by the Greeks to induce altered states of consciousness was sensory deprivation in caves and isolated chambers. According to modern research, reduction of external stimuli leads to dream-like autistic states, involving release of internal imagery: cut off from exterior input, the mind concentrates on itself and produces ‘from within’ images and visions which may be interpreted as revelations of divine truth, more real than everyday reality. Today, normal subjects isolated in darkness and sound-proof conditions, report hallucinations after a few hours.⁹²

Pythagoras’ descents into secret chambers were well-known, and his legend contains several reiterations of this motif. He is credited with sojourning in an underground οἰκεῖον τῆς φιλοσοφίης on Samos, in a subterranean chamber in Croton, in the Idaean cave on Crete, and in secret *adyta* in Egypt,⁹³ as well as with consuming special foods that relieved him of hunger and thirst, or even with abstaining from food and drink entirely during his withdrawals to sacred precincts.⁹⁴ In these secluded places, Pythagoras learnt to remain quiet.⁹⁵ Even if some accounts of Pythagoras’ *katabaseis* are late elaborations of his life legend, they reflect the fundamental idea that the sage’s way to wisdom entailed retreats to isolated places. In the soundless darkness of caves and subterranean rooms, starving themselves and remaining motionless, Pythagoras and his disciples fostered their delusive memories of previous incarnations.

A most remarkable connection between *μνήμη* and *μανία* is suggested in the Platonic theory of recollection. Plato may have borrowed the doctrine of recollection and its association with transmigration of souls from the Pythagoreans, but he transformed the notion of remembrance of incarnations into the recollection of the eternal by a disembodied soul and ultimately an epistemology of innate ideas.⁹⁶ Plato expounds his theory of *anamnēsis* on several occasions. In the *Meno*, *ἀνάμνησις* is the ability of the immortal soul to ‘recollect’ (*ἀναμνησθῆναι*) what it learnt during its previous sojourns in this and netherworld.⁹⁷ Since the world is interconnected, ‘recollecting’ a single true

not sufficient to corroborate the assumption that the Pythagoreans practiced yoga-like exercises.

⁹² Ustinova 2009.

⁹³ Ustinova 2009: 187-191. Descents to underground chambers: in Croton: D.L. 8.41; Tert. *De anim.* 28; Schol. S. *El.* 62. cf. Lévy 1926: 36-39; Lévy 1927: 129-136; Carcopino 1944: 214; Rohde 1925: 600; Kahn 1960: 32; Burkert 1972: 156; Riedweg 2005: 52; on Samos: Porph. *VP* 9, Iamb. *VP* 27. cf. Riedweg 2005: 10; to the Idaean cave: Porph. *VP* 17; D.L. 8.3; Lévy 1927: 27-29; Cook 1914-40: 1, 646; 2: 933-934; Faure 1964: 114; Riedweg 2005: 11; in Egypt: D.L. 8.3; Iamb. *VP* 19; Burkert 2002: 19; Assmann 2002.

⁹⁴ Porph. *VP* 34; Iamb. *VP* 141; Riedweg 2005: 33.

⁹⁵ Hippol. *Refut.* 1.2.18.

⁹⁶ Robin 1919: 452-455; Cameron 1938; Gulley 1962: 6-9; Burkert 1972: 213-214; Vernant 1983: 86-87, 108; Morgan 1990: 38-42, 53, 67; Kahn 2001: 4, 51; reservations: Vlastos 1995: 162.

⁹⁷ Pl. *Men.* 80-86; Crombie 1963: 135-141; Gulley 1962: 4-23; Morgan 1990: 51-54. In *Meno* 81c-d, 98a, *ἀνάμνησις* is interpreted as ‘fastening’ of true opinions (*αἱ δόξαι αἱ ἀληθεῖς*) in the soul, which leads to their transformation into stable knowledge, ἐπιστήμη: Robin 1919; Vlastos 1995.

thing would lead to learning everything else. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates asserts that at birth, knowledge acquired in previous lives is lost, and afterwards it is regained: learning is recollection of the forgotten knowledge, which the soul possessed before the birth of the body.⁹⁸

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates explains that in the distant past, when blameless and unencumbered by the body, the soul was capable of seeing ‘the blessed sight and vision of the most blessed of the mysteries ... the sight of simple and calm and happy apparitions (φάσματα)’.⁹⁹ In contrast, when the soul is ‘entombed in the body’, there is no shine in the earthly imitations of justice and other things dear to the souls, ‘but by means of inaccurate organs of sense, only a few, and with difficulty’ succeed in catching a glimpse of divine perfection.¹⁰⁰ In his day, according to Socrates, the only mortal who is able to attain the divine, ‘the real being’, is the philosopher. By recollecting his soul’s perceptions during its past travels with god, ‘always initiated into perfect mysteries, he alone becomes truly perfect’.¹⁰¹ In the *Philebus*, Socrates explains that ἀνάμνησις is the recollection of the soul independently of the body, and therefore different from μνήμη, acquired by the soul by means of perception.¹⁰² Through ἀνάμνησις, the limits of human knowledge are transcended: it is ‘knowing beyond knowledge’,¹⁰³ a mystical revelation of the pure essence of reality.¹⁰⁴ This memory does not belong to the past: it is an escape from the temporal and reunification with the divine.¹⁰⁵ Thus, it brings salvation: the soul

⁹⁸ Pl. *Phd.* 72e-78b, esp. 75e-76a. Cf. *Phlb.* 34Bc; Hackforth 1972a: 74-77; Ackrill 1973; Gallop 1975: 113-137; Bostock 1986: 60-115; Morgan 1990: 69-71; Frede 2001.

Several scholars feel that the egalitarian notion of recollection as a faculty possessed by every soul (e.g. Bostock 1986: 67, 114; Morgan 1990: 174) would have been foreign to Plato, and resolve the perplexity in various ways. Gulley assumes transformation of the notion of recollection from the *Meno* to *Phaedrus* and in the later dialogues, and believes that Plato’s notion of the process of recollection was divided into stages (Gulley 1954; Gulley 1962: 13-16). Bedu-Addo suggests that Plato ‘has in mind two quite different types of recollection’, a gradual process of learning, and immediate recollection by true philosophers (Bedu-Addo 1991: 30; cf. Morgan 1990: 175, on souls that can be good and poor learners). Scott (1995: 24-52) argues that Plato refers to a higher level of learning, the philosopher’s knowledge of ultimate reality, rather than ordinary human understanding or true opinion (Scott 1995: 47).

⁹⁹ Pl. *Phdr.* 250c, cf. 247d-e; Riedweg 1987: 37-38; 55. Scott 1995: 73-80, emphasizes that recollection in Plato is experienced only by philosophers, and is an extraordinary rather than a routine occurrence.

¹⁰⁰ Pl. *Phdr.* 250b. Plato is most probably alluding to the Eleusinian mysteries and their ‘shine’, Riedweg 1987: 41; 46-47. On the ‘dull organs’ as ‘inadequate reasoning powers of man’, see Gulley 1954: 204.

¹⁰¹ Pl. *Phdr.* 249c; note the word play: τελέους ἀεὶ τελετὰς τελούμενος, τέλος ὄντως μόνος γίγνεται; Hackforth 1972: 87.

¹⁰² Pl. *Phlb.* 34a-c. For a conception of memory as related to the past, see Arist. *Mem.*; Simondon 1982: 315.

¹⁰³ Wulff 2000: 398, citing the words of a modern spiritual seeker.

¹⁰⁴ Pl. *Phdr.* 247d-e. On mystical revelations see James 1961; Katz 1983; Bishop 1995; Wulff 2000; Paper 2004.

¹⁰⁵ Vernant 1983: 93-94; Simondon 1982: 312.

that remembers the divine truth is released from the embodied existence, whereas each forgetful soul is sentenced to further reincarnations.¹⁰⁶

Plato asserts a striking contrast between the inner contents of *anamnēsis* and the visible bizarre behavior of the person who experiences it. Socrates says that those few who are able to recognize in this world the visions that they preserve as the memory of the divine reality, are stricken with astonishment and ‘no longer aware of themselves’.¹⁰⁷ Most notably, he is aware of the fact that the philosopher, who alone is able to attain the divine essence of things, appears to the multitude, all those who are unable to recognize his godly inspiration, to be ‘violently excited’ and ‘possessed’.¹⁰⁸ In the *Symposium* Plato makes this point abundantly clear: Alcibiades remarks that all those present at the banquet ‘partook in the philosopher’s *μανία καὶ βακχεία*’, stressing that they are initiated — as opposed to servants and other people who are ‘vulgar and ignorant’.¹⁰⁹

To the unenlightened, a philosopher experiencing *anamnēsis* looks like an initiate possessed by a god: that is, both seem to be in the grip of madness. The route to pure knowledge is via initiation; this idea is exquisitely elaborated in the *Symposium* by Diotima, the wise Mantinean woman.¹¹⁰ In the catalogue of blessings of madness in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates lists *τελεστικὴ μανία*¹¹¹ — in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades states that *μανία καὶ βακχεία* are characteristic of every philosopher. These are not just metaphors, juxtaposing the acquisition of telestic and philosophic wisdom. Plato states that both kinds of wisdom are attained as revelation, rather than by rational deliberation, dialectic inquiry, or learning. Furthermore, Socrates, the paradigmatic philosopher, is described by Alcibiades as experiencing trances that attracted general attention.¹¹² Socrates was quite aware of the fact that his own behavior looked bizarre or even mad to the masses, hence could appreciate better than others the correspondence between the philosopher’s inner enlightenment and outer eccentric conduct. Thus, the philosopher attains truth by means of *μανία*, and the core of this truth is the soul’s *μνήμη* of its divine essence.¹¹³

The initiation of the philosopher may be compared to the bard’s investiture, envisaged as the divine gift to evoke memory of the past. The poet and the philosopher share the god-given ability to contemplate memory concealed from other men, memory

¹⁰⁶ Pl. *Phdr.* 248c-249d.

¹⁰⁷ Οὐκέτι αὐτῶν γίγνονται, 250a.

¹⁰⁸ ... ὡς παρακινῶν, ἐνθουσιάζων δὲ λέλθῃ τοὺς πολλούς, 249d; Morgan 2010: 54-55 interprets the word ἐνθουσιάζων as ‘divinely occupied’: ‘rather than being invaded by an outside force, the mind of the philosopher leaves the mortal world’; ‘being inspired is being next to the divine, by means of your memory’. Cf. Rowe 1986: 182-183.

¹⁰⁹ Pl. *Symp.* 218b; Morgan 1990: 95-96.

¹¹⁰ 210a; Riedweg 1987: 22-28; Morgan 1990: 86-89; Seaford 2004: 235.

¹¹¹ ‘Our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness (*μανία*), provided it is given us by divine gift’: *Phdr.* 244a, cf. 265a; Hackforth 1972: 58-59; Rowe 1986: 168-171; Morgan 1990: 163-167. Morgan 1990: 164 emphasizes the lack of hierarchy of the types of madness.

¹¹² Pl. *Symp.* 220c cf. 174d; Guthrie 1962-67: 3: 402-405; Nieto 1997: 39; Morgan 1990: 94. Another peculiar gift of Socrates was his ability to hear voices, notably that of his *daimonion*: Pl. *Apol.* 31 c-d; *Euthyd.* 272e; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.4; Long 2006.

¹¹³ Morgan 1990: 170-171; 161: Plato ‘endorsed philosophy as the highest form of madness’; Morgan 2010: 56: ‘Inspiration is recollection’.

of the community or of ultimate reality. Both attain their memory as initiation, by means of *μανία*.

Conclusions

The faculty of memory, comprising memorization and remembrance, is often viewed as entirely rational. My comments on three phenomena, poetry, Plato's philosophy and mystery initiations, are intended to demonstrate that in some spheres, *μνήμη* and *μανία* are intertwined. The poet's memory is only partially his own: he recalls and commemorates in the grip of divine inspiration, when he is out of his mind. In Plato, the philosopher's recollection of his soul's true knowledge is pictured as a seizure of *μανία*. Finally, the aim of mystery rites was the creation of the eternal memory of a life-changing ecstatic experience, whereas the *μνήμη* of the ceremony was enhanced by means of *μανία*. Magic memory and inspired knowledge are present in all these phenomena. The ancient mingling of thinking, alteration of consciousness and remembering, expressed by means of the words deriving from the root *men-*, did not disappear in Greece.

Fig. 1. *Kitharōdos*. From an amphora attributed to the Berlin Painter, at the Metropolitan Museum, Inv. 56.171.38. Drawing by Y. Sokolovskaya.

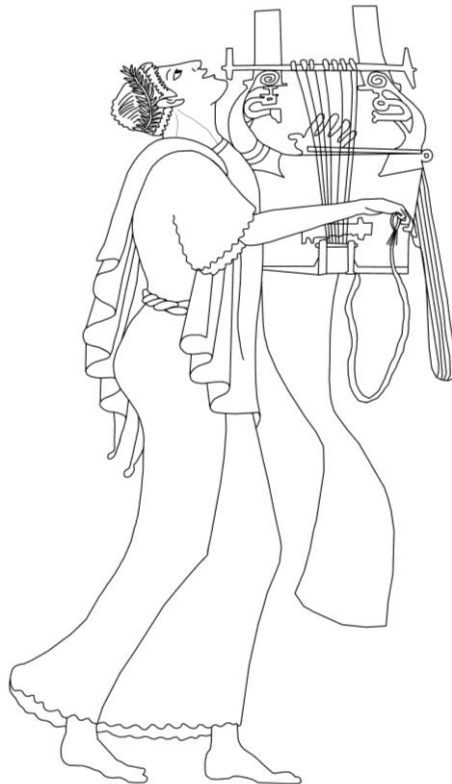


Fig. 2: Orpheus and the Thracians.
From a crater by the Orpheus Painter,
at the Altes Museum in Berlin,
Inv. V.I. 3172. Drawing by Y.
Sokolovskaya.

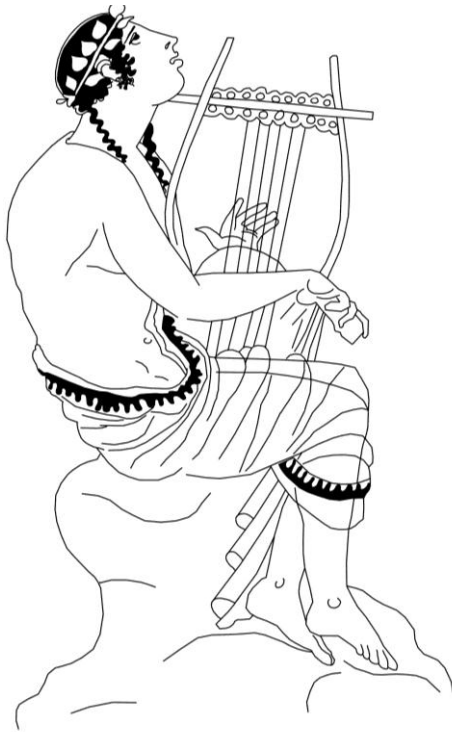


Fig. 3: Maenad. From an amphora
by the Kleophrades Painter, at the
Antikensammlung in Munich,
Inv. 2344. Drawing by Y.
Sokolovskaya.



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