CHAPTER 17

Plotinus' "Reverse" Platonism: A Deleuzian Response to the Problem of Emanation Imagery

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The concept of emanation is central to Plotinus' ontology, appearing throughout the *Enneads*. It has, however, been historically difficult for modern interpreters to grasp, due to the often vague, metaphorical language with which Plotinus discusses it. As far back as 1937, A. H. Armstrong sums up the state of research by stating that "the difficulty is not so much to discover what Plotinus meant by 'emanation' [. . .] The difficulty is to see what the precise philosophical meaning of this conception is."[1] Most scholars, he claims, acknowledge this difficulty but do not attempt any serious resolution of it. In the intervening decades, there have been surprisingly few attempts to address this problem directly. Lloyd Gerson has argued that Plotinus' metaphysics is not truly emanationist at all, but is more accurately labeled "instrumental creationism," the qualification "instrumental" being necessary to maintain the simplicity of the One – the ultimate source of all things – in Gerson's analysis. But even Gerson acknowledges that this description is only acceptable "if it is allowed that instrumental creationism is a legitimate species of creationism." If not, "then Plotinus' metaphysics is not accurately called creationist. But it is not emanationist either. I do not have a convenient label to offer for this alternative."[2] As we will see momentarily, there is good reason to doubt whether Plotinus' metaphysics is emanationist in the usual sense of the word. Rather than attempting to stretch the notion of creationism or of emanationism far enough to accommodate the system presented in the *Enneads*, I would like to suggest a new context within which to understand it, namely the ontology of Gilles Deleuze. While this may at first seem like an arbitrary combination of two incompatible philosophers, I hope to show that there are certain aspects of Deleuze's ontology, such as its emphasis on difference, decentralization, and

generativity, that make it effective as a tool for rethinking Plotinus' system. While Deleuze's rejection of Platonism is clear from even the most cursory reading of his work, I believe his thought can nonetheless be fruitfully applied to those aspects of Plotinus' system, such as emanation, which deviate from the thought of Plato.

The doctrine of emanation can be seen as a response to the central ontological question, posed by Plotinus in *On the Three Primary Hypostases*, of "how from the One [. . .] anything else, whether a multiplicity or a dyad or a number, came into existence, and why it did not on the contrary remain by itself, but such a great multiplicity flowed [ἐξερρύη] from it as that which is seen to exist in beings."[3] This "flowing" gives rise to the lower hypostases, Intellect and Soul, as well as the realm of Nature and the individual objects within it. As Armstrong points out, there is no single Greek word or phrase which is translated as "emanation," but rather a collection of diverse metaphorical descriptions meant to illustrate the process. The language of "flowing" and "overflowing" is often used to describe emanation, as in *On the Origin and Order of the Beings Which Come After the First*: "This, we might say, is the first act of generation: the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows [ὑπερερρύν], as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself."[4] Along with this, Plotinus often uses the language of radiation, and the familiar images of the circle and the sun, to describe the relation of the lower hypostases to the One. In *On the Primal Good*, for example, while describing the manner in which all things are directed toward the One or Good, he states that the Good

> must stay still, and all things turn back to it, as a circle does to the centre from which all the radii come. The sun, too, is an example, since it is like a centre in relation to the light which comes from it and depends on it; for the light is everywhere with it and is not cut off from it.[5]

On one level, these metaphors are not difficult to understand: emanation is an outpouring of some sort, from a single, central source to a multiplicity of individual objects. However, if we pause for a moment to consider what Plotinus says about the nature of the One, the descriptions above become less satisfying, for it becomes difficult to see how anything could ever flow, radiate, or grow out of it. To begin with, the One is not an intellect, as one might expect of the source of all things. Plotinus states that "the Good must be simple and without need, it will not need thinking [νοεῖν]; but what it has no need of will not be present with it."[6] Furthermore, the One or Good is not to be identified with any thing of this world, or with the totality of things in the world. While these things are, in a sense, "in" Intellect – the realm of Being – they are not in the One. As Plotinus states in *On the Three Primary Hypostases*:

> God is not one of all things; for this is how all things come from him, because he is not confined by any shape . . . One is one alone: if he was all things, he would be numbered among beings. For this reason that one is none of the things in Intellect, but all things come from him.[7]

In addition, as mentioned above, the One is absolutely simple, "for if it is not to be simple, outside all coincidence and composition, it could not be a first principle."[8] Plotinus also frequently stresses that the One "stays still," that it "must not be the Good by activity or thought, but by reason of its very abiding. For because it is 'beyond being,' it transcends activity and transcends mind and thought."[9] We thus have the paradox of a first principle which is prior to thought, motion, differentiation, and multiplicity of any sort, which is perfect and complete in itself, but from which multiplicity nonetheless flows or emanates. In what is perhaps an attempt to address this issue, Plotinus states that "nothing can come from [the One] except that which is next greatest after it,"[10] and also next in simplicity, stillness, etc.: namely, Intellect. All subsequent created things, in which ever greater degrees of complexity and motion are manifested, thus flow only indirectly from the One. Nonetheless, the question of how anything at all issues from it remains unanswered.

Plotinus seems to be aware of this paradox, for at certain points he indicates that his emanationist metaphors are not entirely accurate. Most significantly, through much of *On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole*,[11] a two-part treatise comprising texts VI.4 and VI.5 in the *Enneads*, he seems to reject emanationism outright. At one point, for instance, while attempting to explain the unity of the intelligible, he asks us to imagine a small, luminous body placed inside a larger transparent sphere. He goes on to argue that

> since the light does not come from the small bodily bulk [. . .] suppose that someone took away the bulk of the body but kept the power of the light, would you still say the light was somewhere, or would it be equally present over the whole outer sphere? You will no longer rest in your thought on the place where it was before [. . .] but you will be puzzled and put in amazement when, fixing your gaze now here and now there in the spherical body, you yourself perceive the light.[12]

This striking passage leads Armstrong to claim that "we have no longer emanation but immanent omnipresence" and that "there seems to be a struggle between a doctrine of emanation and one of immanent omnipresence, which finally issues in an outspoken pantheism."[13] While I believe that the claim of pantheism is somewhat of an overstatement, I agree that this passage seems to indicate a rejection of emanationism. When the source is removed, it no longer makes sense to speak of light emanating from somewhere to somewhere else, spreading out or splitting into parts, or indeed to speak of any sort of motion

or process at all – the light just *is*, its existence known simply through the luminosity of the outer sphere.

This unusual language in VI.4–5 has been the subject of much scholarly attention. While most of the literature on this treatise concerns the lower hypostases, as opposed to the One, it provides an illuminating glimpse of how contemporary scholars have attempted to reconcile passages like the one quoted above with Plotinus' more general ontology. Dominic O'Meara, responding to an article by J. S. Lee, asserts that, inasmuch as the intelligible is immaterial and unextended, it is meaningless to speak of it being divided into parts, or of something participating in only a part of it.[14] Eyjólfur Emilsson extends this analysis to the realm of Soul, which he takes to be the main topic of VI.4–5, stating that "the whole of soul must presumably be present to whatever any soul is present to. In other words, the doctrine of the unity of soul is just a special case of the divisibility of being."[15] However, while these analyses are extremely helpful in clarifying the way in which Intellect or Soul can be present in their entirety to individuals, the authors take Plotinus' rejection of emanation imagery in these treatises as problematic primarily when we attempt to reconcile VI.4–5 with the rest of the *Enneads*. For example, Emilsson states that

> relating our treatises to other Plotinian works poses difficult questions. This is so because here Plotinus goes very far in rejecting the language of emanation and even that of reflection as mere metaphors liable to mislead us. As he depends on this sort of language elsewhere [. . .] our treatises may leave us somewhat baffled as to what to make of those other passages.[16]

While I agree that the language of VI.4–5 causes a special problem in developing a systematic understanding of Plotinus' ontology, I believe that it is possible to reconcile this apparent rejection of emanationism with Plotinus' somewhat reluctant acceptance of it elsewhere, while also providing at least a feasible answer to the question of how anything came from the One in the first place. While the One is admittedly not the subject of *On the Presence of Being Everywhere*, the question of how something indivisible, unmoving, and simple can give rise to anything applies with even greater force to the One than it does to the lower hypostases. Rather than relegating this treatise to special consideration apart from the rest of the *Enneads*, then, I instead take Plotinus' indication here that the One is a source by some means other than straightforward emanation as a starting point from which to rethink this key aspect of his ontology.

I now turn to the work of Gilles Deleuze, in particular his own rather distinctive ontology. Before I begin, a few caveats are in order. First, it barely needs to be said that the differences between the metaphysical commitments of Plotinus, a third-century Platonist, and Deleuze, a twentieth-century poststructuralist

and empiricist, are vast. Nonetheless, I believe that some of Deleuze's central ontological insights are applicable even within the extremely different context of Plotinus' work, for reasons that will hopefully become apparent shortly. In addition, it is impossible to do justice to Deleuze's ontology in a paper of this length, and thus my discussion of it will of necessity be limited to a brief overview of a few central concepts. While this will force me to pass over many important nuances in Deleuze's thought, I am hopeful that even this cursory examination will be sufficient to demonstrate that this line of inquiry holds promise. With that said, I will now turn to my overview of some of the most relevant Deleuzian notions.

For the purposes of this project, one of the key texts for consideration is *Difference and Repetition*, an important work from 1968 in which Deleuze presents a critique of what he considers to be an ontology of identity and representation, as seen in Plato, Hegel, and most of the other central thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition. In its place, he proposes an ontology of difference, comprised of three registers: the virtual, the intensive, and the actual. He emphasizes throughout that his distinguishing of the virtual from the actual does not imply that the virtual is a realm of mere possibility and is therefore less real than the actual. On the contrary, "The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual.*"[17] Elsewhere, he adds that "the only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real [. . .] The process [the virtual] undergoes is that of actualisation."[18] Furthermore, this actualization should not be thought of in the sense in which an acorn can be said to actualize its potential when it becomes an oak tree. Rather – using the language and theoretical framework of differential calculus – Deleuze characterizes actualization in terms of "differential elements" of a "virtual Idea" (or sometimes "virtual multiplicity"), which are actualized as they enter into "differential relations" determined by "singular points." To give an example that will hopefully help clarify this barrage of terminology, Deleuze describes the virtual Idea of language as "a virtual system of reciprocal connections between 'phonemes' which is incarnated in the actual terms and relations of diverse languages."[19] In other words, from the full continuum of possible human vocalizations, the "differential elements" – the phonemes – of a particular language are actualized through their mutually determinative "differential" relations within that language. This implies that an individual sound has no linguistic significance outside of a particular language in which it is actually used, and outside of the ways in which it is combined with other sounds into meaningful units of that language. The "singularities," or "pertinent peculiarities,"[20] of a given language are those points that define the structure and development of the language; for example, the changes in how a given set of vowel sounds is pronounced in a certain area can mark the birth and evolution of a new regional dialect of the language. Thus, while the capacity for the development of any and all languages is inherent within the virtual network of differentially connected phonemes, the process of actualization takes place only when actual

speakers begin to communicate with each other through meaningful combinations of these elements.

Units such as groups of speakers who share a dialect – which are intermediate in size and complexity between individual speakers and the set of all speakers of the language – are a good example of Deleuze's third ontological register, the intensive. The intensive is, in essence, the means by which the virtual is actualized.[21] It possesses certain quantifiable attributes, such as, in the case of a linguistic group, the geographical distribution of speakers, their socioeconomic conditions and average level of education, who they generally converse with, and so on, which determine how any given individual will speak. In summary, then, the virtual Idea of "language," while fully real, is only actualized in the individuals who speak a particular language, each uttering combinations of phonemes in a way that is determined by what Deleuze refers to as the "intensive" properties of his or her local linguistic community. He is borrowing a term from the sciences, where an intensive property is a property such as temperature, which is not divided when the substance that has the property is divided. Thus, if a gallon of 100-degree water is divided in half, the two resulting half-gallons are not each at 50 degrees. However, each half-gallon of water will weigh half as much as the gallon did; weight, in contrast to the intensiveness of temperature, is an extensive property. For Deleuze, intensiveness indicates an inherence of the property in the thing that is not present with extensive properties, which seem to be instilled in objects through some external mechanism. Put differently, having a certain weight is not a property of the water per se, but of the contingent fact that the water happens to be in a particular size container; when it is poured into two smaller containers, we think of the same overall volume of water as being comprised of units that weigh less than the previous one did. In an important sense, then, the water's weight is a property of the container, not the water itself.

It is worth taking a step back from our analysis here in order to better understand how Deleuze conceives of intensive connections among elements, which he sometimes refers to as "assemblages." They are, as he puts it, "rhizomatic." In botany, the term "rhizome" refers to "a horizontal, usually underground stem that often sends out roots and shoots from its nodes,"[22] as is the case with many common plants, such as ginger, bamboo, and several types of fern. Deleuze discusses the notion most thoroughly in the introductory chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, coauthored with Félix Guattari. There they contrast the rhizome with two other types of organic structure: (1) that of a typical tree, which has roots, a trunk, and branches. Deleuze and Guattari consider this "arborescent" organization to be an inadequate representation of the ontological structures they are exploring, because of its centralized and hierarchical nature. They also contrast the rhizome with (2) the radicle-system, where "radicle" refers to the first shoot that emerges from a seed and grows downward, providing an anchor for the developing roots. When a main root is severed or its growth is otherwise aborted, "an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development."[23]

While this radicle-system might seem like a less hierarchical alternative to the traditional, arborescent model, Deleuze and Guattari counter that "the root's unity subsists, as past or yet to come, as possible."[24] Thus the goal of the radicle, like that of the arborescent structure, is the establishment of a centralized root system, whenever that may become possible. In other words, the destruction of a control center does not result in a decentralized system, but rather in a system seeking to re-establish a central locus of power.

A rhizomatic structure is, by contrast, distributed and decentralized from the start and not in any way driven toward centralization. Deleuze and Guattari use the term to draw attention to several of the central characteristics around which they construct their decentralized, non-hierarchical ontology. In the opening pages of *A Thousand Plateaus*, they enumerate six "approximate characteristics of the rhizome"[25] that help to clarify their use of the term. The first two, considered together, are "principles of connection and heterogeneity," or the fact that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order."[26] Unlike the arborescent root structure, in which a path from one root tip to the next inevitably involves doubling back toward the center, the parts of the rhizome are connected laterally in a nonhierarchical network; there is no central point toward which every route must lead and each area in the rhizomatic structure has multiple connections with many others.

In addition, the rhizome is inherently multiple, unlike the radicle structure, in which multiple shoots sprout up from a destroyed or aborted central root with the "memory" of that root and the "intention" of establishing another centralized system. The figure of unity thus overshadows the arboreal and radicular systems in a way it does not in a rhizomatic arrangement, due to the latter's "principle of multiplicity." Put another way, there is no level or "plane" above that on which the connections of the rhizome exist, no external power directing those connections. They state that a rhizome "never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines" or connections, referring to this network of connections as a "plane of consistency of multiplicities" in which the multiplicities are defined based on the connections made and the trajectories or "lines of flight" through which those connections are established.[27] There is no internal organizing principle or essential structure to the rhizome, nothing that would inevitably point to another plane, or to a form, ideal, model, or central locus of control in which the pattern of connection is formed.

Fourth, the "principle of asignifying rupture" states that "a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines."[28] Unlike in the case of the radicle structure, in which a destroyed central root leads inevitably only to the appearance of radicles which mimic that now absent central root, when a rhizome is severed, new lateral connections appear on the plane of consistency, or old ones are reactivated and strengthened, in an unpredictable fashion. Again, there is no controlling

principle or model external to the plane of consistency itself, so there is nothing to impose the same response after each rupture. In other words, the rupture does not in any way point to a dimension supplementary to the plane of consistency, as the damaged radicle-system always points to the possibility of a central root. Finally, Deleuze and Guattari describe what they call "principles of cartography and decalcomania."[29] Decalcomania is the decorative technique of transferring patterns to pottery or to other materials. It is thus a mapping from one medium onto another, with results that can constitute quite a transformation from the original image, unlike a simple tracing, in which the result is meant to resemble the original as closely as possible. With respect to the rhizome, this means that there are multiple points of entry into the system, as in an animal's burrow; in addition, each time the animal enters the burrow, it has multiple possible paths from which it can choose. As opposed to the repetitive tracing of the same route, with the same goal, as in a daily commute to work or school, a journey from one point to another within a rhizomatic structure is open-ended and variable.

From this overview of the nature of rhizomatic connections, it should be clear that one of the primary features of Deleuze's ontology is its decentralized nature. Replacing an ontology of identity with one of difference entails, first and foremost, dispensing with the notion that individual members of a "species" – whether a biological species or something like a linguistic community – are united through a shared essence that exists on or points to a dimension external to the plane of consistency. Rather, the real, historical processes accounted for by Deleuze's intensive register allow for the actualization of the virtual in ways that differ from individual to individual. In place of a single, unifying essence, there are numerous distinct individuals, each related to others by the material conditions of their existence. Deleuze expresses this succinctly in *The Logic of Sense*, where he states that "To reverse Platonism is first and foremost to remove essences and to substitute events in their place."[30]

How could this "reversal" of Platonism possibly help us shed light on the ontology of such a thoroughly Platonic thinker as Plotinus? First and foremost, in the notion of actualization through increasing particularization and activity, it gives us a new way to conceive of how anything could arise from the One. Deleuze is very clear that "actualization comes about through differentiation, through divergent lines, and creates so many differences in kind by virtue of its own movement."[31] While Deleuze's virtual register does not possess the simplicity of Plotinus' One, Deleuze also does not characterize it in terms of difference in the same way as he does the intensive, which "includes the unequal in itself"[32] and "affirms difference,"[33] or the actual, in which heterogeneity is even more pronounced. Instead, the virtual is a field of differential connections among elements such as phonemes (in the case of the Idea of language), none of which are inherently preferred over any others. Manuel DeLanda explains this succinctly when he describes the virtual as "a *continuum* which yields, through progressive differentiation, all the discontinuous individuals that

populate the actual world."[34] One of main points upon which Deleuze insists across his ontological works is that the existence of these individuals is not the result of a process of creation or causality, at least not in the sense in which this requires a creator or cause outside the individual itself. Rather, he borrows the mathematical notion of a function or operator, such as addition, which is defined by the effect it has on operands, not by a particular result. As Deleuze puts it, "the quasi-cause does not create, it operates."[35] This focus on activity and differentiation is reminiscent of the language that Plotinus uses to speak of Soul's presence in individual bodies, explaining that Soul "leapt out, we might say, from the whole to a part, and actualises itself as a part in [the world]."[36] This particularization and separation takes place "not spatially, but [the soul] becomes each particular thing in its activity."[37]

Returning to the question of what to make of Plotinus' emanation imagery and his apparent abandonment of it in VI.4–5, the same principles of activity, differentiation, and decentralization apply. Plotinus conceives of Intellect's generation from the One in terms of action, but not in terms of causality in our typical understanding of the word. Rather, the intellect is generated through its own turning back or returning to contemplate the One: "How then does [the Good] generate Intellect? Because by its return to it it sees: and this seeing is Intellect."[38] This return to the Good is inherently generative; indeed, it is the motion by which Intellect constitutes itself by distinguishing itself from that from which it came. The initial moment of Plotinian ontology is thus defined by difference, by Intellect's divergence from the One even as it turns back toward the One in contemplation. From Intellect proceeds Soul, a "restlessly active nature" which is "always moving on to the 'next' and the 'after,' and what is not the same"[39] and which is actualized in individuals by means of yet further differentiation. Further differentiation leads to further generation, and while a simple, unmoving first principle is the ultimate source of all things, the process of generation is described throughout in terms of actualization and differentiation from it – the sort of continuum of "progressive differentiation" to which DeLanda refers. As Deleuze asserts, "actualization is creation."[40]

This should prompt us to think of generation not as a flowing outward from a source, but rather as a process of relational self-determination – a series of "differential relations" through which all created things are constituted, as with the process by which the virtual is actualized by means of the intensive. From here, we can answer the question of how the One gives rise to anything when it is simple, complete, and unmoving by asserting that it is not a motion or process initiated by the One that causes everything to "emanate" from it, but rather its difference from everything created. Beginning with Intellect, all generation is a turning toward the One and a self-constitution through differentiation from it. The One initiates no action, it simply "abides." As Plotinus frequently reminds us, "The One did not in some sort of way want Intellect to come into being [. . .] for if this was so, the One would be incomplete."[41] While it is immeasurably greater than, and, in this sense, on a "plane" external to that of Intellect, it does not provide an ordering principle for Intellect,

being prior to all conceptions of ordering or rules, which by definition imply a multitude of factors to order or regulate.

Recalling Deleuze's conception of the virtual as a field of differential dispersion, through which the rhizomatic connections of the intensive register emerge, we can gain new insight into statements such as "if anything comes into being after [the One], we must think that it necessarily does so while the One remains continually turned toward itself,"[42] and that this occurs "without the One moving at all, without any inclination or act of will or any sort of activity on its part."[43] The One does not move, will, or actively cause Intellect to come into being any more than the virtual imposes an order upon the intensive plane of consistency; rather the intensive is defined by the rhizomatic structure of self-organizing connections among elements, without reference to any external ordering principle. The virtual is thus not the source of these emergent structures in the way in which emanationist images would portray the One as the source of Intellect, that is as the sun is a source of light or a spring is the source of flowing water – another possible reason to rethink the import of such images. While Plotinus employs this imagery in an attempt to explain how Intellect, which he describes as "all movement filling all substance [. . .] always one thing after another,"[44] can come from the One without the latter moving or changing in any way, it is ultimately inadequate, as he himself acknowledges. This is the case primarily because it depicts the One as a source in far too active of a sense – as imbued with some sort of excess which overflows it – hence Plotinus' removal of the central source entirely in the controversial passage from *On the Presence of Being Everywhere* under discussion here.

Deleuzian ontology thus gives us a way to understand how Intellect can, in a sense, generate itself as it turns back to contemplate the One. This idea is in keeping with the way in which Plotinus describes contemplative activity throughout *On Nature and Contemplation and the One*, his most significant treatise on the topic. Speaking in the voice of Nature, he indicates the inherently generative character of contemplation: "My act of contemplation makes what it contemplates [. . .] as I contemplate, the lines which bound bodies come to be as if they fell from my contemplation."[45] Later in the treatise, he explains how Intellect's contemplation, while stronger and less "active" than that of Nature, nonetheless generates Intellect itself. Unlike with Nature or Soul, for Intellect, contemplation and its object are one. However, this unity is not the same as that of the One, for contemplation is inherently multiple. Thus, "when [Intellect] contemplates the One, it does not contemplate it as one: otherwise it would not become intellect."[46] As described earlier in this essay, it is through this contemplative activity, through this turning to regard the One, that Intellect emerges as a self-organizing principle. Thus the One, in its "everlastingness and generosity," is the "productive power of all things"[47] not by actively creating, overflowing, or radiating in the manner implied by emanationist metaphors, but rather by being what Intellect joins with in contemplation, in an act through which Intellect is constituted. The ability of the

Deleuzian framework to conceptualize such a means of "creation" is another significant feature that I believe makes it a superior means of conceiving of Plotinus' ontology as compared to the emanationist imagery with which he himself is dissatisfied.

Before concluding, I would like to articulate one final advantage that I believe this account has over the traditional explanatory frameworks used to address the question of how things proceed from the One, namely the facility with which Deleuze's ontology handles interactions between incommensurables. As DeLanda points out, "an assembly process may be said to be characterized by intensive properties when it articulates *heterogeneous* elements as such," giving as an example "the assemblage formed by a walking animal, a piece of ground and a gravitational field."[48] Even this most basic configuration illustrates the way in which an assemblage can be made up of vastly different elements from different orders of existence: in this case, an organic, living being; an inorganic compound; and one of the fundamental forces governing the natural world. Clearly none of these components is permanently altered in a significant fashion through this interaction, yet the connections giving rise to this transitory configuration of animal, ground, and gravity are no less significant because of this. Deleuze himself, when speaking of such intensive assemblages, writes that:

> It is no longer a question of imposing a form upon a matter but of elaborating an increasingly rich and consistent material, the better to tap increasingly intense forces. What makes a material increasingly rich is the same as what holds heterogeneities together without their ceasing to be heterogeneous.[49]

Admittedly, Deleuze is referring to elements that exist on the same "plane of consistency," whereas Plotinus' hypostases are not only on different planes, but actually *are* those different planes. But far from making the application of Deleuzian thought to Plotinian ontology inappropriate, this further speaks to its applicability. The incommensurability, the utter difference between the hypostases, is a constant theme in the *Enneads*, in statements such as "there must be something simple before all things, and this must be other than all the things which come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things which derive from it."[50] In his ontology of difference, Deleuze starts from the assumption that unlike elements, as well as more similar ones, can combine to form assemblages. There is no priority of the homogenous over the heterogeneous – if anything, the reverse is true. Likewise, Neoplatonic ontology begins with the assumption of radically different ontological realms between which there is necessarily some kind of commerce, mirroring Deleuze's starting point. Emanationist explanations still remain within the paradigm of sameness that characterizes the ontology of identity against which Deleuze is reacting.

Our tacit assumption that only like entities can interact leads to all sorts of difficulties in interpreting Plotinian texts, not least of which is the trouble caused by Plotinus' abandonment of emanation imagery in *On the Presence of Being Everywhere*. O'Meara characterizes the root of such problems as "difficulties we have in reconciling the omnipresence of soul in the corporeal world with the non-corporeal, size-less (ἀμεγέθης) nature of soul and with the indivisibility of soul implied by its sensory unity (ὁμοπαθής)."[51] According to O'Meara, Plotinus is quick to diagnose the problem, inasmuch as he "finds at the root of our difficulties with intelligible omnipresence a tendency to treat the intelligible as if it were material."[52] Plotinus himself takes great care to avoid this tendency, and admonishes us to do so as well throughout the treatise, most notably in the following passage:

> When one was speaking about those things [of the lower world] one would reason logically from that nature and from what is held to be true about it [. . .] But when, on the other hand, one engages in reasonings about the intelligibles, the right way would be to take the nature of substance about which one is concerned and so establish the principles of one's reasonings, without passing over, as if one had forgotten, to the other nature.[53]

Here, Plotinus reminds us to reason about intelligibles in an appropriate fashion, namely by employing "intelligible principles of intelligibles and those which belong to true substance."[54] In other words, we should refrain from attributing properties such as spatial location, divisibility, and temporality to intelligibles. Likewise, we must remember that we can only have probable knowledge about the things of this world, not the kind of certainty that could come from reasoning about intelligibles. In short, we must develop a facility for conceiving of two distinct orders of being, each with its own set of principles and properties, as part of a union (in this case, ensouled human beings) in which neither component becomes like the other. Plotinus has already alluded to the necessity of reorienting our thinking in this way in the first part of the double treatise, where he states that "nothing prevents different things from being all together, like soul and intellect and all bodies of knowledge, major and subordinate."[55] This fundamentally heterogeneous sort of assemblage is precisely what Deleuzian ontology excels at conceptualizing.

I hope to have provided a compelling argument in support of approaching certain aspects of Plotinus' ontology from a Deleuzian perspective. In the end, however, the question could be raised as to whether this account might not simply be another metaphor to describe a process that is essentially indescribable. After all, the Plotinian One is ontologically prior to Intellect, thought, and language, and thus prior to any attempt to rationally understand its workings. Could it be that metaphor is the best we can hope for when we discuss it? And if this is the case, what makes a Deleuzian explanation any better than the metaphors of flowing or radiating that Plotinus clearly finds inadequate? As to

the contention that this may be merely one metaphor among many, I concede that this may, in fact, be the case. In one sense, talk about first principles as far removed from normal human experience and comprehension as Plotinus' One is bound to be somewhat metaphorical, and it is impossible to know the extent to which Plotinus himself felt that he could ever hope to give more than a metaphorical description of the process by which anything proceeds from it. That having been said, there is value in a metaphor that more fully and accurately illustrates something, and thus in arguing for the superiority of one account over another, even if neither is a literal description of Plotinus' conceptions. With this essay, I hope to have presented at least a few compelling reasons to adopt a Deleuzian framework for the interpretation of key elements of Plotinus' ontology, rather than accepting the traditional emanationist explanation. Inasmuch as the former gives us fruitful new insight into how constantly moving, differentiated Intellect proceeds from something as radically different from it as the motionless, perfectly unified One, I believe that it is, if nothing else, a closer approximation to the perhaps ineffable truths that Plotinus so frequently tried to articulate.

NOTES

1. A. H. Armstrong, "'Emanation' in Plotinus" [Armstrong], p. 61.
2. Lloyd P. Gerson, "Plotinus's Metaphysics: Emanation or Creation?" pp. 574.
3. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, V.1.6.5–7.
4. Ibid. V.2.1.5–10.
5. Ibid. I.7.1.24–8.
6. Ibid. V.6.4.1–3 (*On the Fact that That Which Is Beyond Being Does Not Think*).
7. Ibid. V.1.7.19–23.
8. Ibid. V.4.1.11–13 (*How That Which Is After the First Comes from the First, and On the One*).
9. Ibid. I.7.1.17–21. "Beyond being" is a reference to *Republic* VI. 509b9, where Plato states that the Good is "ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας."
10. *Enneads* V.1.6.40–1.
11. Ibid. VI.4–5.
12. Ibid. VI.4.7.28–40.
13. Armstrong p. 62.
14. Dominic O'Meara, "The Problem of Omnipresence in Plotinus' Ennead VI, 4–5: A Reply" [O'Meara], *pp.* 70ff. See also Jonathan Scott Lee, "The Doctrine of Reception According to the Capacity of the Recipient in 'Ennead' VI 4–5," to which O'Meara was replying, and Michael F. Wagner, "Plotinus' Idealism and the Problem of Matter in 'Enneads' VI 4 and 5."
15. Eyjólfur Emilsson, "Plotinus' Ontology in Ennead VI.4 and 5," p. 97.
16. Ibid. p. 87.
17. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* [*DR*], p. 208.

18. Ibid. p. 211.
19. Ibid. p. 193.
20. Ibid. p. 203.
21. To take another example, Manuel DeLanda, in his *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* [DeLanda], explains the intensive by borrowing from evolutionary biology the notion of a "deme," or a local population of members of a particular species that interbreed and thus share a gene pool (pp. 53–5).
22. http://www.yourdictionary.com/rhizome
23. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* [*ATP*], p. 5.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid. p. 7.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid. pp. 8–9.
28. Ibid. p. 9.
29. Ibid. p. 12.
30. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* [*LS*], p. 53.
31. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 43.
32. *DR* p. 232.
33. Ibid. p. 234.
34. DeLanda p. 72.
35. *LS* p. 147.
36. *Enneads* VI.4.16.28–30.
37. Ibid. VI.4.16.34–5
38. Ibid. V.1.7. 5–6.
39. Ibid. III.7.11.14–18 (*On Eternity and Time*).
40. *Bergsonism* p. 98.
41. *Enneads* V.3.12.28–31 (*On the Knowing Hypostasis and That Which Is Beyond*).
42. Ibid. V.1.6.17–19.
43. Ibid. V.1.6.25–8.
44. Ibid. VI.7.13.41–3 (*How the Multitude of Forms Came into Being, and on the Good*).
45. Ibid. III.8.4.8–11.
46. Ibid. III.8.8.31–2.
47. Ibid. V.4.1.34–6.
48. DeLanda, p. 67.
49. *ATP* p. 329.
50. *Enneads* V.4.1.5–8 (*How That Which Is After the First Comes from the First, and on the One*).
51. O'Meara p. 63.
52. Ibid. p. 65.
53. *Ennead* VI.5.2.16–21; also quoted by O'Meara.
54. Ibid. VI.5.2.8–9.
55. Ibid. VI.4.11.11–13.

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