

Stoic "Common Notions" in Plotinus

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One of the more provocative hypotheses developed by Philip Merlan in his book *Monopsychism, Mysticism, and Metaconsciousness* is that Plotinus in the *Enneads* came close to abandoning "explicitly and entirely the theory of anamnesis in favor of memory, i.e. of unconscious inborn ideas"¹, and that in positing such a memory he was indebted to a similar revision in the Middle Platonist Albinus.² Merlan's thesis relies heavily on several passages in the *Enneads* where Plotinus reinterprets the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis in a manner consistent with his own postulate of the descended soul's incessant but unconscious intelligizing. This postulate allows Plotinus to embrace the doctrine of recollection without being forced thereby to accept the related doctrine of soul's pre-natal existence, for what the descended soul "remembers" of intelligible reality are not Plato's transcendent Forms, but certain immanent and innate ideas which, in some manner never fully explained by Merlan, represent the intelligible Forms implanted and ever active in the soul. Anamnesis, then, becomes the process of bringing to conscious awareness what the soul has always possessed, although on an unconscious level. Moreover, the principles underlying Plotinus' rethinking the traditional theory, Merlan asserts, can in large part be found in the *Didaskalikos* of Albinus, where he finds reference to two classes of intelligibles, the Platonic transcendent Ideas and the Stoic common notions (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι = soul's inborn ideas), as well as to two corresponding types of memory, the Platonic anamnesis and a special μνήμη associated with soul's embodiment.³ The φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι, like the special μνήμη of which

1. *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neo-Aristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague 1963), 74.

2. For his full discussion of this question, cf. *Ibid.*, 55-77.

3. Cf. especially *Ibid.*, 72f. As evidence of a tradition of reinterpretation of Plato's doctrine of recollection Merlan cites a similar distinction between memory and anamnesis in Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* I, XXIV 56-59, where "...quite obviously the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι are treated as alternative term to the term ideas (species)" (74). As to the question of Cicero's source, Merlan only denies that it could be either Antiochus or Posidonius. R.E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge 1937), 57f., *contra* Theiler, also rejects Antiochus in view of his adherence to Stoic sensationalism; cf. the analysis of Antiochus in J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca 1977), 94. On Cicero's general theory of common notions, see A.S. Pease, ed., *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum Libri Secundus and Tertius* (Cambridge, Mass. 1958), Vol. 1, 295ff. and 2, 579f.

they are the objects⁴, belong to the embodied soul, and as such are the immanent "doubles" of the Platonic transcendent Ideas, just as μνήμη duplicates the Platonic anamnesis. "Ideas are to anamnesis, what 'common notions' are to memory"⁵; hence memory of immanent inborn concepts virtually replaces anamnesis of transcendent Ideas. From such similarities Merlan concludes that we can infer a systematic if not an historical link between the two Platonists.⁶

Whatever shortcomings Merlan's treatment of Plotinian memory and anamnesis may have⁷, his suggestion of a doctrinal connection with Albinus merits careful consideration. His argument suffers, however, from his failure to address the crucial question of whether or not Plotinus followed Albinus in identifying his "unconscious inborn ideas", which he makes the objects of this memory, with the Stoic common notions, in spite of the very clear indications in the *Enneads* that Plotinus affirmed both the existence and validity of the latter.⁸ For if within the long tradition of criticism of Platonic anamnesis Plotinus' modification of the anamnesis doctrine can indeed be traced directly or indirectly to the *Didaskalikos*, then it would be difficult to believe that he could have ignored so critical a development as Albinus' alliance of Stoicism with Platonism. It is the purpose of the present paper to attempt to answer this question ignored by Merlan, first by examining those passages in the *Enneads* where Plotinus mentions the Stoic κοινὰ ἔννοια⁹ in order to determine the manner in which

4. Although Albinus does not explicitly affirm that the objects of this memory are φυσικὰ ἔννοια mentioned in *Didaskalikos* IV.8 as the standards of proof, that is clearly his intention. We need only cite as evidence the phrase ἀνακινεῖν τὰς φυσικὰς ἔννοιās, where ἀνακινεῖν is a reference to recollection (on this see below, p. 21).

5. *Ibid.*, 73. Merlan seems merely to assume that Albinus recognized the traditional form of anamnesis in addition to the special μνήμη, although there is no support for this in the text. The only account of anamnesis as such, in *Did.* XXV.3, fits perfectly his description of μνήμη and may be considered an elaboration of it (see also below, n. 31). The "doubling" of the anamnesis doctrine, which, as we shall see (below, n. 33), Merlan traces to Cicero, is found in Nemesius; cf. Merlan, 76, n. 2 and W. Jaeger, *Nemesios von Emesa. Quellenforschungen zum Neuplatonismus und seinen Anfängen bei Poseidonios* (Berlin 1914), 57ff.

6. *Ibid.*, 67.

7. Cf. the criticism of H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology. His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague 1971), 96, n. 25.

8. Although Merlan apparently finds reference to innate ideas in I.2.4.19ff. and IV.3.25.27ff., he never deals with the theory of common notions as such in Plotinus.

9. It should be emphasized that the Stoic κοινὰ ἔννοια hardly qualifies as technical terminology in the *Enneads*. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate in what follows, the fact that, as VI.5.1 in particular shows, Plotinus was

he interpreted the Stoic theory, and then by searching out any evidence in these passages that Plotinus, like Albinus, went beyond the Stoics in making common notions the objects of a memory duplicating — and virtually replacing — the Platonic anamnesis.

I will begin by arguing generally that Plotinian common notions are innate ideas and specifically that they are those innate ideas which Plotinus made the objects of his version of anamnesis. I will then show that in what he says about these innate ideas Plotinus appears to provide for two distinct levels of recollection and that the first of these levels — and not the second as suggested by Merlan — bears the marks of the tradition of interpretation, both of the anamnesis doctrine and of the theory of common notions, which is found in Albinus. The accumulated evidence, I believe, will entitle us to assert, with greater assurance than is warranted by Merlan's argument, the likelihood that Plotinus was to some extent dependent upon Albinus' interpretation, and will at the same time shed new light on the nature and extent of Plotinus' revision of Platonic anamnesis.

Before considering what is to be found in the *Enneads* we should look briefly at the postulates of the theory of common notions as presented by the Stoics, so that we might have a basis for comparison of the traditional doctrine with the accounts given by Albinus and Plotinus.¹⁰ The germ for the Stoic theory of common notions is the idea of the *consensus omnium* as a criterion of truth found in both Plato and Aristotle.¹¹ How, the Stoics asked, are we to explain the fact that there are certain notions to which all people in all

concerned to bring the Stoic theory into agreement with his own psychology is clear indication that it did occupy a place of at least some importance in his thought. Specifically, in those occasional passages at the beginning of treatises where he opts to express his concept of the intelligible *τύποι* or *ἀρχαί* in terms of the *consensus omnium*, Plotinus may well have been motivated by what had become conventional methodological practice (we might compare, for example, *Enn.* II.4.1, III.7.1, and VI.5.1 with Cicero *De Nat. Deor.* II. 13 and *Disp. Tusc.* I. 36, Alexander Aphrodisias *de fato* 165. 15, and Sallustius *De Deis et Mundo* 1-2, on which see R.B. Todd, "The Stoic Common Notions: A Re-examination and Reinterpretation", *Symbolae Osloenses* 48 (1973), n. 83). In such contexts he may have felt it proper or convenient to sacrifice his more specialized terminology to the popular idiom of his day.

10. For the purposes of this paper, it will be necessary to give only a general outline of the Stoic theory. A full treatment would of course have to account for the numerous difficulties and opposing interpretations, both ancient and modern, inspired by what is at the very least a complex doctrine (cf., however, notes 12 and 13 below).

11. Plato: *Laws* 886A; Aristotle: *Eth. Nic.* 1172b 36-1173a 1; *De Caelo* 270b 5-6; *Eth. Eud.* 1216b 28-30; cf. also *Met.* 982a 6-7 and 1005b 11-18. Todd, 61, notes that the notion of consensus first gained philosophical significance in Aristotle.

areas of the world give their unequivocal assent, unless we are to consider them untaught concepts natural to all men and possessing immediate conviction and unquestioned truth? For the old Stoa at least, these concepts, although natural (ἔμφυτοι ἔννοιαι, φυσικαὶ προλήψεις), were not innate ideas¹², but rather primitive adumbrations of knowledge (*inchoatae intelligentiae*)¹³ arising from basic observation and subsequently developed into full knowledge through reason. Yet no matter how rudimentary in content, such ἔννοιαι were absolutely certain and immutable, and the very foundation upon which all reasoning was built.¹⁴ Thus, as *semina scientiae*¹⁵, they fulfilled two functions: (1) as the irreducible and unanalyzable first principles of all philosophic investigation, and so, as Plutarch attests¹⁶, the Stoic answer to the problem posed in Plato's *Meno* of the seeming futility of scientific inquiry, and (2) as the "yardsticks" by which to measure the validity of the views of all philosophers¹⁷, since, according to Chrysippus, no proposition contradicting a common notion could be accepted as true.¹⁸ The

12. The point made by F.H. Sandbach, "ENNOIA and ΠΡΟΛΗΨΙΣ in the Stoic Theory of Knowledge", *CQ*, 24 (1930) (reprinted in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. A.A. Long [London 1971]), 48, that ἔμφυτος may mean "ingrown"; "ingrained", or "implanted", and so need not carry the sense of "inborn", is the most convincing argument against the claim that for the Old Stoa common notions were innate ideas, although he concedes that for Epictetus preconceptions were "inborn"; cf. E. Bréhier, *Chrysippe* (Paris 1910), 66f. I. Heinemann, *Poseidonios' metaphysische Schriften* II (Breslau 1928), 467f. has an interesting interpretation of Posidonius' position in this matter.

13. Cf. e.g. Cicero, *Acad. Post.* I, 41; also A. Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epictet* (Stuttgart 1894), 129f., Sandbach 46f.; Heinemann I, 107f. However, Todd, relying solely on a passage in Alexander of Aphrodisias (*de mixt.* 217.2-32 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [SVF] II 473, p. 154.23-155.24) finds within the theory of the Old Stoa a distinction between προλήψεις or φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι and κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, the latter being in his view not rudimentary notions, but generalizations based on προλήψεις; cf. especially 53f.

14. Cf. Bonhöffer's discussion of Chrysippus' definition of reason (λόγος) as ἐννοιῶν τιῶν καὶ προλήψεων ἄθροισμα, *Epictet und die Stoa Untersuchungen zur Stoischen Philosophie* (Stuttgart 1890), 206f.; also Sandbach 47 and Plutarch, *comm. not.* 1083c. On the practical application of this idea in Stoic theological arguments, see M. Schofield, "Preconception, Argument, and God", in M. Schofield, M. Burnyeat, J. Barnes, eds., *Doubt and Dogmatism. Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology* (Oxford 1980), 298ff.

15. For the expression *semina scientiae* or *semina virtutum*, see Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* III, 3; IV, 43; Seneca, *Ep.* 94, 29; 108, 8; 120, 4; *Ben.* IV, 6, 6.

16. *apud* Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaedon* p. 125, 7 ed. Finckh (frg. 215 Sandbach).

17. Cf. Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 225. On a similar principle in Epicurus, see Schofield, 296f.; Diogenes Laertes X 37-8.

18. Cf. Schofield, 296.

Stoics could therefore claim that man's ability to discover truth and attain wisdom was rooted in his possession of both common notions and the power of reason (*λόγος*, *ratio*), to develop such notions.¹⁹

Yet even the proponents of the theory of the *consensus omnium* had to acknowledge that there existed widespread disagreement concerning such basic issues as the nature of the gods, and such an admission forced both the Epicureans and Stoics either to concede that preconceptions could be tainted by false assumptions or to limit *ἔννοιαι* to only the most general of notions, thus allowing for the possibility of a divergence of opinion on more substantive ideas derived from them.²⁰ Some Stoics, for instance, held that while all fundamentally agree that the gods exist, there are many false ideas about their specific nature due to divergent customs and beliefs of different nations.²¹ Moreover, we have noted the view, particularly in later Stoicism, that what could accurately be considered common notions were not true concepts or full propositions, but inchoate generalizations and the mere seeds of knowledge from which wisdom was to grow. Sound reasoning, then, was needed to develop *ἔννοιαι* into knowledge and so to demonstrate the validity or invalidity of opinions arising from them. Nature has provided in the form of common notions only the capacity for wisdom; true knowledge comes from developing these notions through reason. Hence Epictetus' repeated assertions that philosophy "articulates" (*διαρθροῦν*) our preconceptions.²² In this way the Stoics could posit incontestable first principles of knowledge while at the same time affirming the dominant role of dialectic in philosophy.

With these features of the Stoic theory before us, we turn now to the *Enneads*. We are faced immediately with the problem of the almost complete lack of comprehensive treatment of the theory as such. What we find instead is a series of unelaborated references whose brevity suggests that Plotinus presumed his au-

19. Cf. Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik*, 128 for references in Epictetus to these two powers; also Schofield, 302.

Discussions of the influence of the Stoic theory on other later thinkers can be found in H. Binder, *Dio Chrysostomus und Posidonius. Quellenuntersuchungen zur Theologie des Dio von Prusa* (Borna-Leipzig 1905), 21ff.; W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin 1930), 38ff.; A.D. Nock, *Sallustius Concerning the Gods and the Universe* (Cambridge, 1926), xli and text I, 4-8 (p. 2n).

20. For Epicurus' view on this matter, cf. Diogenes Laertes X 123-4 and Schofield, 307. On Carneades' refutation of the Stoic *consensus omnium*, cf. Heinemann 106; see also Cicero, *Nat. D.*, II 12 and *Leg.* I 24ff.

21. Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* I 43.

22. Cf. Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 189 and Schofield, 307.

dience's familiarity with it. There is, however, one comparatively sustained discussion of what for Plotinus is the most basic of such notions. For what it tells us both of the relevance of the theory for Plotinus, as well as of the points of agreement and disagreement with the Stoic version, this passage is an apt point of departure in our attempt to reconstruct Plotinus' view of common notions in the *Enneads*. The passage in question is the introduction to the treatise VI.5:

That unity is wholly and integrally everywhere at once is a common notion [κοινή ἔννοια], whenever all men instinctively [κινούμενοι αὐτοφυῶς] say that the god in each of us is one and the same. And if no one inquired into the manner (in which this is true) nor wished to test their opinion by reason, they would accept this and, keeping it active in their understanding, would cease (from this inquiry), merging with that which is one and the same, and would not wish to be separated from this unity. This is the most certain principle of all [πάντων βεβαιωτάτη ἀρχή], to which, as it were, our souls give voice, not pieced together from particulars, but coming before the particulars, even before that principle which establishes that all things seek the good. For the latter is true if all things seek unity and are one and their (ultimate) effort is toward this unity (1.1-14).

It is clear from the opening lines that Plotinus adheres to two axioms of the Stoic doctrine of common notions: (1) that they constitute a *consensus omnium*²³ occurring naturally (we may compare αὐτοφυῶς with the Stoic ἔμφυτοι ἔννοιαι or φυσικαὶ πρόληψεις), and (2) that they are to be employed as the self-evident starting points (ἀρχή= the Stoic *principium*) of philosophic proofs.²⁴ Plotinus is most concerned here with the methodological problem of the proper ἀρχαί of philosophic inquiry. In the section immediately following (.2.7ff.) he insists that when dealing, as here, with pure Being, we make our starting points the intelligible principles (νοηταὶ ἀρχαί) which pertain to intelligible realities. The κοινή ἔννοια of unity's omnipresence is a proper first principle precisely because it is communicated to us through the language of the soul, by which Plotinus doubtless means nondiscursive cognition, and is most basic and certain. That he also gives to it a function corresponding to the Stoic conception of the ἔννοια as a measuring stick by which the validity of subsequent propositions and judgments

23. It will become clear in what follows that for Plotinus an ἔννοια is κοινή not only in this sense, but also as being universally applicable to experience and knowledge. On this distinction as it appears in Aristotle and Stoicism, see Todd, 54 and 61.

24. On the possible influence of Posidonius on VI.5.1, cf.; Theiler, 100.

can be tested, is strongly implied in chapters 1 and 2, particularly in the statement ending chapter 2 that when investigating Being we must refer back to its nature expressed in the *ἔννοια*.²⁵ A more definitive statement on this point comes in the later treatise *On Eternity and Time* (III.7.7) in an explanation of the procedure by which we are to analyze the concept of time:

Now if the blessed men of ancient times had said nothing about time, we should have to take eternity as our starting-point and link up our subsequent account of time with it, stating what we think about it and trying to adapt the opinion [δόξα] we express to the *ἔννοια* of time which we have.

In short, whatever δόξα about time we claim as valid must be measured against our preconceived *ἔννοια*²⁶ from which the opinion is derived. In the discussion that follows we find Plotinus applying this rule:

. . . for either time is movement, as it is called, or one might say that it is what is moved, or something belonging to movement, for to say that it is rest, or what is at rest, or something belonging to rest, would be quite remote from our *ἔννοια* of time, which is never in any way the same. (II.18-20)

Thus Plotinus would accept the Chrysippean claim that, insofar as the conviction of the κοινή *ἔννοια* is as immediate as that of sense perception, no proposition which contradicts a common notion can be accepted.

On the other hand the influence of the Stoic view of common notions as inarticulate and inchoate generalizations is perhaps to a certain extent evident in the passage quoted above (VI.5.1), where Plotinus speaks of those who find it necessary to test opinion (δόξαν) by reason (λόγῳ: 4-5), and elsewhere²⁷, for example the introduction to the treatise *On Matter* (II.4.1):

What is called "matter" is said to be some sort of "substrate" and "receptacle" of forms; this account is common [κοινόν

25. ἐπειδὴ πανταχοῦ τὸ τί ἐστὶν ἀρχή, καὶ τοῖς καλῶς ὀρισσαμένοις λέγεται καὶ τῶν συμβεβηκότων τὰ πολλὰ γινώσκεισθαι οἷς δὲ καὶ πάντα ἐν τῷ τί ἐστὶν ὑπάρχει, πολλῶν μᾶλλον ἐν τούτοις ἔχεσθαι δεῖ τούτου, καὶ εἰς τοῦτο βλεπτόν καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο πάντα ἀνενεκτέον (2.24ff.).

26. Plotinus, like other interpreters of the Stoic theory, was not bound by the strict terminology of the Stoa. Thus often in the *Enneads* *ἔννοια* alone = the Stoic κοινή *ἔννοια* (for a similar usage in Plutarch, cf. Todd, n. 88). In most cases it is clear from the context of its appearance when *ἔννοια* means a common notion. As for the passage here, as well as for its other occurrences in III.7, the *ἔννοια* of eternity or time must be interpreted in light of III.7.1.4, where Plotinus implies that this *ἔννοια* is intuitive (on this, see below, pp. 8f.).

27. See also III.2.1.1ff.; III.5.1.1ff.; .2.1ff.; III.7.1.4ff.

τινα . . . λόγον] to all those who have arrived at an ἔννοια of a nature of this kind, and as far as this they all go the same way. But they disagree as soon as they begin to pursue the further investigation into what this underlying nature is and how it is receptive and of what.

At first reading the purport of the passage seems to be this: the κοινή ἔννοια of matter is limited to the generalization that it is a kind of substrate and receptacle; insofar as this notion tells us nothing about the nature of matter, it is virtually useless in adjudicating such controversial assumptions as Plotinus' subsequent arguments are designed to address. Here and in similar passages we detect hints of the Stoic twofold method of justification, by self-evident ἔννοιαι and by discursive reasoning, in his assertions that demonstration (ἀπόδειξις or λόγος) must be brought to bear to judge disagreements about the meaning of common notions. Perhaps the clearest reference to this comes in the claim in chapter four of VI.5 that he has proved the omnipresence of the gods (1) by the fact that all who have an ἔννοια of them declare them to be everywhere (the *consensus omnium*), and (2) by the fact that reason (λόγος) also confirms this to be the case. Thus it would seem that Plotinus followed the Stoic tradition in holding that common notions, although in themselves irrefutable and so the criteria of subsequent reasoning, are "inarticulate" with regard to more specific philosophic questions.

Closer examination of these passages, however, gives us strong reason to reject a thoroughly Stoic interpretation. In III.7.1, an introduction which follows closely the format of VI.5.1 and II.4.1, Plotinus sets forth the *aporia* about the concepts of eternity and time by stating that we use these terms much too freely, as if we had a clear understanding of our notion (ἔννοια) of them. But problems arise when we try to "come near" the ἔννοια since in so doing we find conflicting opinions about them in ancient sources. It is significant that there is nothing here to suggest that Plotinus subscribed at all to the Stoic view of common notions as inarticulate or inchoate. Indeed, Plotinus' language points to a very different opinion, for the *aporia* is said to stem not from the nature of the ἔννοια, but from *our* inability, in some sense, to draw near it. The same is true of VI.5.1; there not only is λόγος not essential for the articulation of the common notion, it is, in fact, detrimental, preventing the proper activity of the ἔννοια in us as well as our identification with it. Plotinus clarifies his meaning in the following chapter: discursive reason, as a thing of parts, cannot comprehend intelligible, nonpartitive unity. So it is exactly the discursive mind's desire to demonstrate the truth of unity's omnipresence "by piecing together the particulars" that prevents

it from recognizing the immediate certainty of that truth. By contrast, if only the *ἔννοια* were active in our thought we would cease from all such activity and find rest in identity with the oneness we contemplate (6ff.). What these remarks represent is an inversion of the later Stoic view that common notions are inchoate and inarticulate. For Plotinus they are fully formed ideas and manifestations of a more direct contact with common truth than is afforded by *λόγος*. His appeals to *λόγος* or *ἀπόδειξις*, then, may be construed simply as resignation to the perceived fact that he is writing for those who reason discursively and have not "drawn close" to the *ἔννοια*.

The explanation for Plotinus' divergence from the Stoic doctrine is easily found. For the Stoics common notions were empirically derived, and so were "natural" only in the strict sense that they were untaught (*ἀδίδακτοι, ἀνεπιτεχνήτοι*) by custom or doctrine.²⁸ It is Plotinus' view, on the other hand, that the *κοινὴ ἔννοια* is an innate idea which to some degree operates within us before all experience and constitutes the internal dialogue of the soul (VI.5.1.8-12). It is the soul's own possession and as such is not to be sought from without. Thus Plotinus' statement that all people affirm this notion *ἀυτοφυῶς* may well be a direct criticism of the Stoic sense of that word, for clearly by a "natural" *ἔννοια* Plotinus means an idea which is *a priori* and known directly, or intuited, by the soul.

The precise nature of this intuition is implied in his criticism of our too liberal use of the terms eternity and time in III.7.1. Our uncritical employment of these concepts, he says there, stems from the erroneous belief that we have, as if "by comprehensive grasp of our notion of them" (*ὡσπερ ταῖς τῆς ἐννοίας ἀθρωπότεραις ἐπιβολαῖς*), a distinct experience of time and eternity in our souls. Now, we know that the phrase *ἄθροα ἐπιβολή* (and its synonym *προσβολή*) is part of the technical terminology of Hellenistic epistemology which in the *Enneads* consistently denotes the act of intuitive vision, the "complete view" of the whole nature of intelligible realities as opposed to the partial and imperfect comprehension of discursive reason.²⁹ What precisely, then, would constitute a "comprehensive view" of a common notion, and what is the "distinct experience" produced by it? The answer lies in an exhortation in V.5.10.8ff. regarding the proper manner by which we are to grasp the One:

28. Cf. Aetius, *Plac.* IV 11(= SVF II 28 15ff.)

29. For discussions of Plotinus' adaptation of this concept and its relation to his theory of intuition, cf. O. Becker, *Plotin und das Problem der geistigen Aneignung* (Berlin 1940), 14ff. and W. Beierwaltes, *Plotin. Über Ewigkeit und Zeit (Enneade III 7)* (Frankfurt am Main 1967), 58, n. 2, 83, and 276.

Who then could grasp its (sc. the Good's) power fully? If one could, how would he differ at all from it? Then the grasp must be partial? Rather, you who thrust toward it will do so completely [προσβαλεῖς μὲν ἀθρώως ὁ προσβάλλων], but you will not announce its fullness. If you could, you would be intellect intelligizing, and should you then meet with it, it would escape you, or rather you it. But whenever you see it, look at it entirely [ὅλον βλέπε].

To conceive (cf. the imperative ἐννόει: 10.2) the One is, then, to thrust our entire being toward its pure essence. In this as in other passages the Hellenistic ἀθρόα ἐπιβολή or προσβολή, in the sense of an immediate and comprehensive apprehension of the whole nature of a thing, becomes for Plotinus the intuitive vision of the essence of a thing, here the One, which strips away all elements foreign to its nature. The account of what is entailed in the mind's projection toward the One is couched in language typically reserved for description of intuitive vision: our concept must be pure and unmixed; we must try to grasp it in itself and not through those things which come after it; we must grasp it immediately in its fullness, for reflection will come later.

When viewed in this context the purport of III.7.1 becomes clear. The ἀθρόα ἐπιβολή of the concept of eternity and time would be the act of projecting oneself toward one's ἔννοια of it such that all alien features are abstracted and the mind focuses on their unalloyed natures in a clear, intuitive vision through which the soul is brought into the presence of a higher truth. Insofar as this involves a common notion the projection must be understood as an internalized act directed at immediate contact with or awareness of the innate "discourse of the soul". Perfect understanding requires the exclusive attention of the mind upon the essence of realities devoid of all extraneous qualification, and it is through our common notions, the soul's prediscursive internal dialogue, that we comprehend the pure nature of things.

So far, then, from Plotinus' description of common notions as the soul's internal "voice" which arises before experience, we can be certain that he regarded them as innate ideas. What we should like to know now is whether Plotinus identified the κοινὰ ἔννοια specifically with those innate ideas which, according to Merlan, he made the objects of anamnesis, and so the immanent doubles of the transcendent Forms, in his revision of that doctrine. For this we must turn to the two principal passages cited by Merlan as instances of Plotinus' revision.

(1) I.2.4.19ff. (a description of what the soul attains at the moment of its conversion (ἐπιστροφή):

What, then, is this? A sight and impression of what is seen, implanted and working in it (θέα καὶ τύπος τοῦ ὀφθέντος ἐντεθεῖς καὶ ἐνεργῶν), like the relationship between sight and its object. But did it not have the realities which it sees? Does it not recollect (ἀναμιμνήσκειται) them? It had them, but not active (ἐνεργοῦντα), lying apart and unilluminated; if they are to be illuminated and it is to know that they are present in it, it must thrust towards that which gives it light (δεῖ προσβαλεῖν τῷ φωτίζοντι).

(2) IV.3.25.27ff.:

We should not say that the intellections (of intellect) constitute memory. For they do not come (from without) to be grasped lest they escape. For in this way Intellect would be in fear of losing its essence. In the same way we cannot assert that soul remembers in the sense that we say soul remembers its innate ideas (συμφύτων) which it possesses; these ideas soul, as it comes into this (lower) sphere, possesses but has not exercised (ἔχειν καὶ μὴ ἐνεργεῖν κατ' αὐτά). The process of souls exercising the ideas they possess the ancient philosophers customarily call memory and recollection (μνήμην καὶ ἀνάμνησιν). So this is another form of memory, for time is not an attribute of what is here termed memory.

The point of both passages is that what Plotinus' predecessors have termed μνήμη or ἀνάμνησις is actually the timeless process by which soul "exercises" (ἐνεργεῖν) — brings to the level of conscious awareness — the Forms which it has always had within it. The vision of the Forms is at this point in soul's ascent an immediate intuition (προσβαλεῖν = the intuitive προσβολή) bringing the soul closer to Intellect and leading it to assimilation with the objects of its direct vision. In I.2.4.24 Plotinus further characterizes it as the result of soul's "adapting" (ἐφαρμοσαι) of its impressions (τύποι) of the Forms to the Forms themselves. If we compare these descriptions of the immanent Forms with what Plotinus says in VI.5.1-2 and III.7.1, there is little doubt that the συμφύτων or τύποι, both denoting the Forms soul's inherent "possessions", are indistinguishable from *a priori* common notions. First of all, the very term συμφύτων and the reference to the τύποι as "implanted" in the soul recall the statement in VI.5.1 that the κοινή ἔννοια of the omnipresence of unity comes to us αὐτοφωῶς and is part of soul's internal dialogue. That these ideas are exercised (ἐνεργεῖν) through the illumination of the intuitive προσβολή also reminds us of Plotinus' insistence in VI.5.1 that the κοινή ἔννοια must remain active in our understanding (ἐνεργοῦντες τοῦτο τῇ διανοίᾳ) if we are to go beyond the discursive λόγος and approach it. Secondly, it is likely that the προσβολή is precisely the intuitive vision to which

Plotinus alludes in III.7.1 when he refers to the ἀθρόαι ἐπιβολαὶ ἐννοίας of eternity and time or in when in V.5.10 he exhorts us to conceive (cf. ἐννόει) the Good through an ἀθρόα προσβολή. For in both cases the ἐπιβολή or προσβολή brings us closer to the content of the ἔννοια, just as in I.2.4 the προσβολή draws soul closer to the source of its τύποι, Intellect.

By far the most compelling evidence that Plotinus equated common notions specifically with the intelligible τύποι comes in VI.5.1-2. Blumenthal has shown convincingly that when Plotinus speaks of the intelligible first principles (ἀρχαί) in VI.5.2, he means precisely these impressions engendered by the images emanating from Intellect.³⁰ If so, then the κοινὴ ἔννοια of VI.5.1, as the πάντων βεβαιωτάτη ἀρχή, is the strongest and most fundamental of such τύποι, all other ἔννοιαι, such as the ἀρχή that all things seek the good (11f.), being impressions of less immediacy and clarity. This would explain the fact, which we shall consider in detail later, that in VI.5 and elsewhere in the *Enneads* Plotinus attributes to common notions exactly the same function as that of the intelligible τύποι, i.e. as the standards of all discursive reasoning.

We can therefore confirm that for Plotinus the Stoic common notions, as the *consensus omnium*, represent the unexercised Forms in the soul — the impressions (τύποι) of the Forms which have yet to be “adapted” to the Forms themselves.³¹ — and so are the

30. Blumenthal, 107. On common notions as intelligible ἀρχαί, see above, pp. 4ff.

31. It should be noted that with this interpretation of common notions, Plotinus could readily answer the question which so perplexed his Hellenistic predecessors: How is it possible that philosophers can derive from the same κοινὴ ἔννοια propositions or theories which conflict with and even contradict each other? For if common notions denote the “unharmonized” τύποι of the Forms in the soul, then such principles (ἔννοιαι or ἀρχαί) as the soul “proclaims” will not be fully illuminated, in the sense that the soul will not be fully conscious of their true meaning. As long as it has not been brought into accord with the intelligible Forms themselves, the *consensus omnium* may be subject to various and false analyses which Plotinus’ own arguments are meant to refute. Plotinus might then have reasoned that the various aporiai stemming from a κοινὴ ἔννοια are due to mistaken reasoning of the “unconverted” who are not fully conscious of the activity of the Forms within them and so have not brought the *consensus omnium* into accord with the intelligible Forms themselves. So, although common notions are intuitive, they lack sufficient clarity for the soul due to its unconverted state. In such cases Plotinus’ justification for the employment of discursive λόγοι would be the need to bring the τύποι into harmony with the intelligible Forms and to lead us to that state of conversion in which we are able to quit all discursive argument. Furthermore, this position could well be Plotinus’ reformulation of the later Stoic contention that common notions are “inarticulate”. For while Plotinus might well concede, on his own interpretation, that they are merely

proper objects of Plotinian "anamnesis" as described in I.2.4 and IV.3.25. We now understand precisely in what manner, as Merlan asserts, they are the duplicates of the intelligible Forms. Most importantly, (1) as the soul's innate ideas and (2) as the immanent doubles of the transcendent Forms which are the objects of the soul's "recollection", such notions bear a remarkable resemblance to Albinus' φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι.

Yet if we are right in so interpreting the Plotinian common notion, we are faced with a *prima facie* dilemma which forces us to reconsider the entire matter of Plotinus' revision of anamnesis. At a number of points in the *Enneads* we are told that we can "arrive at" ἔννοιαι of higher realities by the mediate method of envisioning these prototypes in their material images.³² The immediate problem is to reconcile these apparent references to ἔννοιαι as *a posteriori* concepts with Plotinus' position that such notions are innate and fully developed prior to all experience. For it is certainly not the case that in such contexts Plotinus is dealing with concepts of a lower order. The ἔννοιαι to which he refers are, for example, the concepts of the coming-to-be of intelligibles, of the World Soul, and of time; in one instance (VI.9.5.38) the "partless notion" (ἔννοια ἀμέριστος) of the One which he says helps the soul to achieve unity is hardly distinguishable from the intuitive κοινή ἔννοια of unity described in very similar terms in VI.5.1. The solution would appear to lie in the purpose of Plotinus' method of envisioning the archetypal intelligibles in their images in space and time.³³ To return to III.7.1, Plotinus, after denying that we have a clear ἔννοια of eternity and time and deciding to analyze both concepts thoroughly, proposes to begin his examination with eternity, since contemplation of this paradigm will bring to light

the *seminae scientiae*, he would deny that this is to be explained by the inchoateness of the notions themselves, maintaining rather that, due to the condition of our unconverted souls, we are not aware of the activity within us of the Forms of which such notions are the expressions.

32. The One we necessarily designate ἕν, wishing both to lead ourselves to a partless concept of it (εἰς ἔννοιαν ἀμέριστον ἀγοντες) by revealing its nature to each other through this name, and to unify the soul (VI.9.5.38); by positing, for the sake of clarity, the image of lines emanating from one center, our argument leads us to a concept (εἰς ἔννοιαν . . . ἄγειν) of the coming-to-be of multiple intelligibles from the One (VI.5.5.1ff.); the universe, whether thought of as in motion or at rest, is well suited to give a concept (καλῶς ἂν εἶχεν εἰς ἔννοιαν) of the World Soul (II.9.17.14); we can form a concept of time (εἰς ἔννοιαν) from observation of something which manifests order (III.7.13.5). Cf. also II.4.1 (ὄσοι εἰς ἔννοιαν ἦλθον) and I.8.3.13.

33. At times this method is called ἀναλογία (VI.5.5.22; VI.9.5.45). On Plotinus' use of analogy, cf. M. de Gandillac, *La Sagesse de Plotin* (Paris 1952), 149ff.

the nature of its image, time. But one might also undertake the reverse procedure, beginning the investigation with time and ascending to the intelligible world to contemplate its archetype. The latter process he terms ascent "by recollection" (κατὰ ἀνάμνησιν: 1.22). We may assume that what he says here applies equally to all such arguments from likeness, and so surmise that when Plotinus refers to the possibility of arriving at common notions of intelligible truths by the same process, he has in mind ascent by recollection of those notions. It is important to remember that in III.7.1 this method of ascent is espoused because we cannot "get near" our ἔννοια of eternity and time by the intuitive ἀθρόα ἐπιβολή. Presumably Plotinus has in mind those whom he describes in VI.5.1 as questioning common notions by bringing discursive reasoning to bear on them, and who thus are not immediately aware of the activity of the ἔννοια of intelligible realities within them, but must "remember" them by examining their images.

But how, then, are we to reconcile this account of recollection with that presented in I.2.4 and IV.3.25, according to which anamnesis is the intuitive "exercising" of immanent Forms? Here again proper understanding of the role of intelligible τύποι is crucial. We may compare Plotinus' discussion of the τύποι of the Forms in the soul in I.2.4 with his view, stated in a number of passages³⁴, of the function of soul's faculty of understanding (διάνοια), which is to adapt (ἐφαρμόζειν) the images (φαντάσματα) of sense experience with the intelligible impressions (τύποι) imparted to soul by Intellect. Such adaptation, he says in V.3.2.13, is what we would term the recollection of the soul (ὃ δὴ καὶ ἀναμνήσεις φαίμεν ἄν τῆς ψυχῆς εἶναι).³⁵ From what he says here and in V.3.3.1ff., it becomes clear that in this context he regards anamnesis as the process whereby soul exercises the intelligible truths it possesses by applying them as standards of judgment to its experience. There is thus good reason to identify it with the method of ascent by recollection (κατὰ ἀνάμνησιν) according to which we grasp the nature of a thing by contemplating its likeness to its intelligible paradigm. In I.2.4, however, Plotinus is speaking of a higher level of adaptation whereby soul, in a state of complete introversion, brings the intelligible τύποι into accord with the Forms them-

34. On Plotinus' notion of ἐφαρμογή, cf. I.6.3.1ff.; I.1.9.15ff.; V.1.3.13, .11.1ff.; VI.7.6.2ff.; also Blumenthal, 102ff. This is much like Epictetus' ἐφαρμογή of articulated common notions to experienced events; cf. Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 191f.

35. The example in V.3.3.1ff. indicates that this is not ordinary recollection of events, but involves a judgment which exceeds the limits of simple memory. In I.6.2 Plotinus shows clearly that in this context he is thinking in terms of Platonic anamnesis, although of course what soul remembers are "itself and its possessions" (ἀναμνησεται ἑαυτῆς καὶ τῶν ἑαυτῆς).

selves, so that this strictly speaking cannot be anamnesis in sense given in V.3.2 (and III.7.1), since, as Plotinus stresses there (15f.), dianoetic anamnesis does not involve the kind of self-knowledge implied here. Yet, inasmuch as the intuition of I.2.4 is also a kind of adaptation which in form closely resembles the dianoetic adaptation of images to intelligible impressions, Plotinus might well regard it as a type of μνήμη, although one outside of time. And so he seems to have done in IV.3.25.27ff.

Thus Plotinus apparently recognized the possibility of two levels of anamnesis, one the adaptation of perceptual representations to intelligible impressions associated with διάνοια and the other a higher adaptation of intelligible impressions to intelligible realities³⁶, and in both cases the objects of recollection are ideas or impressions originating in Intellect but immanent to soul. If we accept, as it seems we must, that these συμφύτα or intelligible τύποι are equivalent to the Stoic common notions, then we can understand how Plotinus could have conceived the έννοιαι as the objects of anamnesis at each of its stages. The first stage of recollection is that at which soul, through its faculty of understanding, begins to exercise its έννοια, or immanent impression of an intelligible Form, by employing it as a standard for interpreting its experience, thereby "adapting" it to its sensate impressions. This is equivalent to the ascent from images (the φαντάσματα) to paradigms (the τύποι of the Forms). Then, in its intuitive "recollection" at the moment of conversion as explained in I.2.4, the fully introspective soul further adapts this τύπος or έννοια to the Form itself, realizing then how the former agrees with the latter and thus acknowledging the impression of that Form within it as its possession binding it to the intelligible world. Again it is important to remember that at both levels anamnesis is not recollection of knowledge lost in soul's descent, but an awareness of what has always been within it.

That Plotinus conceived of two distinct stages of recollection bears directly on the larger question of the possible influence of Albinus on the *Enneads*. For if we follow Merlan's thinking, it will be obvious that the anamnesis associated with the understanding (διάνοια) does not represent that revision of the doctrine of which, he believes, Albinus' μνήμη is the systematic forerunner. We have seen that Merlan concentrates solely on those passages in the *Enneads* where Plotinus recasts Plato's doctrine in terms of his own theory of the soul's constant but unconscious intelligizing, so that there recollection becomes soul's intuitive awareness

36. For a very similar analysis of these separate moments of the recollective act, cf. E.W. Warren, "Memory in Plotinus", *CQ*, m.s. 15,n.2 (1965), 256ff.

of ideas which have always been active in it. Yet if we examine more closely Albinus' own formulation of the doctrine, we shall find that in content and language it has much more in common with Plotinus' dianoetic anamnesis, or the "ascent by recollection" rooted in sense experience and discursive reason, than with this intuitive enlightenment which is completely internalized and timeless.

Albinus distinguishes two types of intellection, one occurring before, and the other after soul's embodiment.³⁷ The first of these is νόσις proper, its objects being Plato's transcendent Forms (τὰ νοητά or ἰδέαι). When soul enters body this intellection becomes φυσικὴ ἔννοια which is stored up in the soul and has as its objects certain innate standards of reasoning (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι).³⁸ The φυσικὴ ἔννοια, he says, is at times called by Plato, among other names, memory (μνήμη). Now, we know from what Albinus says elsewhere (1) that by μνήμη he means the process through which we recollect knowledge forgotten in embodiment by reasoning from the small αἰθρυγμάτα or partitive objects of sense, thus arriving at general ἔννοιαι³⁹, and (2) that these φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι or standards of reasoning are the Stoic common notions.⁴⁰

The general agreement of this formulation with Plotinus' dianoetic anamnesis is clear. In the first place, in both versions recollection takes place in time and involves discursive reasoning.⁴¹ Moreover, both are associated with the rational progression from particulars to universals which involves the abstraction of immanent forms from matter. That Albinus' μνήμη entails such abstraction is clearly implied by his statement that the forms in

37. *Didaskalikos* IV 6-7 (pp. 17-19 Louis).

38. On the two levels of intellection in Albinus, cf. IV.6 (p. 17 Louis): Νόσις δ' ἐστὶ νοῦ ἐνέργεια θεωροῦντος τὰ πρῶτα νοητά. αὕτη διττὴ ἔοικεν εἶναι, ἢ μὲν πρὸ τοῦ ἐν τῷδε τῷ σώματι γενέσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν. θεωρούσης αὐτῆς τὰ νοητά. ἢ δὲ μετὰ τὸ ἐμβιβασθῆναι εἰς τόδε τὸ σῶμα; IV.7 (p. 19 Louis): καὶ νόσις ἔσται διττὴ, ἢ μὲν τῶν πρώτων, ἢ δὲ τῶν δευτέρων.

39. XXV 3 (p. 119 Louis): ἀναμνηστικῶς οὖν νοοῦμεν ἀπὸ μικρῶν αἰθρυγμάτων, ἀπὸ τινων κατὰ μέρος ὑποπεσόντων ἀναμνησκόμενοι τῶν πάλαι ἐγνωσμένων. ὧν λήθην ἐλάβομεν ἐνσωματωθέντες. That this for Albinus satisfactorily answers the question πῶς ἂν τὸ ἀρχικὸν εἶναι αἰ [sc. φυσικαὶ] ἔννοιαι, shows that anamnesis and the μνήμη of IV.6 are one and the same.

40. Albinus' statement in IV.8 (p. 21 Louis) that τῷ . . . ἔχειν ἔννοιαν φυσικὴν καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ τῷ λόγῳ ψρώμενοι καὶ ἀναφέροντες ἐπὶ τὰς φυσικὰς ἔννοιαι ὡς ἐπὶ μέτρα τινὰ ὀρισμένα κρίνομεν. . . , reveals unmistakably the Stoic influence. On this passage see below, pp. 21ff.

41. Albinus' φυσικὴ ἔννοια is a discursive form of νόσις, although to a certain extent intuitive insight is involved; cf. Merlan, 69, on *Did.* IV 7.

and inseparable from matter are the objects of the φυσικὴ ἔννοια.⁴² Similarly, according to *Enn.* I.6.3.6ff., in dianoetic anamnesis soul adapts sensory images to the intelligible τύποι by uniting the dispersed inner forms of things, isolating them from their external mass of matter, and then, having internalized them, recognizing that they agree with its own impression of the intelligible Forms.

But there is more specific evidence of agreement in the terminology employed by Plotinus. We turn first to a passage which not only strongly suggests a connection between anamnesis and common notions in the context of what is purported to be an interpretation of Plato's thought, but also provides a significant verbal parallel to Albinus. In VI.6.4 Plotinus puzzles over two contradictory accounts in Plato of the manner in which we arrive at the idea of number. In the first of these Plato considers number to be an inference from observation of discrete entities whereby the mind, in moving from one object to another, naturally counts them. Yet elsewhere Plato reverses himself in saying that number is an intelligible reality in itself: intelligible number does not arise in the soul as it counts; rather the soul "stirs up" in itself the notion of number from the variations in perceived objects (ἀνακινεῖσθαι ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἐκ τῆς περὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ παραλλαγῆς τὴν ἔννοιαν τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ: 23f.).

Although in *Timaeus* 39B 6-C 1 and 47A 4-6, the discussions of Number to which Plotinus here alludes, Plato makes no mention of recollection⁴³, there can be little doubt that by this "stirring up" of the immanent ἔννοια of number Plotinus means anamnesis. In the nearly contemporary treatise IV.4.5 Plotinus employs the same term in exactly this sense: fully descended souls can stir up their memory (ἀνακινήσουσι τὴν μνήμην) of the same experiences as those remembered by souls inhabiting the celestial sphere. It is then plausible to construe the phrase ἀνακινεῖσθαι τὴν ἔννοιαν τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ in VI.6.4 as the awakening of the μνήμη of the fully descended soul's vision of intelligible number which it enjoyed when among the Forms. And insofar as this memory is stimulated by perception, clearly we have to do with dianoetic anamnesis of a common notion. When seen in this context Plotinus' use of the phrase closely parallels that of Albinus. In *Did.* V.7 Albinus defines inference (ἐπαγωγή) as follows:

42. See Merlan, 68f.

43. In Plato's words, our observation of night, day, and of the revolving months and years has "given" (ἔδοσαν) us our ἔννοια of time (*Tim.* 47A 9). It is, of course, part of my argument that, in reinterpreting this as an act of recollection, Plotinus construes the term ἔννοια according to the technical sense it assumed from the time of early Stoicism.

Induction is the whole system of reasoning which passes from similar to similar or from particulars to universals. Induction is most useful for stirring up the innate ideas (εἰς τὸ ἀνακινεῖν τὰς φυσικὰς ἐννοίας).

It will be recalled that according to Albinus Plato used μνημὴ to mean the recollection of innate ideas, so that τὸ ἀνακινεῖν τὰς φυσικὰς ἐννοίας must denote soul's ἀνάμνησις of its precorporeal existence by a process of induction resembling Plotinus' method of reasoning from images to paradeigms. It is likely, then, that this aspect of Albinus' thought anticipates Plotinus' association of the Stoic common notions with a special memory of the descended soul which is awakened by the mind's recognition of the likenesses to intelligible realities exhibited by the objects of sense.⁴⁴

Furthermore, in the *Enneads* it is exclusively within the context of dianoetic anamnesis that the intelligible τύποι are said to be the standards according to which we make rational judgments from sense experience⁴⁵; in exactly the same way Albinus considers the φυσικαὶ ἐννοιαὶ to be the standards of judgment insofar as they constitute soul's μνήμη of its precorporeal existence. Here we once again find close verbal parallels⁴⁶:

Did. IV. Τῷ γὰρ ἔχειν ἐννοίαν φυσικὴν καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ τῷ λόγῳ χρώμενοι καὶ ἀναφέροντες ἐπὶ τὰς φυσικὰς ἐννοίας ὡς ἐπὶ μέτρα τινὰ ὠρισμένα κρίνομεν, εἴτε οὕτως ἔχει τάδε τινά, εἴτε καὶ ἑτέρως.

Enn. I.6.3.1-5: . . . τάχα δὲ καὶ αὕτη [sc. ψυχῆ] λέγει συναρμοττουσα [sc. τὸ καλὸν σῶμα] τῷ παρ' αὐτῆ εἶδει κάκεινω πρὸς τὴν κρίσιν χρωμένη ὡσπερ κανόνι τοῦ εὐθέως. (Cf. V.3.3.8-9: κανόνα ἔχουσα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ παρ' αὐτῆ)

Certainly in I.6.3 τῷ παρ' αὐτῆ εἶδει (= intelligible τύπος) is

44. Porphyry (*Ad Marc.* X. 19ff.) understands Plato's theory of ascent from sensibles to intelligibles as a process of unifying inborn notions (συνάγωγος δ' ἄν καὶ ἐνίξοις τὰς ἐμφύτους ἐννοίας καὶ διαρθρῶν συγκεχυμένας καὶ εἰς φῶς ἔλκειν ἐσκοτισμένας πειρωμένην). On his version of the Stoic "articulation" of common notions, see the discussion of W. Rötscher, *Porphyrios Πρὸς Μαρκελλαν, Philosophia Antiqua* Vol. XV (Leiden 1969), 76f.

45. Cf. also V.3.4.16f. and see M. Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V.1 On the Three Principal Hypostases* (Oxford 1985), 229ff. Blumenthal, 106f., notes that such impressions also serve as standards for "more general deliberations" about intelligible truths.

46. These passages echo the technical terminology of Hellenistic philosophy; cf. Epicurus, *Men.* 129 (p. 86 Bailey) (ἐπὶ ταύτην [sc. ἡδονὴν] κατανωόμεν ὡς κανόνι τῷ πάθει πᾶν ἀγαθὸν κρίνοντες) and Epictetus, *Disc.* II, 13 (. . . καὶ εὐρεσις κανόνος τινός οἶον ἐπὶ βαρῶν τὸν ζυγὸν εὐρομεν. οἶον ἐπὶ εὐθέων καὶ στρεβλῶν τὴν στάθμην).

what Plotinus means by a common notion. For it cannot be mere coincidence that in the one passage where, as we have noted⁴⁷, Plotinus most certainly attributes to common notions their function as standards of philosophic reasoning, he expresses it in the same technical terminology of the "adaptation" of a discursive belief to the soul's internal *ἔννοιαι*:

Now if the blessed men of ancient times had said nothing about time, we should have to take eternity as our starting-point and link up our subsequent account of time with it, stating what we think about it and trying to adapt the opinion we express to the notion of time which we have (. . . *πειρωμένους τῇ ἐννοίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἣν κεκτήμεθα ἐφαρμόζειν τὴν λεγομένην ὑφ' ἡμῶν δόξαν*: III.7.7.14f.).

We could hardly hope for a clearer illustration of the extent to which the role of the Plotinian common notion in dianoetic anamnesis matches that of Albinus' *φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι* in his special *μνήμη*. At the same time it should be emphasized again that Plotinus seems to have gone further than Albinus in making such innate ideas the objects of a higher, intuitive anamnesis as well.

We may conclude that the treatment of the Stoic common notions in the *Enneads* lends only qualified support to Merlan's argument for Plotinus' indebtedness to Albinus' anamnesis doctrine. On the one hand the likelihood that Plotinus was influenced to some extent by the version of the *Didaskalikos* has been demonstrated by a number of observations: (1) there is compelling evidence that Plotinus identified *κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι* with soul's inherent and intuitive ideas and that these ideas, rather than the Platonic Forms, are what the soul remembers in anamnesis; (2) at one level of anamnesis the innate ideas are recalled by a method of reasoning from particulars to universals which involves abstraction of immanent forms from matter; (3) the intelligible Forms are in direct relation to the innate ideas as their source or cause⁴⁸, for, as impressions of the transcendent Forms implanted in the mind, the *κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι* are manifestations of soul's immediate link with intelligible truths; (4) the innate ideas serve as the criteria by which the validity of discursive judgment is measured. But these points of contact prove a connection with an entirely different level of anamnesis than that suggested by Merlan. For Merlan failed to see that Plotinus' concept of a higher, timeless memory, far from

47. See above, pp. 5f.

48. In the case of Albinus, we may infer that at the moment when, upon soul's embodiment, the higher intellection becomes the *φυσικὴ ἔννοια* at the same time the objects of the former, the *ιδέαι*, correspondingly become the objects of the latter, the *φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι*.

being in the tradition of the Albinian μνημή, represents a significant advance upon the Middle Platonism of Albinus. Indeed, we may infer that the reference to οἱ παλαιοί in IV.3.25.31-33 is criticism of those — and he may here have had in mind, among others, specifically Albinus — who had confused temporal anamnesis with its atemporal counterpart and whose versions of the doctrine actually corresponded to a lower act of διάνοια.

Moreover, Albinus' emphasis on the inferior status of descended soul's νόησις would in turn explain why we find him in agreement with Stoic tradition in regarding the φυσικὴ ἔννοια as merely a simple knowledge (ἐπιστήμη ἀπλή) from which arises the φυσικὸς καὶ ἐπιστημονικὸς λόγος, natural or scientific reason.⁴⁹ Hence Plotinus would have had principally the same objections to this facet of Albinus' interpretation of common notions as he apparently had to the Stoic theory. Although we find general agreement concerning the derivation of innate ideas from the transcendent Forms, Albinus' adherence to the original view of anamnesis as the recapturing of knowledge lost through soul's embodiment, as well as to the corollary notion that anamnesis is exclusively a rational ascent from particulars to universals, seems to have led him to accept unquestioningly the Stoic position that such ideas, although inviolable standards of judgement, are inchoate principles of the mind from which reasoned concepts originate. By contrast, Plotinus' view that common notions are fully developed and ever present to soul (i.e. equivalent to the intelligible τύποι) is in effect the theoretical underpinning of his theory of an entirely intuitive "anamnesis".⁵⁰ So, while Merlan is justified in calling our attention to the link between the two Platonists in their respective revisions of the doctrine of anamnesis, we must still question his conclusion that Plotinus' thought is predominantly derivative.⁵¹

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49. Cf. *Did.* IV. 6-7 (pp. 17-19 Louis).

50. Thus although both Plotinus and Albinus maintain that the rules of philosophic justification require the employment of λόγος to elaborate common notions, the epistemological foundations on which each bases this claim are quite different, since for Plotinus the need for discursive reasoning is due to the condition of the unconverted soul rather than to any imperfection in the ἔννοια itself.

51. For his strongest statement on this matter, cf. Merlan, 77.