

‘I HAVE REGAINED MEMORY’ (*SMṚTIR LABDHĀ*): THE *BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ* AS A PARRHESIASTIC JOURNEY AGAINST FORGETFULNESS

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ABSTRACT: *This paper proposes an interdisciplinary reading of the Bhagavad Gītā, presenting it as a parrhesiastic dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and focusing on the importance attached to memory. Foucault’s studies on the exercise of parrhesia (“true speech”) in the Greco-Roman context, but also Heidegger’s views on the original memory, and Abhinavagupta’s commentary to the Bhagavad Gītā have been used as important tools of interpretation. Devotion is described as the constant memory of Kṛṣṇa, through which the practitioner succeeds in substituting some subconscious dispositions (saṃskāras) for others, building a psychic memory that allows for liberation at the time of death. On the one hand, Kṛṣṇa’s goal is to awaken transcendental memory in Arjuna, on the other, at the end of the Gītā we are invited to remember and study this sacred conversation. This leads us to establish a comparison between the use of memory promoted in the Bhagavad Gītā and in the Epicurean school, highlighting important similarities and differences between the two pedagogies.*

Keywords: *death, devotion, emotions, Epicurus, guṇa, happiness, parrhesia, remembrance, saṃskāras, truth*

1. THE *KAIROS* OF THE SOUL

In one of the Epictetus' most unique dissertations, a disciple asks the Stoic master why he never answers his questions. The answer of Epictetus is visceral in its frankness: the disciple in question does not move him to speak since he does not possess the competence to listen. “About what should I talk to you? Tell me. About what matter are you able to listen?” (*peri tinos oun legō pros se; deixon moi. peri tinos akousai dūnasai; Dissertations*, II, 24). Foucault quotes this passage, intitled: “To one of those whom he did not deem worthy”, several times in his famous studies on the exercise of *parrhesia* in the Greco-Roman context (Foucault 2012, 177). The Greek term ‘parrhesia’ has two possible meanings, which give it two very different senses. In a rather pejorative sense, *parrhesia* implies “to say (*rhema*; lit: “utterance”) everything

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(*pan*)”, which is a symptom of charlatanism rather than wisdom, because the person who thus exercises *parrhesia* (i.e. the *parrhesiastes*) expresses “any or everything has in mind without qualification” (Foucault 2001,13). In Christian literature, we find a constant denunciation of this unfiltered talk¹, which makes true silence impossible and therefore it is conceived as “an obstacle to the contemplation of God” (Foucault 2001, 13). But already Epictetus, in his *Enchiridion*, sharply warned against this harmful *parrhesia*: “Keep silent most of the time, and say only what is necessary to be said, in a few words. Only rarely and when the *occasion* calls for it, we will say something.” (*kai siōpē polu estō ē laleisthō ta anagkaia kai di'oligōn. spaniōs de pote kairou parakalountos epi to legein lexon men; Ench. XXXIII*). It is important to learn to discern what this appropriate occasion is, -the *kairos* that invites us to speak-, which in turn will be related to the competence of our interlocutor to listen. Discerning the conditions necessary for a true conversation (a frank saying for a frank ear), becomes a particularly relevant task when what we are going to say is the truth, whatever the consequences may be. This is precisely the other meaning of the term 'parrhesia': “to tell the truth”. And this is the most widespread use of the term in Greek-Roman literature. The *parrhesiastes*, therefore, is one who has the courage to tell the truth, even if this could seriously harm him or her; as opposed to the flatterer, the exercise of truth becomes for the *parrhesiastes* a duty and a way of relating freely to himself/herself and to others (see Foucault 2012,178; 2001, 14-15). The nexus between *parrhesia* and self-care crosses in different ways the discourse of Hellenistic philosophies and makes the exercise of truth a “*techne* of spiritual guidance for the education of the soul” (Foucault 2001,110). The difference between the Hellenistic *parrhesia* and the *parrhesia* of Christian spirituality has to do with the subject from whom this *parrhesia* is required: in Greco-Roman philosophy it is the master who must exercise the *parrhesia*, while in Christianity will be the disciple who must confess his soul to the master. “It is quite characteristic to note that in [Greco-Roman] philosophy there is a great concern for imposing silence on the disciple. [...] for the disciple is essentially the one who is silent, while in Christianity the disciple will be the one who must speak.” (Foucault 2012, 160). The *parrhesiastes*, in the Hellenistic context, is “an agent of *gnōthi seauton*”, a “*kairos* technician”, a director of souls who embodies what he says, since *parrhesia* has become “the presence of his own way of life made manifest, presented, sensitive and active as a model in the discourse he maintains.” (Foucault 2012,181). It is the figure in which we find a harmony between saying and doing, and therefore, the truth is transmitted as a way of being, through his/her presence, rather than as a theoretical idea. Taking literally, it is what the Sanskrit term ‘*ācārya*’ (‘master’, ‘teacher’) alludes, in reference to one who has fulfilled the *ācāra* (‘good conduct’, ‘good behavior’), and the one who has already undertaken (‘*ā-carati*’; ‘to practice’, ‘to approach’) the paths by which he leads his disciples.

¹ The Quietist movement initiated by the Spanish mystic Miguel de Molinos (fifteenth century CE) is perhaps the one that most vindicates contemplative silence as a place of encounter with God, considering that verbal meditation (and this includes prayer and any other kind of verbal activity) is always an inferior means of relating to the divine.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā* (henceforth: BG) we are offered a mystical *parrhesia*, between a Divine Friend ('*suhṛt*' or '*sakhi*'; BG, 9.18 and 10.44), an avatar who as Aurobindo (1997,18) indicates, only manifests as such when the *occasion* has come, on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, and an interlocutor, Arjuna, who throughout the first chapter possesses nothing but the sensible and logical arguments of a reason stripped of vision and driven to despair. Indeed, the *Gītā* begins at the moment when Arjuna has very persuasive reasons, apparently irrefutable for not fighting, and thus abandoning all efforts and all desire for victory. Faced with the injustice of the world, alone with the dam of his reason, Arjuna joins in an understandable but self-centered misfortune. This beginning should not be interpreted lightly, for, as Aurobindo claims in his commentary: "Arjuna has sought to justify his refusal on ethical and rational grounds, but he has merely cloaked by words of apparent rationality the revolt of his ignorant and unchastened emotions" (1997, 61). However, if Arjuna were not receptive to listening, the dialogue of the *Gītā* would culminate in this first chapter: rational, logical and tragic. It would be rather an impossibility of dialogue, a convincing but empty monologue. Therefore, the *parrhesiastic* exercise actually begins from the second chapter, when Kṛṣṇa finds the opportunity to guide a soul willing to hear something greater than his own arguments. Only in that circumstance -fulfilled the conditions of the *kairos*- does Kṛṣṇa agree to impart a teaching that forces him out of His incognito, dropping the veil of His power (*yogamāyā*; BG, 7.25) and revealing Himself to Arjuna no longer as a mere friend, but as the master of the eternal *dharma* (BG, 11.18). These '*kairos*-conditions' are related to the Arjuna's competence to listen, that is to say: to his capacity and necessity -as a disciple- of remaining silent. In fact, one of Kṛṣṇa's last warnings highlights the importance of always being open to listening: "If you do not listen (*na śroṣyasi*) to Me because of your arrogance, you will get lost" (BG, 18.58). Through this sacred conversation, Arjuna will not only recover his own essence, but will also realize the identity of the master, whom he had taken for an ordinary friend (BG, 11.41). *Kṛṣṇa dwells within what He says*, while Arjuna, unable to live satisfied nowhere, must fix his mind on the Divine- Friend, learn the language of stillness, fill his heart with gratitude and remain silent. In Kṛṣṇa's words: "to whom censorship and praise are equal, who is silent (*maunī*), satisfied with everything that comes to him, homeless (*aniketa*), with his mind firmly established (*sthiramati*) and full of devotion - that person is dear to Me" (BG, 12.19). From our perspective, what the Divine Friend is going to provide to Arjuna are not convincing arguments to make him change his mind; it is not rhetorical persuasion that Govinda employs, since it is not the power of reason what is at stake.

Furthermore, throughout this paper, we will interpret the song of Bhagavān as a healing journey from forgetfulness to original Memory (*smṛti*), by means of a true speech/being that has the purpose not to convince or demonstrate, but to transform. "I dwell in the heart of all beings; from me come Memory (*smṛti*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) and also their loss" (BG, 15.15), declares Kṛṣṇa. It is this original memory -the presence of the source-, that needs to be awakened in the despondent heart of a calculating and rational Arjuna. Throughout the *Gītā*, the noun '*smṛti*' (lit. "which is remembered"), as well as other verbal forms related to the root '*smṛ*' ("remembering"; "remembrance";

“desire”) will often be emphasized in a meaningful way. It should be taken into account the last words of Arjuna, at the end of this transcendental conversation: *naṣṭo mohah smṛtir labdhā* (“The delusion has dissolved, I have regained Memory”; BG, 18.73). The Sanskrit term *smṛti* is often translated in an ambiguous way because it swings between the meaning of “awareness” or “mindfulness” and the meaning of “memory”. This has given rise to some debates about the most successful translation in various philosophical contexts (see Ditrich 2013), and thus, it is common to read Arjuna’s last words translated in this way: “The delusion has dissolved, I have regained the *awareness* (of the Self)”.² In our view, not only are not these two meanings incompatible, but they can be understood as one. This polysemy of the term *smṛti* and its associated terms (from the forms *smaraṇa*, *samaratva* or *anusmara*) becomes deeper if we consider that the vocabulary related to memory, the awakening of the mind and love (including the broad spectrum of desire) come together in the Sanskrit root ‘smṛ’, in a way impossible to reproduce in English using only one word. Besides, the term ‘smṛti’ implies “tradition” and is the name given to a body of texts -among which is the epic literature *itihāsa*³, and therefore the *Mahābhārata*-, which are distinguished from the authoritative textual *corpus* of the *Śruti* (lit. “which is heard”), in reference to the revealed scriptures of the Vedas. As Gerald James Larson argued, the term *smṛti* should be considered as a multiple-dimensional “portmanteau expression” (1993, 375). According to this author, memory is recognized only as a legitimate means of knowledge (*pramāṇa* or *pramā*) by the Jains, and this in an ambiguous manner (Larson 1993, 376). But this does not prevent the existence of other dimensions of memory, which do not refer to a mere cognitive faculty, and which transcend the conception of memory as a mere retrieval of past particular experiences. In fact, the richness of this term shows that memory is recognized as a potential transcendental faculty associated with meditative exercise, and also at the same time the fact that certain states of mind reached through meditation are understood as an access to a Memory that is not verbal, nor imaginal, but transcendental, and whose effect is manifested in the embodied presence. Furthermore, the teaching that Kṛṣṇa imparts to Arjuna is not the knowledge of something that Arjuna never knew and will now learn; nor is the knowledge of something that Arjuna knew and has forgotten, in the sense of not having properly retained it in his mind. It is not a retentive exercise the journey to Memory that the *Gītā* presents to us. The sort of remembrance which is at stake is more linked to being than to thinking, more original and closer to *keeping* than to retaining. In short, it is *a way of witnessing life* what Kṛṣṇa comes to awaken in Arjuna. In this regard, the consideration of Memory found in the *Gītā* is similar to Heidegger’s consideration of remembering as the source of thought and gratitude.

Originally, ‘memory’ means much as devotion. A constant concentrated abiding with something- not just with something that has passed, but in the same way with what is

² Cf., Osborne and Kulkarni (trans.) 2012), 309.

³ The expression *iti ha āsa* (“so indeed it was”) it is the name given to a Hindu genre of literature, whose representative works are *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*.

present and with what may come. What is past, present, and to come appears in the oneness of its own *present* being. (Heidegger 2004,140)

Memory as a sign of eternity, of what always remains as a continuous present is manifested in gratitude for the gift of being, in a devotion for what must be thought: “The *thanc*, as the original memory, is already pervaded by that thinking back which devotes what it thinks to that which is to be thought. It is pervaded by thanks”. (Heidegger 2004,142). Thus, Heidegger will often wonder whether the memory is “no more than a container for the thoughts of thinking” or if, on the contrary, “thinking itself resides in memory” (2004,139). It is precisely through a call to devotion and thankfulness, that Kṛṣṇa is going to ask Arjuna to remember Him and armed with the light of this remembrance to put aside the laziness, complaint, and obfuscation of his mind, and prepare for the true fight. If Martin Heidegger, from the Greek term ‘*aletheia*’, understands truth as the unconcealed or the unveiled (‘*a-leth*’), Harald Weinrich relates this term to the negation of forgetfulness (i.e. the negation of the semantic element ‘*leth*’, where the name for the river of forgetting comes from: “*Lethe*”). Thus, according to Weinrich:

on the basis of the construction of the word *aletheia* one can also conceive truth as the “unforgotten” or the “not-to-be-forgotten”. In fact, for hundreds of years Western philosophical thought, following the Greeks, sought truth on the side of not-forgetting and thus of memory and remembrance. (2004, 4)

The last words of Arjuna also reveal the close relationship that maintains both, eternal truth and memory, since it is due to Kṛṣṇa in the shape of Acyuta (“the imperishable”) as Arjuna acknowledges having recovered the Self (BG, 18.73). In fact, to understand the semantic malleability of the term *smṛti* it is sufficient to notice the three possible translations of Arjuna’s final statement (“*smṛtir labdhā*”). Hitherto, we have anticipated two, namely: *a*) “I have regained *memory*”, and *b*) “I have regained the *awareness* (of the Self)”. However, in which could be considered one of the most literal English translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Franklin Edgerton (1944, 179) translates *smṛtir labdhā* as *c*) “attention (to the truth) is won”. Thus, this two-word expression can mean the recovery of memory, the awareness (of the Self), and the attention (to the truth), all at once. At any rate, at the end of the dialogue what was concealed comes to light and is now perceived by the power of vision, which falls on this transcendental Memory acquired by Arjuna in an exercise of listening, openness and humility. “I stand free from doubt”, Arjuna concludes, “*I shall do Your words*” (*kariṣye vacanam tava*; BG, 18.73).

Concerning this mystical *parrhesia*, we are willing to argue that in the sacred conversation (*dharma-saṁvādah*; BG, 18.70) between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, lies a danger which is obviously not a political risk such as that posed to us by certain historical episodes in Ancient Greece (for example in the case of a *parrhesiastes* Plato in Syracuse). Nor is it the risk of the friend who by telling the truth puts a particular relationship at risk. Nevertheless, there is a much greater risk in this journey that Kṛṣṇa

is undertaking, even if it is assumed to be in a position of higher power with respect to Arjuna. The *parrhesiastes* Kṛṣṇa does not gamble His life, but the possibility of being remembered, that is to say: the possibility of being alive through the presence of those who embody Memory. He risks, in particular, being rejected once and for all in favor of forgetting that reason requires, in certain situations, to be true. Ultimately, we should wonder if there is a greater risk than that of the Divine Friend when finally finds the *kairos* of speaking frankly to the soul.

2. DEFEAT IS THERE, WHERE FORGETTING IS

I'm a poor audience for my memory
W. Szymborska

The dialogue of the *Bhagavad Gītā* comprises eighteen chapters (from chapter 25 to 42) of the sixth book of the *Mahābhārata*, entitled “*Bhīṣma parva*” (“Book of Bhīṣma”). If we read the *Gītā* as an individual text, separate from this book, as it is usually done, our reading begins with the “Yoga of Arjuna’s grief” (“*arjuna-viśāda-yogaḥ*”). In this first chapter of the *Gītā*, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to lead his chariot to the center of the battlefield in order to contemplate his enemies. Then we see the despondency of Arjuna, possessed by compassion (*kṛpā*), and we are offered a monologue of arguments, objections and complaints, which plunge the warrior into skepticism, sadness, and paralysis. However, if we read the *Gītā* in the context of the book to which it belongs, the attitude of Arjuna will seem to us quite paradoxical and unstable, considering that only four chapters before, this warrior was totally convinced of the victory, and even comforted his brother Yudhiṣṭhira by exhibiting a pearl of wisdom worthy of Kṛṣṇa Himself. Indeed, in chapter 21 of the *Bhīṣma Parvan*, it is Yudhiṣṭhira, the king of the *pāṇḍavas*, who feels sorrow (*viśāda*) when observing the troops of his enemies. Doubts overwhelm him because of the strength and weapons of the opposing army, led by the fearsome warrior Bhīṣma: “with our troops, we are doubtful (of victory)” (*te vyaṃ saṃśayaṃ prāptāḥ sa sainyaḥ*; MhB, 6.21.5), he confesses to Arjuna. In our view, the answer that Arjuna provides to his brother deserves special attention, since it reveals a force of spirit whose loss will lead to the dialogue of the *Gītā*. Effectively, what Arjuna *reminds him* is that the determining factor in battle is not quantity but quality, and that the true warrior does not overcome by the force of his external weapons, but by the firm strength of his internal ones.

na tathā balavīryābhyāṃ vijayante jigīṣavaḥ
yathāsatyānṛśamsyābhyāṃ dharmeṇaivodyamena ca/
tyaktvādharmaṃ ca lobhaṃ ca mohaṃ codyamam āsthitāḥ
yudhyadhvam anahaṃkāra yato dharmas tato jayaḥ/
evaṃ rājan vijānīhi dhruvo 'smākaṃ raṇe jayaḥ
yathā me nāradaḥ prāha yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ/
guṇabhūto jayaḥ kṛṣṇe prṣṭhato 'nveti mādhavam
anyathā vijayaś cāsya saṃnatis cāparo guṇaḥ/
ananta tejā govindaḥ śatrupūgeṣu nirvyathaḥ

puruṣaḥ sanātanatamo yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ /

(MhB, 6.21.10-14)

Those who desire victory do not conquer so much by power (*vīryā*) or by force (*bala*) as by truth (*satya*), kindness (*anṛśamsa*), virtue (*dharma*) and perseverance (*udyama*). Having given up injustice (*adharmā*), greed (*lobha*), and delusion (*moha*), and remaining firm during the course of the battle without arrogance (*anahamkāra*), for victory is there where righteousness is. Know this, oh king, our victory in this battle is certain. As Nārada told me: victory is there where Kṛṣṇa is (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*). Victory depends on Kṛṣṇa, it is intrinsic to Madhava, just as humility is his other attribute. Govinda, brilliant and infinite, even in the midst of a multitude of enemies remains calm. He is the most eternal of beings; where is Kṛṣṇa, there is victory.

How to reconcile this triumphant discourse, based on faith in Kṛṣṇa's energy, truth, and justice, with the dejected and skeptical mood that overwhelms Arjuna at the beginning of the *Gītā*? Only four chapters later, Arjuna will fall into a dejection much worse than Yudhiṣṭhira, and his own words of comfort will vanish at the imminent beginning of the battle. Certainly, kindness could be a secret weapon for victory, but not self-pity, as Kṛṣṇa will have to remind him later. Likewise, humility (*samṇati*) is a crucial trait of those who fight in the name of *dharma*, but not false modesty or victimhood. The degree of confidence transmitted by Arjuna while reassuring his brother is proportional to the degree of despair in which he is about to plunge: “I do not desire victory, Kṛṣṇa, nor kingdom, nor pleasures. *Of what use to us* is kingdom, Govinda, or pleasures or even life?” (BG, 1.32). On the one hand, the extreme mood swings experienced by Arjuna are significant, since a crucial part of Kṛṣṇa's teaching is based on moderation or equanimity (*samatvaṃ*; BG, 2.40), that is, on the sage's ability to remain unperturbed (*sama*) both in the joy as in pain (*samaduhkhasukham dhīram*; 2.15). On the other hand, we have underlined the beginning of the interrogation: “*of what use to us*”, which literally translated would be “what [is] to us” (*kiṃ naḥ*), since this kind of question seems to be a sentence already doomed to failure, rather than a real interrogation. The question about the meaning of life, of victory or of joy, formulated in this way, may symbolize to what extent Arjuna has forgotten what Kṛṣṇa represents, what *dharma* truly means. Thus, from “victory is there where Kṛṣṇa is” (*yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*), we have suddenly turned to “defeat is there, where forgetting is” (which in Sanskrit could be “*yato viśmṛtis tato'jaya*”). The meaning of life, or of its own path (*sva-dharma*) becomes blurred, and the result is mood paralysis and impotence. Even when Arjuna argues that it is the fulfillment of *dharma* that prevents him from fighting (BG, 1.40-41), and even if his reasoning throughout the first chapter of the *Gītā* seems sensible and hardly refutable, it is only his own particular ego that complains, becomes frustrated and feels sorry for his bad luck. The limits of his vision have been narrowed to the point that the questions Arjuna is able to ask himself, in such a state, can only lead him to a dead end. These are questions that only bear fruit in certain conditions, for they need the gray and narrow atmosphere that only amnesia provides with. Apparently, Arjuna has lost all anchor points in the heart where *ātman*

or *puruṣa* dwell (see *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* II.3.17 and *Praśna upaniṣad* 3.6). But not quite. Otherwise, it would not have been possible for him to remain open to memory, to the willingness to *re-cordare* (from Latin etymology: *to go through the heart* [cor] *again* [re]). After Kṛṣṇa reproves him for his pusillanimity (“*hṛdayadaurbalya*”; lit. “weakness of heart”), Arjuna adopts another very different internal position, which indicates at least the will to overcome his critical state: “I am your disciple, I beg you, teach me” (BG, 2.7). And as the *Gītā* reveals to us, this internal collapse of Arjuna, this sudden amnesia that manifests itself with all its power at the beginning of the journey constitutes the blank space (the dark night) that every soul is required to grow. Until the beginning of the *Gītā*, Arjuna felt comfortable with his role as a warrior (*kṣatriya*), but he played it for reasons of a lower order, although legitimate and dignified. Now, at the time of the crisis, he must face a higher law: the one that urges him to follow only the path of Self, and to do so, first abandon all *dharmas*. As Aurobindo states, what Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa is a law, a path, a code of conduct to follow: “give me, [Arjuna] practically asks, that which I have lost, a true law, a clear rule of action, a path by which I can again confidently walk. He does not ask for the secret of life or of the world, the meaning, and purpose of it all, but for a *dharma*” (1997:26). Indeed, Arjuna himself confesses that his mind is bewildered with respect to *dharma* (*dharmasammūḍhacetāḥ*; BG, 2.7) and asks Kṛṣṇa to indicate the best way to follow.

The term 'dharma' is crucial in the context of Indian philosophy, and its semantic field is overwhelming (eg. it can be render as “virtue”, “religion”, “nature”, “law”, “justice”, “path”, it is also the name given to a part of Buddha's teachings and this is by no means an exhaustive list). However, certain authors such as Shyam Ranganatham argue that, regardless of the context in which this term is used, its intentional content is always the same. “Dharma has just one, moral meaning in the classical Indian circumstance, which is the meaning of all key philosophical moral terms, like ‘ethics’ and ‘moral’ ” (Ranganathan 2017, 114). According to this, the idea that the term ‘dharma’ is polysemic and refers to different meanings according to its context, corresponds to an “Extensionalist” point of view, which Ranganathan calls “the orthodox view”. In turn, this author proposes that the term ‘dharma’ should be considered a “perfect formal moral term, without focus” (2017, 96). This assessment is important to us, if we take into account that one of the conclusions of Kṛṣṇa's teaching consists precisely in the recommendation to abandon all dharmas: “Abandoning all *dharmas*, take refuge in Me” (BG, 18.66). Thus, even if at the beginning of his teaching, Kṛṣṇa reminds Arjuna his social duty (or *dharma*) as a warrior (BG, 2.32-2.38), the *Gītā* would not have acquired the universal and timeless importance that it holds today, as a transnational spiritual reference guide, if Kṛṣṇa's teaching were simply based on remembering the moral demands regarding a particular culture and time (i.e. the moral of Indian society during the time of songwriting). This does not mean that Kṛṣṇa is disinterested in morality, in a negative-sense -much less that his message is immoral-. On the contrary, what this indicates, rather, is that the universality of his teaching relies on a pearl of higher-level wisdom than the social or particular normative recommendations because as Aurobindo states, the *Gītā* “replaces the conception of social duty by a divine obligation” (1997, 35). Important to note, in the first verse of

the *Gītā*, the battlefield of Kurukṣetra is called ‘Dharmakṣetra’, suggesting that what is going to take place is the battle of *dharma* versus *a-dharma* (i.e. the battle of good against evil). Significantly, in his commentary on *Bhagavad Gītā* entitled *Bhagavadgītārthasaṃgraha* (henceforth: GS), the great Kashmiri thinker Abhinavagupta considers that the word “kṣetra” refers to the body (*śarīra*) in this particular context. Thus, playing with the root *kṣi* (to destroy), from which the term ‘kṣetra’ could be derived, he declares: “Liberation is obtained through the destruction of all *dharmas*” (“*samastadharmāṇāṃ kṣayādapavargaprāptyā*”; GS, 1.1). According to this, the body is the battlefield in which all *dharmas* must be destroyed to obtain liberation (*apavarga*). However, Abhinavagupta also takes into account the root *kṣad* (“to confront”, “to attack”), another possible etymological source for the term ‘ṣetra’, in which case the body would become the field in which the battle between contradictory desires takes place⁴. In our view, the consideration of Kurukṣetra as “Dharmakṣetra” is significant since Arjuna will learn to fight from that recovered memory (*smṛtir labdhā*) that Kṛṣṇa awakens in him, that is to say: rooted in the heart of a path where all personal and social dharmas, and the respective desires that accompany them, have to be abandoned.

Certainly, what Kṛṣṇa tries to awake in Arjuna is the highest path to the Self, which is related to a certain ability for action, precisely one of the definitions of ‘yoga’ that *Gītā* brings up: “yoga is skill in action” (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*; BG, 2.50), which in turn is related to detachment and equanimity (“equanimity is called yoga”; *samatvam yoga ucyate*; BG, 2.48). Although the term ‘yoga’ also plays a crucial role in the setting of Indian philosophy, it is necessary to highlight that in this context “the word yoga has not attained any definite technical sense, as it did in Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra*, and, in consequence, there is not one definition of yoga, but many” (Dasgupta 1932, 451). However, it is in this text that we find formulated the three paths of yoga (namely: *karma yoga*, “the yoga of action”; *jñāna yoga*, “the yoga of wisdom”; and *bhakti yoga*, the yoga of devotion) that are considered today the “cardinal directions” or the “conceptual filters” of the so-called “premodern yoga” (see De Michelis 2008,18). Everything seems to indicate that the fundamental meaning of the term ‘yoga’ in Kṛṣṇa's teaching, has the general character of a spiritual practice which implies a kind of union for which separation or isolation of certain mental states is required, especially desires. Surendranath Dasgupta already warned of the meaning of this yoga (“union”) which is always also a sort of “*viyoga*” (“disjunction”)⁵: “The reason why this negative concept of cessation of desires should be regarded as *yoga* is that without such a renunciation of desires no higher kind of union is possible” (1932, 444). The path of “abandoning all *dharmas*” consists of nourishing a single desire which becomes rather an intimate aspiration to take refuge solely in the Divine Friend. At this point, it should

⁴ See for instance: Marjanovic (trans.) 2004, 30-31. For further readings on Abhinavagupta's commentary, see also: Sankaranarayanan, S. (trans.) 1985.

⁵ This is also pointed out by Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary to *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* II.3.11, where yoga is defined as “*sthīrām indriya dhāraṇām*” or “steady control of the senses”. Śaṅkara argues then, that this sort of union (*yoga*) involves a disjunction (*viyoga*) concerning another thing (i.e., the yogi concentrates on the Self [*yoga*] and abandons all the distractions [*viyoga*] that lead him to ignorance)

be noted that devotion to Kṛṣṇa in the context of the *Gītā* implies metaphorically renouncing the boundaries maintained with other masters or reference models (i.e. being guided by Kṛṣṇa, the *pāṇḍavas* will have to fight with their previous preceptors). In a significant episode, just before the battle begins, Yudhiṣṭira will ask for the benediction of his four previous masters who are on the enemy side: Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, and Śalya. The reader familiar with the *Bhīṣma Parva* will remember the identical answer that the four characters provide: “A man is a servant of wealth, but wealth is not servant of anyone. I am bound to the Kauravas by wealth.” (*arthasya puruṣo dāso; dsas tv artha na kasya cit [...] Baddho'smi arthena Kauravaiḥ.*; MhB, 6.43.41,56,71,82). They all wish Yudhiṣṭira's victory, however, as Bhīṣma and Droṇa admit, they are not free, and they speak to him as “eunuchs” (*klīvabat*; lit. “like a weak-minded”, “like a coward”; MhB, 6.43-42, 57). Perhaps it is Droṇa who best expresses the situation they are in: “I will fight for the Kauravas, but I hope the victory will be yours.” (*yotsye'ham kauravasy'ārtha; tav'āsāsyō jayo mayā*; MhB, 6.43.58). Thereby, the spectator encounters unfolded in the *Mahābhārata* a whole range of loyalties and affections between human and divine ties, intertwined with each other, in a way in which it is easier to understand Arjuna's confusion about what is the right path (and the right master) to follow. We could ask at this point if the action required of Arjuna, in case he decides to follow the path of Self, could be considered a “teleological suspension of the ethical”. This is what Abraham did, according to Kierkegaard, when he agreed to sacrifice his son by divine mandate. According to Kierkegaard, from the ethical domain Abraham is exposed to being nothing more than a murderer (of his own son), however, from the religious perspective he is willing to make the leap to the absurdity in which true faith consists (always related to the *scandalous* in Kierkegaard's thinking). Thus, Abraham's action (or intention) by virtue of faith keeps an abysmal difference with the figure of the tragic hero, since the former “still remains within the ethical” (Kierkegaard 1994, 49). On the contrary, “by his act [Abraham] overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher *telos* outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former” (Kierkegaard 1994, 50). Similarly, there are two different stages from which to consider Kṛṣṇa's teaching concerning the impossibility of the spirit (*puruṣa*) killing or being killed (BG, 2.19-20, 27) since from an ethical point of view, such justification for the battle supposes a dangerous fallacy, and yet, from a transcendental point of view the required action goes beyond the ethical stage and acquires a much deeper meaning. Hence, Aurobindo assertively states that “the *Gītā* is not a book of practical ethics, but of the spiritual life” (1997, 31), and clarifies that “[the *Gītā*] does not preach indifference to good and evil for the ordinary life of man, where such a doctrine would have the most pernicious consequences” (1997, 37). From our point of view, Arjuna is neither a tragic hero, nor a murderer, nor a believer in the Christian sense. Precisely, Kṛṣṇa's teaching aims at Arjuna not fighting simply by obeying a social duty, nor by virtue of the absurd. The memory that Arjuna recovers at the end of the conversation with the Divine Friend, may not be described in rational terms but still it is not an irrational leap into the absurd: it is an intuitive understanding (*buddhi-yoga*) that he acquires throughout the *Gītā* due to Kṛṣṇa's words. Thus, the

vision of Self sublimates both the blind absurdity in the Christian-religious stage, and also the murder from an ethical perspective.

In the end, the road to highest freedom lead us to two apparent paradoxes, namely that the *dharma* of Self demands abandoning all paths, and that the devotion to Self results in selflessness *for* and equanimity *to* other potentially desired things. This is how *yoga*, first defined as “the skill in action”, is directly related to “desireless action” or *niṣkāma-karma*. Any action performed from the Self (i.e. from a mind steadfast in *yoga*) entails at the same time a disjunction (*viyoga*), since the *yogi* or *yogini* takes distance with the results of it. However, this does not mean that the well-established person in the Self must completely abandon his interest in the world, nor behave like an emotional automaton for the sake of an inner connection with the Supreme. The dialectical interplay between union-disjunction (i.e. *yoga-viyoga*) unfolds a more subtle skill, namely the ability to find the right measure between closeness and estrangement, commitment and indifference. To explain this, Geoffrey Ashton draws on the insights of Edward Bullough about the importance of distance in aesthetic contemplation and creation. This aesthetical distance involves a negative and a positive aspect:

But “the working of Distance” does not entail a total disengagement with the world (or artwork); it also displays “a positive side- the elaboration of the experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of Distance” (Bullough 1971, 760). [...] while Arjuna becomes yoked to the divine by transcending the phenomenal world, he does not essentially depart from it (as Śāṅkara advocates), nor does he become purged of his own feelings (à la *Mīmāṃsāka* model of ritual agency). Rather, he re-connects with the world in a way that is simultaneously desireless and directly infused with sensitivities to others. (Ashton 2013, 13)

However, the teaching of the *Gītā* is not simply to carry out *any action* in a selfless way. It is not *any action* that Arjuna is required, nor is it the most appropriate action simply according to his social status. It is about carrying out the action that demands the path of Self. In order to discern what this action is in each particular situation, the first thing is to be willing to follow our own *dharma* (*svadharma*), whatever it may be, instead of trying to imitate that of others (*paradharma*). In other words, in order to deal with the situation Arjuna finds himself in, he must first accept the situation itself as well as the role that has been given to him in the plot. Kṛṣṇa repeatedly stresses the importance of this commitment to one's path (BG, 3.35;18.47). This same warning can be found in the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus:

memnēso, hoti hupokritēs ei dramatos, hoiou an thelē ho didaskalos: an brakhu, brakheos: an makron, makrou. [...] son gar tout'esti, to dothen hupokrisnathai propōpon kalōs: eklexasthai d'auto allou.

Remember (*memnēso*), that you are an actor of a drama (*hoti hupokritēs ei dramatos*) as such sort as the director chooses (*hoiou an thelē ho didaskalos*) – if short, then in a short one, if long, then in a long one. [...] For your task is to play well the given role; but to choose it, belongs to another (*eklexasthai d'auto allou*). (*Ench.*, XVII)

According to Epictetus⁶, the choice of the role is 'not up to us' (i.e. it is *aprohaireta*), since it is outside the scope of *prohairesis* ("choice") (Long 2002, 212). Following the teaching of Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna should also be *satisfied* with everything that comes to him (BG, 12.19), and precisely that harmonic acceptance is a symptom of wisdom, a particular trait of a mind well steadfasted on Yoga. It is not a bare conformism or a mere passive assentiment what it is demanded, but especially the impulse to act and *to react properly* to the events that happen to us, without worthless hesitation, despondency or complaint. The reaction -appropriate or not- to the role that has been given to us by the "screenwriter", *does* depend on us so accepting it is a first step in order to carry it out correctly. Hence, "voluntarily" pursuing our own path instead of interrupting it, or to imitate that of others is a teaching we find formulated both in the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and in the Stoic philosophy of Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius⁷. For this acceptance of the personal path and for its correct fulfillment, an intellect endowed with vision and open to listening is needed. Here the notion of "buddhi-yoga" is introduced in the *Gītā*, which certain authors such as Edgerton translate as "discipline of mental attitude", but which is more common to find translated as "the yoga of understanding", or even "the yoga of vision". In the second chapter we are told that mere action is inferior to this "buddhi-yoga" (*dūreṇa hyavaram karma buddhiyogāt*; BG, 2.49), since the one endowed with wisdom leaves good and evil behind (*buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte*; BG, 2.50), that is to say, he or she has transcended the conventional moral standards, and does not act moved by an interest or a reward. Further on, Kṛṣṇa warns us that this *buddhiyoga* is only granted to the loving devotees (BG, 10.10), those who have deposited their *buddhi* in Kṛṣṇa (*mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya*; lit. "[let your] intellect enter into me", BG 12.8). The intellectual organ or *buddhi* acquires great importance in the *Gītā*, since we are told that it can perceive "the infinite bliss" that lies beyond the senses (*sukhamātyantikam [...] atīndriyam*; BG, 6.21). Moreover, the yogi or the yogini gifted with this *buddhi-yoga* will not fall into the negative tendency proper of demoniac beings (*āsura bhūtāḥ*, BG, 16.20), those who defend that "there is no truth in the world, neither God, nor foundation, nor any law of cause-effect" (*asatyam pratiṣṭham te jagadāhuraniśvaram aparasparasambhūtam*; BG, 16.18) but instead, that everything is the result of personal will or of desire. Again, this consideration prevents us from concluding that the yogi or the yogini must simply leave moral standards behind and plunge into an amoral or immoral void. On the contrary, guided by the divine vision that he/she perceives through the intellect, the seeker commits himself/herself to the action that the Self requires, and plunges his/her steps into the divine path, very different from the nihilistic

⁶ This acceptance of the role that has been given to us is also stressed by the Stoic Marcus Aurelius, strongly influenced by Epictetus, whose *Discourses* came to him thanks to Rusticus. In a number of passages of his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius invites us to accept the destiny that God have planned for us. One example might be: "What a glorious power is granted to man! Never to do any action, but such as God is to commend; and to embrace kindly, whatever God appoints for him" (*Meditations*, 12. 11). See Moor and Hutcheson (2008).

⁷ In the words of Marcus Aurelius: "Consider, too, that, only to the rational animal it is given to follow *willingly* what happens. But the bare following is a necessity upon all"; see *Meditations*, X.28.

emptiness, the selfish complaint, or the persecution of personal goals. Arjuna's initial bewilderment, at the beginning of the *Gītā*, could have led him to this kind of materialistic nihilism, if he had not been willing to listen. It is important to highlight at this point that, like the impassivity (*apatheia*) recommended by the Stoics, the tendency for emotional restraint imparted by Kṛṣṇa does not imply that Arjuna should repress his emotions. As we have already indicated, Arjuna's confusion and despair seem to be entirely understandable. What Kṛṣṇa tries to make his disciple see is that these emotional states are due to an error of vision or, using a Stoic terminology, they are due to an "error of judgment". Hence the importance of purifying the intellect. Addressing the doctrine of emotions in Epictetus, A.A. Long offers an explanation that might serve to understand Kṛṣṇa's recommended impassivity of character:

Indeed, they [the Stoics] insisted, only a rational mind can act *irrationally*, meaning commit errors of judgement. And with this thought we reach the central Stoic doctrine: such emotions as anger and jealousy are basic errors of value judgement, mistakes in reasoning, impulses or motivations that exceed a correct and appropriate response to our situation. [...] we make ourselves angry or jealous because we misjudge the harm we think is being done to us. (Long 2006, 380)

Following this line of interpretation, the *tamasic* intellect is described in the *Gītā* as one which confuses what is right (*dharma*) with what is wrong (*adharma*), and assigns all things the opposite values (*sarvārthānviparītamaśca*). Likewise, the *rajasic* intellect is characterized by wrongly distinguishing (*ayathāvat*) what is right (*dharma*) and what is wrong (*adharma*), what should be done (*kārya*) and what not (*akārya*). The classes of the intellect according to the three *guṇas* are explained in chapter eighteen of the *Gītā* in terms of value assignment. An intellect shrouded in darkness (*tamasāvṛtā*) will assign wrong values to phenomena, as will a passionate intellect (whose quality is the *rajo-guṇa*). On the contrary, a *sattvic* intellect is one that knows how to effectively distinguish between active and inactive, what should be done and whatnot, and ultimately knows how to recognize bondage (*bandha*) and distinguish it from liberation (*mokṣa*). The sanskrit term '*guṇa*' ("strand", "attribute", "quality") is a universal concept in Indian philosophy, and can qualify its object from many different levels as Kapani shows when she recognizes in the *guṇas* a triple qualification: moral, psychological, and physical (1993, 417). However, in our opinion, it is undeniable that this term is used periodically to describe emotional or phenomenological states. *Tamas* is associated with depression, fear, and dark emotional states, in which the vision of the intellect is clouded. Arjuna's bewilderment at the beginning of the *Gītā* gives us an idea of the *tamasic* emotional state in which he finds himself, which leads to severe flaws in his reasoning, as he attributes erroneous or disproportionate values to the situation. With this *guṇic* qualification of the intellect (and also of the knowledge [*jñāna*], the agent [*kartā*] and the resolution [*dhr̥ti*]; BG, 18.19-35) it may be expressed the idea that *emotions determine and condition cognitive states*, that is, the domain of the judgment and beliefs that we normally know as "propositional attitudes". However, to purify this intellect will not only require rhetoric or argumentation since working on

the discursive level is not enough, even if it is necessary. Stoic rationalism distances itself considerably from the philosophy of the *Gītā* regarding the remedy proposed to purify this intellect and perhaps with regard to the reasons why this intellect has clouded over. The reason Arjuna's intellect has reached a *tamasic* state is his forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa, which implies a forgetfulness of the Self that Arjuna is. This memory will not be replaced by merely employing the weapons of rational conversation or logical thinking, although training the intellectual organ (*buddhi*) is important, given that with an armed intellect of resolution and determination, peace can be gradually achieved (BG, 6.25). But if there is something that causes the loss of the intellect, it is forgetfulness or confusion of memory (*smṛtivibhramah*) as Kṛṣṇa puts it in the following stanza: “From anger (*krodhāt*) arises delusion (*sammohah*), from delusion, confusion of memory (*smṛtivibhramah*), and confusion of memory produces the ruin of intellect (*buddhināśāh*) because of which, [the yogi or the yogini] perishes.” (BG, 2.63)⁸. Therefore, the intellectual vision of the yogi depends on the power of his memory that does not consist in a mere retentive capacity, but in a presence that remains constantly receptive to divine friendship, even in the worst stages of the path. Thus, memory is linked to devotional exercise and this determines the vision of the devotee, which in turn results in the mastery of *buddhi-yoga*, granted only to the most sincere and persevering lovers. In our view, the nexus between devotion and memory needs to be reviewed, since a two-way relationship seems to be established: on the one hand, devotion awakens memory; on the other, the memory of the seeker allows him/her to grow in devotion, which it always implies growing in peace and trust, for peace is not contemplated as a mere flat scenario, already given and closed, but as a passage of successive steps through which the devotee can always continue to deepen.

3. MEMORY AS A *BIOS TECHNE*

In the following pages, we show how memory can give rise to different ways and styles of life, even becoming a *bios techne* to assimilate philosophical doctrines which are opposite by nature. On the one hand, the *Gītā* is presented not only as a dialogue about the memory of Self but also as a means to exercise this memory. Kṛṣṇa Himself considers the study of this text as an “offering of knowledge” (BG, 18.70). Furthermore, memory placed at the service of the Divine Friend gives rise to a way of life in which the mind is purified and which can lead us to the meeting of Kṛṣṇa, either in life or after death. On the other hand, memory plays a very important role in the pedagogy of the Epicurean School, since Epicurus recommends his disciples to memorize and learn his ethical precepts, in order to avoid unfounded fears and to be able to achieve peace of mind (*ataraxia*). One of the worst threats of this mental peace is the fear of death, and to overcome it the Epicurean disciple must remember that the human being is nothing more than an atomic structure and that his/her death represents nothing more than the dissolution of said material composition. Thus, although the two philosophies should

⁸ Further on, it will be indicated that the anger (*krodha*) from which the delusion emerges according to this verse, is closely related to desire (*kāma*). See BG, 3.37-40.

be practiced and memorized by all those who seek the serenity of mind, their contents and teachings are not only different but opposite.

3.1 SMṚTIPATHA OR THE ROAD TO MEMORY

In chapter twelve of the *Gītā*, devoted to *Bhakti yoga* (“yoga of devotion”), we find an idea of devotion connected to an exercise of concentration in Kṛṣṇa. The act of worshiping is conceived as the constant task of *remembering* the divinity, according to which, the yogi or the yogini constantly focus their mind, intellect, and senses on Kṛṣṇa. Thus, we can read: “Those who let their mind enter into me, whose intention is always set on me, endowed with a supreme faith, are the most esteemed [yogis]” (*mayyāveśya mano ye mām nityayuktā upāsate; śraddhayā parayopetāḥ te me yuktatamā matāḥ*; BG, 12.2). The discipline of focusing the mind on divinity could be understood as a repetition technique (i.e. keeping the mind and the senses directed towards the same purpose), but driven by a sincere faith (*śraddha*) and affection (*prītipūrvakam*). This faith and this love cannot be trained, that is, they cannot be acquired through repeated techniques or through effort. However, by virtue of constantly reminding the divinity these two dimensions can be deepened. In other words, through “memory training” (understood as an exercise of “constant meditation on”), the yogi or the yogini can grow in love and faith. The remembrance of Divine-friend involves devotion, and in turn, the exercise of devotion contributes to memory expansion. This mutual relationship between memory and devotion, and the practice of keeping the mind, intellect and senses directed to the Divine Friend, becomes important if we bear in mind that only this determination prevents the yogi or the yogini from falling into the hole of lower desire. Kṛṣṇa warns Arjuna that the desire (*kāma*), described as the eternal enemy of the knower (*jñānino nityavairiṇā*), since it conceals knowledge (*āvṛtaṃ jñānam*), and displays, in return, an insatiable fire (*duṣpūra-anala*; BG 3.39), dwells precisely in the intellect (*buddhi*), the mind (*manas*) and the senses (*indriyāṇi*; BG, 3.40). Therefore, *practicing the memory on Kṛṣṇa* becomes a way to expel this inhabitant, enemy of divine life, from the immediate vicinity of our own cognitive-sensitive instruments. The body as a battlefield (*kṣetra*), so contemplated by Abhinavagupta, acquires all its sense at this point. Somehow, the constant remembrance of Kṛṣṇa serves to counteract the influence of other thoughts and other purposes that appear in the yogi or yogini's path in order to distract him/her, and that could relive the fire of this desire (*kāma*) closely related to anger (*krodha*), which in turn could give way to confusion of memory (*smṛtivibhramaḥ*) and of this, to the very ruin of the intellect (*buddhināśāḥ*). In order to avoid this descending sequence, it is crucial to create impressions of memory (“*samskāras*”)⁹ that are strong and firm enough to eradicate others normally installed

⁹ In what can be considered the most exhaustive investigation conducted on this pan-Indian concept, Lakshmi Kapani indicates that the term ‘*samskāra*’ appears, for the first time, in the Canon pāli. Since until that moment, only the verbal form from which the term derives had been used, namely ‘*samskṛ*’ (“to put together”, “to make perfect”, “to purify”). However, the term ‘*samskāra*’ must be considered a crucial term on the stage of Indian philosophy, in the same way as terms ‘*dharma*’, ‘*karma*’, ‘*mokṣa*’, or ‘*yoga*’. See Kapani 1993, 505.

in the nature of the yogi or the yogini. This substitution of some subconscious impressions with others is a crucial and recurring aspect of Patañjali's yoga: "From this wisdom [*prajñā*] is born the *saṃskāra* that prevents other *saṃskāras* from arising" ("*tajjaḥ saṃskāro'nyasaṃskārapratibandhī*"; *Yogasūtra*, 1.50). It is not our intention to explore here the fundamental role that *saṃskāras* play in Patañjali's method, nor the classification that this philosopher makes of them in his famous treatise *Yogasūtra* ("The aphorisms of Yoga"; fourth century CE). On the one hand, we have mentioned this aphorism of Patañjali just because Abhinavagupta himself quotes it to comment the verses in which Kṛṣṇa explains how the yogi or the yogini at the time of death can (and should) remember Him in order to attain liberation (see GS, 8.5-6-7). On the other hand, it is important to highlight the fact that the repeated practice (*abhyāsa*) of a series of exercises, which constitutes the basis of any form of *yoga*, under a plenty variety of different techniques, beliefs and developments, has as one of its first objectives to replace some subconscious tendencies with others, giving rise to a subsoil founded on memory, that is, endowed with a sort of transcendental knowledge which is usually understood as a form of *re-cognition* or *re-union*. From this perspective, the training of a memory established in the divinity, constitutes a specific way of life (it becomes a "*bios techne*") and requires a constant practical commitment to humility and listening to the Divine Friend, but also demands the ability to face the truth about ourselves and the world. Furthermore, the exercise of memory acquires vital importance at the decisive moment of the transit between life and death. Kṛṣṇa indicates that the person who, at the time of death (*antakāle*), abandoning the body (*muktvā kalevaram*), remembers Him (*mām smaran*), surely attains Him after having died (BG, 8.5). This issue gives rise to a more general reflection on the importance of that *liminal experience* because at that threshold-instant, impressions rooted in memory act as a compass that determines the destiny of the soul: "That which the mind remembers when it leaves the body, in that becomes, son of Kuntī, plunged into it" (*yaṃ yaṃ vā'pi smaranbhāvaṃ tyajatyante kalevaram; taṃ tamevaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ*; BG, 8.6). Commenting on this verse, Abhinavagupta will wonder if Kṛṣṇa means that the person must remember Him at the precise moment of his/her death, even though the mind and senses (i.e. the cognitive abilities, including memory) are already fading. However, everything seems to indicate that Kṛṣṇa's main objective is to make Arjuna understand the need to remember Him at all times (*sarveṣu kāleṣu*), and this is synonymous, once again, of focusing the mind and intellect on Kṛṣṇa (*mayyarpitamobuddhirmām*; BG,8.7). Thus, the particular wonder of Abhinavagupta is how the sick person (*asvatha*), with all the activities of his/her senses already detained, might be able to take the road to memory (*smṛtipatha*) that would lead him/her to Bhagavān. (*kathaṃ cāsvasthāvasthāyāṃ vinivṛttasakalendriyaceṣṭasya bhagavān smṛtipathamupeyāt*; GS,8.5-6). The Kashmiri author will explain that Kṛṣṇa does not refer to the specific moment of death, but that this final memory refers to the impressions cultivated during a lifetime. Only the person who has dedicated his life to fix his mind on God can take this road to memory at the time of his/her death, even if this death occurs by accident or suddenly. Therefore, we are not talking about a cognitive strategy operated at a particular time, but about a subconscious memory cultivated during a lifetime through

constant meditation. Hence Abhinavagupta quotes the aforementioned aphorism of Patañjali (YS, 1.50), to explain that this exercise of memory, in which devotion consists- aims to establish a specific subconscious memory fund, capable of counteracting the settlement of other impressions (*saṃskāras*) that would lead us to others roads (i.e. along the *saṃsāra* route [*saṃsārapatha*]) after passing away. Thus, according to *Bhagavad Gītā* only those who have dedicated their lives to fix the mind on Kṛṣṇa, shall be quickly rescued from the ocean of *Saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra-sāgarāt*; BG, 12.7). It should be remembered at this point the famous verses of the *Īśa Upaniṣad* in which the person at the time of his/her death is exhorted to remember the actions performed during the lifetime: “Let my breath go to the immortal breath and this body become ashes. *Aum* remember what you did, mind, –remember, mind, –remember what you did.” (*vāyur anilam amṛtam athedaṃ bhasmāntaṃ śarīram; aum krato smara kṛtaṃ smara krato smara kṛtaṃ smara*; Īśa Up., 17). Som Raj Gupta considers that these verses do not refer to the physical and literal death of the person, but to “the death of the body-ego” that is now replaced by the “divine presence”, as a result of a life devoted to delivering mind and deeds constantly to God. In this sense, Raj Gupta also emphasizes that this memory at the definitive moment is the outcome of a lifetime of surrender: “This replacement, this usurpation, can take place at the hour of death only if man has allowed this usurpation to take place in life” (Gupta 1991, 99). From our perspective, it seems clear that transcendental memory, which leads us to the Divine Friend and frees us from the cycle of reincarnations, is the result of a lifetime of practice and devotion, and does not refer to a mere cognitive operation performed in a particular moment. Therefore, *the cultivation of memory becomes a lifestyle*, related to truth, friendship, listening and devotion. Only then does the memory of the Self settle in the subconscious, giving rise to underlying impressions that favor the encounter with the divine regardless of the concrete circumstances of the individual's death. Reaching the path of immortal *dharma* (*dharmyāmṛtam*; BG, 12.20) requires subconscious impressions that tend towards that eternity, and that lead the soul towards the supreme desire that the person has cultivated during his/her life. At the same time, these subconscious impressions can only be created through repeated practice, that is, through a constant exercise that consolidates the tendency and the object to which we dedicate our words, our thoughts and our actions. It could be said that through mental routine we give memory to our intellect, our emotions and our senses, and that is the best discipline that prevents us from distraction and oblivion. That cognitive tendency, once consolidated, establishes a pattern that is rooted in the subconscious, and personal effort then decreases: devotion finally becomes a spontaneous way of being and relating to the world.

However, regarding this memory/devotion binomial it should be noted that following the theological line of Kashmir Śaivism, Abhinavagupta seems to conceive devotion (*bhakti*) as a synonym for sacred knowledge (*jñāna*) and the former as an immersion *in* or identification *with* Śiva. For example, in a stanza of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in which Kṛṣṇa considers that the best yogi is the one who worships Him with full faith (*śraddhāvānbhajate*; BG, 6.47), Abhinavagupta comments: “The *knowledge* of God (*śeśvarasya jñānasya*) is superior to all [other means]” (GS, 6.47). Similarly, in his

commentary on a similar verse mentioned above (BG, 12.2) in which Kṛṣṇa speaks of those who let their mind enter into Him (*mayyāveśya mano*; BG, 12.2.), Abhinavagupta comments: “The most skilled in Yoga are those immersed in *Māheśvara*” (*māheśvayayaviṣayo yeṣāṃ samāveśaḥ*; GS, 12.2.). The term '*samāveśa*' (“immersion, absorption in”; “identification with”) is especially relevant in a tantric treatise such as *Vijñāna Bhairava* (henceforth: VBh), where devotion is associated with “*mati*”, often translated as “intuitive intelligence” (see Silburn 1999, 165). In a celebrated stanza of this treatise it is said: “True adoration does not consist of an offering of flowers and other gifts, but of an *intuitive intelligence (mati)* firmly established in the supreme heaven [of Conscience] free from duality. Actually, this worship is [like] the absorption [in Śiva] proper of the ardent [desire]” (VBh, 147). Curiously, “devotion”, “desire”, “intelligence”, and “memory”, are all of them possible meanings of the term '*mati*'. This is, for instance, the kind of wisdom that the child Nasciketas proves to possess according to Yama, the God of Death¹⁰. Som Raj Gupta states that “‘*mati*’ can be better rendered by ‘state of being’ than by ‘thought’, the literal meaning of the word”. Describing such state as being “possessed by the [divine] presence and usurped by it so intimately as to become unconscious of her” (Gupta 1991, 257), the approach of Som Raj Gupta shed light on the association between worship and the dissolution /absorption in Śiva established in both the *Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra* and Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa's teaching falters between theism to a particular divinity and theism to an universal-absolute-impersonal *Brahman*, (eg. “[that devoted person] is fit for becoming Brahman”; *brahmabhūyāya kalpata*, BG 14.26; “I am the abode of Brahman”; *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*, BG, 14.27), but devotion in the *Gītā* is expressed mostly in dual terms, as a relationship between a lover and a loved one. However, based on certain stanzas we can infer that the sense of that devotion is the eternal union that underlies it as a supreme secret, so the conditions of this devotion in the text itself remain ambiguous, and hence give rise to diverse interpretations

3.2 EPICURUS' ATARAXIA: REMEMBER THAT “DEATH IS NOTHING TO US”

One of the goals of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (fourth century BCE) was to lead his students to both mental pleasure (*ataraxia*) and bodily pleasure (*aponia*), understood respectively as the absence of psychic anxiety and physical pain. The state of mental serenity or *ataraxia* was also considered the highest spiritual pleasure, achievable for all those who practiced the precepts indicated by this philosopher, normally expressed in the form of maxims so that they could be memorized and repeated. Indeed, on numerous occasions Epicurus recommends to his disciples the practice and memorization of his ethical 'slogans' (*Epistle to Menoeceus* 122-123-135; *Epistle to Herodotus*, 35-36-37,82). This synthesis strategy could also have been a way

¹⁰ See *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.1.9, where we are told that “this kind of wisdom cannot be obtained through reasoning” (*naiṣa tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā*).

of attracting students and new adepts, reason why some contemporary scholars point out the markedly “advertising” or “apostolic” character of the pedagogy of this Hellenistic school¹¹. However, little or nothing is known about the organization or management of the so-called “Hellenistic institutions”, and the Epicurean communities do not represent an exception to this gap¹². In fact, Phillip Mitsis (2005, 469) reproaches Martha Nussbaum for having elaborated a narrative regarding the organization and pedagogy of the Epicurean school for which we do not have sufficient textual evidence. Although it is known that the main ideas of this Hellenistic school continued to be alive centuries after the death of their founder, with the rise of Christianity and religious mysticism these doctrines will become marginal, and the influence of Epicurean philosophy will decline severely from the second century CE. The Epicurus’ texts that we have preserved conceive pleasure (*hēdonē*) as the supreme of goods, the “beginning and end of a completely happy life” (*kai dià toũto tēn hēdonēn arkhēn kai tēlos légomen eĩnai toũ makarĩōs zēn; Ep. Men. 128*), and yet, this Epicurean happiness (*eudaimonía*) has more to do with a rule of moderation than with voluptuousness or excess, often wrongly attributed to this school. In numerous passages, Epicurus tries to deny this common misunderstanding¹³ specifying that the pleasure he refers to is the absence of pain in the body or distress in the mind. (*allà tò méte algeĩn katà sōma méte taráttesthai katà psukhēn; Ep. Men. 131*)

hótan oũn légōmen hēdonēn tēlos hupárkhein, ou tās tōn asōtōn hēdonās kai tās en apolaúsei keiménas légomen, hōs tines agnooũntes kai oukh homologoũntes é kakōs ekdekhómēnoi nomízousin, allà tò méte algeĩn katà sōma méte taráttesthai katà psukhēn.

When we say that pleasure is the only purpose, we do not refer to the pleasures of the decadent and the libertines, as defended by those who do not know our doctrine or disagree with it or misinterpret it, but [we refer] to the fact of not feel pain in the body or distress in the soul. (*Ep. Men. 131*)

Furthermore, in the *Letter to Menoeceus* it is said explicitly that the choice of suitable pleasures is determined by a prudent judgment (*phronēsis*), and therefore,

¹¹ “Epicurus, however, had no scruples about using the tactics of the advertising man in attracting the attention of his audience” (Long 2006, 178)

¹² A.A. Long and Phillip Mitsis vehemently highlight this gap regarding our knowledge of the Epicurean school. For example, Long states that “we know little about the organization of the original Garden and even less about other Epicurean amenities” (2006, 179). And Mitsis (2005, 469) argues that “there is no serious evidence to suggest that Epicurus himself ever envisaged groups coming together to live in the Garden in obedience to his principles; nor do we have any evidence of any permanent residences in the Garden at any period”.

¹³ See Epicurus' *Sententiae Vaticanae*, 81: “The disturbance of the soul cannot be ended nor true joy created either by the possession of the greatest wealth or by honour and respect in the eyes of the mob or by anything else that is associated with causes of unlimited desire”. The same idea can be found in a fragment of a preserved letter from Epicurus and addressed to an unknown recipient: “I am thrilled with pleasure in the body, when I live on bread and water, and I spit upon luxurious pleasures not for their own sake, but because of the inconveniences that follow them”. These two translations belong to the classic work of Cyril Bailey 1926, 119, 131.

exercising this ability is more important than philosophy itself (*Ep. Men.*, 132). The Greek term ‘*phronēsis*’, often translated as “wisdom”, “judgment” or “reason”, is a key concept in Ancient Greek philosophy, from Plato to the sophists, through the Hellenistic Schools. Thomas McEvelley, drawing a comparison between Platonic and Indian philosophy, suggested that this term did not have to be translated as “reason.” Instead, it could be translated as ‘wisdom’ in the Platonic dialogues, “equivalent [...] to Sanskrit terms such as *prajñā* and *vidyā*, which commonly refer to the so-called ‘higher’ knowledge, which is said to be beyond “reason” as much as beyond sense perception” (2002, 189). However, this comparison could not be applied to the use of the term in Epicurean philosophy, given that this school establishes the senses as the door of knowledge, and understands that sensory perception is the crucial axis of a happy life (since the absence of physical or mental pain is determined by the senses). Further on, we will show that for Epicureans, death itself does not mean anything to us since it leads to the total stopping of sensory perception. According to this, the Epicurean judgment or *phronēsis* does not represent a transcendental wisdom, but the determining capacity to exercise reason when choosing the appropriate pleasures that could bring us a happy life, instead of choosing those that could bring us unpleasant consequences in the middle-long term. Consequently, the fifth of Epicurus’ *Capital Doctrines* (*Kyriai doxai*; henceforth KD), establishes what is already anticipated in the *Letter to Menoeceus*: the impossibility of a happy life without the exercise of *phronēsis*.

Ouk éstin hēdéōs zēn áneu toũ phronímōs kai kalōs kai dikaiōs <oudè phronímōs kai kalōs kai dikaiōs> áneu toũ hēdéōs; hótō d’ hén toútōn mē hupárkhei hoĩon zēn phronímōs, kai kalōs kai dikaiōs hupárkhei, ouk ésti toũton hēdéōs zēn. (KD, V)

It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently (*phronímōs*) and nobly (*kalōs*) and justly (*dikaiōs*), [nor again to live a life of prudence, honour, and justice] without living pleasantly. And the man who does not possess the pleasant life, and is not living prudently and nobly and justly, cannot possibly live pleasantly.

Therefore, the pleasant life of Epicurus is far from corresponding to our contemporary idea of “hedonism”. On the contrary, insisting on the benefits of a prudent and frugal life, Epicurus highlights that simple foods can provide the same pleasure as delicacies if they satisfy the pain that causes its lack. Taking this idea to its maximum consequences, the Greek philosopher adds: “bread and water are the greatest pleasure when those who need it feed on them” (*kai m̄za kai h̄dōr tēn akrotátēn apodídōsin hēdonēn, epeidàn endēōn tis autà prosenékētai*; *Ep. Men.*, 131). As regards this invitation to moderation, an *apparent* similarity could be drawn between the teaching of Epicurus and that of Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa teaches that yoga is not for one who eats excessively (*nātyaśnataḥ*) or fasts too much (*na caikāntamaśnataḥ*), nor for one who sleeps too much or wakes too much (*na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva*; BG, 6.16). According to this, one should be a yogi in any circumstance, whether eating, sleeping or being awake, because the ability to direct the mind to the Self (*cittam-ātmani*) in all situations is the quality of the true yogi (BG, 6.17-18). However, at this point it is already possible to guess one of the important philosophical differences that

exist between "Epicurean happiness" and the happiness to which the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gītā* aspires. For Kṛṣṇa would never consider that happiness from the senses could be the highest pleasure for a human being, even when it comes to satisfying basic physical needs (such as the example of "bread and water" mentioned by Epicurus). In fact, in chapter eighteen of the *Gītā*, we are told of three kinds of happiness and a clear distinction is made between happiness that has its source in the senses, and that which is born of self-knowledge. The way in which these three types of happiness are described indicates that the yogi should not always trust the information provided by his own sensations:

yattadagre viṣamiva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam
 tatsukhaṃ sāttvikam proktamātmabuddhiprasādajam/
 viṣayendriyaśaṃyogādyattadagre'mṛtopamam
 pariṇāme viṣamiva tatsukhaṃ rājasam smṛtam/
 yadagre cānubandhe ca sukhaṃ mohanamātmanah
 nidrālasypamādottham tattāmasamudāhṛtam/

(BG, 18.37-39)

That happiness born from the clarity of self-knowledge (*ātma-buddhi-prasāda-jam*) which at first is like poison (*yattadagre viṣamiva*) but in the end is like nectar (*pariṇāme'mṛtopamam*), is considered *sattvic*. The happiness that comes from the contact of the senses with the object (*viṣayendriyaśaṃyogāt*), which at first seems like nectar and is later like a poison, is considered a *rajasic* happiness. The happiness that arises from sleep, laziness and neglect (*nidrālasypamādottham*), both at first and afterward is like a poison and is considered *tamasic*.

Thus, sensations can be deceptive: *rajasic* happiness, originating from the contact of the senses with their objects, produces a pleasant sensation at first to later be harmful. The highest happiness according to Kṛṣṇa is the *sattvic* one, which can produce unpleasant sensations at the beginning, and require sacrifice and effort for the senses-but it becomes over time the highest of goods. When determining what is the highest pleasure, we should not trust our senses, since they respond automatically to external stimuli and it is up to us to assess the consequences that they will produce in the long or middle-term. Besides, the greatest good always comes from self-knowledge, a practice that requires the yogi to control and discipline his sensory capacities. This discipline of the senses based on self-knowledge is not present in Epicurus since his recommendations for a moderate life come from the sensory experience that in this way one suffers less mentally and bodily, or that even a lifestyle based on prudence may completely absent physical and bodily pain, in which case we would speak of *ataraxia* (absence of mental distress) and *aponia* (absence of physical pain). Far from these Epicurean formulations are the paths to which the yogi of the *Bhagavad Gītā* aspires, and it seems that there is a whole kingdom of transcendent sensations, much deeper than those produced by the pleasures or sufferings of the senses, that Epicurus did not even contemplate. This difference between both perspectives has to do with the

atomistic physics on which Epicurus is based, according to which everything that exists is explained by reason of a series of atoms circulating in an empty space. Strongly influenced by Democritus' atomism, Epicurus displays his teachings in the context of a physics that does not give rise to belief in reincarnation, innate ideas, or the afterlife. As we are told in one of the fragments of the *Vatican collection*: “We are born once and cannot be born twice, but for all time must be no more. But you, who are not (master) of tomorrow, postpone your happiness” (*Sen. Vat.*, 14)¹⁴. Thus, the human being is also an atomic-material structure and his death means nothing more than the dissolution of this structure (Bjarnason 2003, 25). Accordingly, our death is nothing more than the end of our material casing, after which we will completely stop feeling, pleasure or pain, forever. If in the *Bhagavad Gītā* the life of the yogi was to be put at the service of the remembrance of Kṛṣṇa, the precepts of Epicurus must be learned to remember that there is no afterlife, nor any divinity supervising our movements. The Epicurean precepts are usually condensed under the famous formula of the four remedies (*tetra-pharmakos*) that represent the beginning of his *Capital doctrines* (KD), and that Philodemus summarizes in this way: “Don’t fear God, neither death. Good is readily attainable while bad is easy to endure” (*Áphobon ho theós, anúopton ho thánatos. kai tagathòn mèn eúktēton, tò dè deinòn eukartērēton; Adv. Soph.*, col. 4.9-14). On the one hand, Epicurus considers the gods as happy and carefree entities that do not concern themselves with human affairs. Attributing a positive or negative influence on our lives is a vulgar mistake that Epicurean disciples should avoid, and therefore, they are recommended to ignore the popular account of a crowd frightened by vengeful and capricious gods. Epicurus, however, does not attack the foundations of religion or the practice of religious rites as such but understands that it must be devoid of the influence that the masses give it. According to his, the divinities must be revered and must also represent for us an example of *ataraxia* to follow since they are distracted with their own affairs and indifferent to human tasks. Much more radical in his critique of superstition will be the Roman philosopher Lucretius, adept of Epicureanism in the first century AD and author of that famous diatribe entitled *De rerum Natura* (“On the nature of things”). As some scholars have pointed out (Summers, 1995), Lucretius does attack religious practices in a forceful way, considering that they frequently encourage fears and manias of irrational superstition. In this sense, Epicurus’ attitude towards the gods has always been considered paradoxical and ambiguous, since he accepts their existence and the rites that are offered to them, but not the divine influence that they are supposed to exercise in our lives. This ambiguity does not occur in the case of death. As the second of the Epicurean remedies says: “Death is nothing to us for that which is dissolved is without sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us” (*Ho thánatos oudèn pròs hēmās; tò gàr dialuthèn anaisthēteĩ, tò d’anaisthētoĩn oudèn pròs hēmās; KD, 2; also Ep. Men.*, 125).

As we have already indicated, memory plays a very important role in this Epicurean instruction. For the philosopher urges his students to memorize, repeat, and assimilate all of these ethical precepts, so that no superstitious or unfounded ideas get in their way

¹⁴ We follow here the translation of Cyril Bailey 1926, 107.

of peace of mind. As we are told in the *Letter to Herodotus*, “the tranquility of the spirit is born from freeing oneself from all these fears and from *continually recalling* the general principles and fundamental precepts” (*Ep. Herod.*, 82). Also at the end of the *Letter to Menoecus* we find this invitation to the practice of the precepts: “Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself, and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men” (*Ep. Men.*, 135). This last statement should be appreciated: “you shall live like a god among men”, that is, happily carefree and serene, according to the Epicurean interpretation of divinity.

Both the Epicurean philosophy and the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gītā* appeal to the memory of the precepts taught, although the differences between the two doctrines are evident and palpable. Indeed, at the end of the *Gītā*, the narrator Saṁjaya confesses that “remembering constantly” (*saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya*) the sacred conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, rejoices over and over again (*hr̥syāmi ca muhurmuḥuḥ*; BG, 18.76). Constantly remembering (*saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya*) the form of *Hari* -which Kṛṣṇa reveals to Arjuna in the eleven chapter-, Saṁjaya's astonishment is enormous, and he rejoices over and over again (*vismayo me mahārājan hr̥syāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ*; BG, 18.77). In this way, the *Bhagavad Gītā* is presented not only as a dialogue about memory but also *for* memory, as it has the power to awaken the memory in those who study it. For as Kṛṣṇa indicates, the study of this conversation is also a form of devotion: “Whoever studies this dialogue between the two of us, will worship me with the ‘offering of knowledge’ ” (*jñānayajñena*; BG, 18.70). It should be noted that the two doctrines, claiming very different and even opposite reasons, agree that the fear of death must be overcome. However, the *Gītā* urges us to remember that *a*) our Self is eternal and therefore cannot kill or die; while Epicurus reminds his disciples that *b*) the human constitution is material and finite so death, being the painless state par excellence, it is harmless. In Epicurean doctrine, memory becomes a technique of life to avoid psychic suffering caused by fear of the unknown, and of the transcendent; in Kṛṣṇa's doctrine, memory becomes a life technique that can purify our minds leading us to unite with Him (or with Brahman), both in life and after death. Furthermore, as Epicurus told us in a fragment mentioned above, the disciple should learn these precepts in the company of someone “similar”, that is, in the company of a friend. The Epicurean school is characterized by the importance it attaches to friendship and Philodemus in his work *On Frankness* deals in detail with the *parrhesia* that begins to be exercised in these communities of Epicurean friends. The nature of this kind of *parrhesia*, however, is not exactly the same as that exercised by the Divine Friend in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, for the transcendence of this conversation far exceeds the limits to which Epicurus adheres in his material consideration of existence. However, both in the material ethics of Epicurus and in the mystical ethics of the *Gītā*, the commitment to truth and friendship is evident, and at the end of the day, both doctrines seek in their own way to lead the disciple towards a state of peace of mind -even though they will understand this state in different ways.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, transcendental memory has been characterized as the result of a lifetime of devotional exercise, the fruit of a life guided by the will to remember the path of Self and fix the mind on Kṛṣṇa (or Brahman). Through this repeated practice we replace some subconscious dispositions with others, aimed at liberation. This is the kind of memory that Kṛṣṇa awakens in Arjuna, through a healing conversation that bears many similarities with the kind of *parrhesia* that the Stoic masters exercised with their disciples. In this case it would be a mystical *parrhesia*, and the meaning of the words spoken can only be achieved through receptivity to a listening that goes beyond the scope of intellectual understanding and incurs in the field of intuitive comprehension. On the one hand, one of the striking features of *parrhesia* discourse is that due to its nature and particular mission, it breaks with the formal rules of rhetorical discourse or the discourse of philosophical argumentation. Thus, according to Foucault, “the parrhesiastes is the one who does not have to take into account either the rules of rhetoric [...] or even the rules of philosophical demonstration” (2012, 174). The main goal of the *parrhesiastes* is to transform the soul of the interlocutor, and not to simply lead him/her towards a logical or speculative understanding:

parrhesia is an action, is such as to act, that it allows the discourse to act directly on the souls; and *parrhesia*, to the very extent that it is this direct action on souls, transmits *dianoia* itself by a kind of coupling or transparency between discourse and the movement of thought. (Foucault 2012, 170)

In this case it would be better to invoke not only a transparency between saying and thinking, but in a much more original way, a transparency between saying and being. For as Heidegger stated: “Being itself is what re-members (*Er-innert*), is the authentic remembrance” (1998, 55), hence why all valuable thoughts are rooted in this source, and become the result of it. Moreover, the teaching of Kṛṣṇa, the “supreme secret” (*guhyaṃ param*; BG, 18.75) that has come to light thanks to the sage Vyāsa, should not be shared with those who are “not willing to listen” (*na-aśuśrūṣave*; BG, 18.67), given that this could mean that they are not simply willing to follow the path of the Self. As we have already pointed out, in the *Bhagavad Gītā* there is also a call to remember the memory, using the dialogue about memory as an exercise *for memory*.

In the first section of this paper, we have shown that the sacred conversation on Kurukṣetra takes place due to Arjuna's forgetfulness about the power of Kṛṣṇa, and the corresponding lack of confidence in victory. Because of this forgetfulness, Arjuna loses even the very meaning of the struggle, which is why the *Gītā* becomes the inspired guide of the Divine Friend Kṛṣṇa. However, Arjuna will once again forget the conversation held in the *Gītā* itself, and this particular forgetfulness will lead to another famous text, the *Anugītā* (second century CE). Arvind Sharma (1978) has shown the philosophical similarities and differences between the two texts. However, the most interesting feature about this succession of forgetfulness is the reproach that Kṛṣṇa

makes to Arjuna at the beginning of the *Anugītā*. The Divine Friend cannot repeat the teaching of the *Gītā* with the same words since it was the fruit of a yogic inspiration or “trance” (*yogayukta*). As Yaroslav Vassilkov indicates, the use of the term ‘yogayukta’ to refer to the mystical state in which Kṛṣṇa found himself on Kurukṣetra battlefield, has been translated and interpreted in various ways:

K. T. Telang rendered Kṛṣṇa's words ‘I was then yogayukta’ as ‘I was accompanied by my mystic power’. Arvind Sharma translates *yogayukta* as simply ‘inspired’. However, the word is most probably used here in the same sense as in the BhG itself: ‘I was then practising yoga’, ‘I was in the yogic introspective trance / meditation’ (Vassilkov 2005, 222)

In this trance-like state, Kṛṣṇa's *parrhesia* takes on a mystical dimension, unable to be repeated by Kṛṣṇa Himself using the same words. Not only does the disciple Arjuna remain silent and listen to the teacher's words, intervening only on certain occasions to ask pertinent questions, but in the course of this listening he is transformed thanks to the divine truth that comes to us in the form of a *parrhesiastic* conversation. Hence the importance we have attached to Arjuna's last words: “The delusion has vanished. I have regained Memory” (*naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā*; BG, 18.73).

Finally, in the second section of this paper, by comparing the use of memory made by the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Epicurean school, our intention has been to contribute to the comparative study of philosophy, reflecting common pedagogical methods that focus on different philosophical content and ideas. The memory to which both Epicurus and Kṛṣṇa invite us refers to teachings that involve very different beliefs. However, both philosophies seek to use these ideas to free humans from fear and provide them with a certain kind of mental tranquility. Furthermore, commitment to the truth and trust in the friend are common features in which both philosophies participate, although important differences arise as we investigate this friendly and transforming truth more closely. Certainly, many of these issues deserve thorough investigation, but we trust that this paper may contribute to the comparative study of the philosophy of the *Gītā* with other philosophies of Ancient Greece.

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