

Kierkegaard and Deleuze

Anxiety, possibility and a world without others

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Introduction

In his appendix to the *Logic of Sense* on Tournier's novel, *Friday*, Deleuze conjoins two quotations concerning possibility: one from William James, and one from Kierkegaard. For William James, 'in the universe of Hegel – the absolute block whose parts have no loose play, the pure plethora of necessary being with the oxygen of possibility all suffocated out of its lungs – there can be neither good nor bad, but one dead level of mere fate'.¹ In relating to Kierkegaard, Deleuze tells the story of 'the bourgeois who takes his breakfast and reads his newspaper with his family and suddenly rushes to the window shouting, "I must have the possible, or else I will suffocate"'.² While the latter anecdote and quotation do not appear to be found in Kierkegaard's work itself, we can nonetheless find a number of similar expressions of this sentiment in Kierkegaard's writings.³ Why does Deleuze focus on the notion of possibility here? We can begin by noting that both quotations can be read in light of the dominance of Hegel's metaphysics. James and Kierkegaard develop kindred criticisms of Hegel. For James, the difficulty with Hegel's thought is that Hegel's assumption that the essence of an object is defined relationally implies that the determination of any part of the universe implies the whole:

The proof lies in the *hegelian* principle of totality, which demands that if any one part be posited alone all the others shall forthwith *emanate* from it and infallibly reproduce the whole. In the *modus operandi* of the emanation comes in, as I said, that partnership of the principle of totality with that of the identity of contradictories which so recommends the latter to beginners in Hegel's philosophy. To posit one item alone is to deny the rest; to deny them is to refer

to them; to refer to them is to begin, at least, to bring them on the scene; and to begin is in the fulness of time to end.⁴

As James notes, there is nothing inherently problematic with the principle that to understand an object or event fully we must understand the whole, but Hegel combines this principle with the idea that such a whole is in fact given with the individual. He fails to consider that the effect may not be latent within the cause, and thus the possibility of genuine novelty emerging within the causal nexus. The world thus becomes, as Merleau-Ponty would say, 'a crystal cube, where all possible presentations can be conceived by its law of construction.'⁵ James's criticisms of Hegel here arise from two claims: that Hegel has an illegitimate conception of the transition between categories, and that Hegel has transposed the representation of logical thinking onto the physical world. In doing so, Hegel has removed any possibility of explaining the contingency and novelty we experience in the world.

Kierkegaard's criticisms of Hegel follow a similar line, arguing that Hegel's logic illegitimately takes for granted a concept of transition in order to allow itself to develop. As he puts it, 'the system is supposed to have such marvellous transparency and inner vision that in the manner of the *omphalopsychoi* it would gaze immovably at the central nothing until at last everything would explain itself and its whole content would come into being by itself.'⁶ For Kierkegaard's Hegel, much as for James's, Hegelian logic operates through a process whereby a fragment generates the whole, and it does so by understanding transition in immanent terms, bringing in an illegitimate understanding of transition as necessity. In fact, Kierkegaard notes that transition itself is not a logical category at all, but nonetheless plays a fundamental role in allowing the dialectic to relate categories together.⁷ It can only do so by misconceiving transition in what Kierkegaard calls 'quantitative' terms. That is, it is only if transition takes a determinate route that we can understand the necessary development of the Hegelian logic. Kierkegaard's claim is that this representation of transition in logic is a falsification of transition as it is found in actuality, which is a qualitative determination. We will return in detail to Kierkegaard's account of transition when we turn to anxiety in the final sections of this chapter. Much as with James's analysis, therefore, for Kierkegaard, the effect is not latent within the cause but requires the addition of a qualitative leap that transcends any quantitative determinations.

I do not want to explore the legitimacy of these criticisms in detail here. We could note that there is a notion of contingency in Hegel that emerges in the

Philosophy of Nature, where the logic externalizes itself, and in the process opens the way to deviations from the strict path of the logic. Contingency here seems to operate in a negative manner, however, merely as a deviation from the Idea generated by the ‘impotence of nature.’⁸ We do not have here the Jamesian or Kierkegaardian analysis of the possibility of genuine novelty, but rather simply the deficient adherence of nature to a logical category. What interests me, instead, is the reason Deleuze introduces these quotations. Deleuze’s opposition to Hegel is well known, and *Difference and Repetition*, written at the same time as the *Logic of Sense*, defines its own context as one of a ‘generalised anti-Hegelianism.’⁹ In that work, Kierkegaard appears as an ally in the attempt to break free from Hegel’s influence, even if this allegiance involves a degree of ambivalence. In the essay on Tournier, however, Deleuze distinguishes his position from Kierkegaard’s on the basis of the concept of possibility. Rather than Kierkegaard’s claims about Hegel positioning him as a fellow traveller for Deleuze here, then, Kierkegaard’s claims about possibility are seen as highlighting a fundamental problem with Kierkegaard’s worldview. In the rest of this chapter, I want to explore why Deleuze feels that possibility is such a misstep by looking at Deleuze’s reading of Tournier’s *Friday*, which is itself a reworking of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, before considering whether Deleuze is right in his assessment.

A world without others

In citing the notion of possibility in Kierkegaard and James, Deleuze argues that in both cases, ‘they are only evoking the a priori other,’¹⁰ an evocation here that Deleuze understands in a negative manner. To prefigure Deleuze’s argument, his claim will be that if possibility rests on the other, and if in turn, the other acts as a principle of ordering that overwrites the natural order of experience, then a move to possibility leaves us little better off than the Hegelian dialectic. Rather than move from representation to actuality, we have moved from one form of representation (a representation of immanence) to another (a representation of possibility). We can see why Tournier’s novel is therefore of interest to Deleuze. If Deleuze can show that the structure of experience differs in the absence of the other from both the dialectic and from possibility, then he opens a new path away from the representation of the world we find in Hegel. Tournier’s examination of Robinson’s experience free from others offers a glimpse of this path.

Tournier describes his novel as having a tripartite structure that mirrors Spinoza’s three kinds of knowledge, though we can understand the novel in

terms of a number of different frameworks, with Bergsonian elements visible throughout. Each moment therefore represents a different way of relating to the world. The first two parts of the novel loosely follow Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, with the arrival of Friday leading to a radical divergence from its original form. Robinson, shipwrecked on a desert island, at first attempts to escape what he names the 'Island of Desolation'. When the ship he fashions proves too heavy to launch, he 'gives up', retreating to a primitive state in what he calls the 'mire',¹¹ where he wallows in his own faeces, eating 'unmentionable foods' and falls into a state of dissolution. 'He moved less and less, and his brief excursions always ended in his return to the mire. Here, in his warm coverlet of slime, his body lost all weight, while the toxic emanations of the stagnant water drugged his mind. Only his eyes, nose, and mouth were active, alert for edible weed and toad spawn drifting on the surface.'¹² Recovering from this initial period of apathy, Robinson attempts to reassert the structures of the European society from which he has been separated. Robinson begins to call himself governor, and to institute a legal code, developing an economy for the environment, draining the mire and so on. He maps the island, and invents a water clock to measure time. When Friday arrives, Robinson contrives to pay Friday for his labour in coin taken from the ship, with Friday allowed to use his wages to buy time off from work, and various trinkets taken from the ship. While much of these first two parts follows the structure of a traditional robinsonade, even before the arrival of Friday, there is a divergence. As well as the quantified and ordered *Speranza* that Robinson institutes, he also experiences several encounters with 'another Friday'¹³ and 'another island'¹⁴ that point not to the abandonment of order of the mire, but to another form of understanding. Here, the world is not understood according to Robinson's own practical concerns, but rather the island shows itself according to its own purposes. After stopping the water clock, Robinson is drawn into this aspect of the island, covering himself in milk before slipping into a womb-like cavern in the heart of the island, and also copulates with the earth, giving rise to mandrake plants that Robinson takes to be his daughters. Friday's arrival exacerbates this ambivalence, with Robinson attempting to civilize Friday, with some apparent success, while at the same time it becomes apparent that Friday has a mind of his own, which subverts this process.

The third moment of the novel begins with Friday's accidental destruction of all of the civilized structures of the island by igniting Robinson's stores of powder carefully stored from his ship, the *Virginia*. Robinson's response to this development is one of relief rather than exasperation, and he recognizes a pre-existing drive towards the kind of nomadism represented by Friday. With the

destruction of the civilization, and the water clock, Robinson enters into a kind of eternity on the island, with each day having its own splendour, and the island no longer understood in terms of 'possible points of view'. Rather, Robinson lives on the island in a 'state of innocence'. The transformation is so radical that when a ship, the *Whitebird*, finally does arrive at the island, it is Friday, rather than Robinson, who departs. Robinson is instead left with the cabin boy of the ship, who takes Friday's canoe and returns to the island, Robinson now taking on a position to the cabin boy similar to Friday's in relation to himself. Tournier originally planned a more 'rigorous' ending to the novel, with Robinson alone on the island, like a 'stylite, standing immobile on a column in the sun'.¹⁵ We will return to this third stage when we discuss Deleuze's account of the transcendental field, but for now, let us turn to Deleuze's analysis of the structure of the novel.

While there are a number of incidental deviations from Defoe's original (in Tournier's novel, for instance, Robinson attempts to kill Friday, but misses through the intervention of his dog, rather than attempting to save him), Deleuze sets out three claims which he holds to be the essential divergences of Tournier's work. He sets these out as follows:

[Tournier's Robinson] is related to ends and goals rather than to origins; he is sexual; and these ends represent a fantastic deviation from our world, under the influence of a transformed sexuality, rather than an economic reproduction of our world, under the impact of a continuous effort.¹⁶

The first here is perhaps the most important. Deleuze points out that unlike Defoe's Robinson, Tournier's Robinson does not relate to the past, but to a future horizon that differs from the world from which he has been shipwrecked. Deleuze's characterization of Robinson in terms of goals and ends does not adequately characterize the ambivalence and creative evolution of Robinson here, but we can note that at least it does capture the way in which Tournier's Robinson does not reassert the values that he has left behind. These deviations in both the sexuality of Robinson, and his understanding of the world, emerge for Deleuze from the relation to the other for Deleuze. At the heart of Deleuze's reading here is a distinction between two different kinds of other: the structure-other (or a priori other) and the concrete other. The a priori other structures our perception, while the concrete other is a specific instantiation of the other.¹⁷ I will turn to how these structure experience in a moment, but for now, we can provide a schematic reading of how these fit in the text. In the first moment of despair, the structure-other is still present, but has no particular concrete instantiation. This leads to enervation, since the lack of any concrete other

can only be understood negatively as a privation of what gives meaning to the world. Deleuze sees the second moment as occurring once the concrete other is replaced with an attempt to preserve the a priori other by other means. The incessant accumulation, the water clock and the reinstatement of the economy all play this role, as does Robinson's attempt at 'superhuman filiation'¹⁸ with the island. In the final moment of the narrative, the a priori other disappears in its entirety, such that Friday is ultimately unable to be incorporated into Robinson's world as a concrete other at all:

What is essential, however, is that Friday does not function at all like a rediscovered Other. It is too late for that, the structure has disappeared. Sometimes he functions as a bizarre object, sometimes as a strange accomplice. Robinson treats him sometimes as a slave and tries to integrate him into the economic order of the island – that is, as a poor simulacrum – and sometimes as the keeper of a new secret which threatens that order – that is, as a mysterious phantasm. Sometimes he treats him almost like an object or an animal, sometimes as if Friday were a 'beyond' with respect to himself, a 'beyond' Friday, his own double or image. Sometimes he treats him as if he were falling short of the Other, sometimes as if he were transcending the Other.¹⁹

Perception and the other

How does such an account of the other lead to a critique of possibility? To understand this, we need to introduce a more precise specification of the other. Deleuze gives two aspects of the other: first, the other determines the nature of the perceptual field. Second, the other presents a possible world to us. I want to focus here on the first aspect, which ultimately relates the other to the phenomenological account of perception.

The two accounts Deleuze seems to be engaging with are those of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.²⁰ Sartre's account of the other seems to influence Tournier's reading of the changes to the psychology of Robinson Crusoe's character, and *Vendredi* can be seen as working through the implications of Sartre's assertion in *Huis Clos* that hell is other people by considering what consciousness is in the absence of others. Ventura in his analysis rightly sees Tournier as here borrowing heavily from Sartre.²¹ As Petit²² has also noted, Tournier's account of Robinson's gaze at Friday which does not objectify seems to suggest that Tournier is critical of Sartre, providing a deliberate counterpoint to Sartre's account of the look. Deleuze suggests that 'Sartre is here the precursor of structuralism, for

he is the first to have considered the Other as a real structure or a specificity irreducible to the object and the subject.²³ Ultimately, Sartre does not develop the concept of an a priori other, since Sartre 'was satisfied with the union of the two determinations [of subject and object], making of the other an object of my gaze, even if he in turn gazes at me and transforms me into an object.'²⁴ Of course, Sartre would see the absence of an a priori other as a strength of his theory, since for Sartre, all relations with others are ultimately contingent and between particular individuals, and, as it were, necessarily so, since it is the absence of a category of the other that makes possible real relations with other people.²⁵ As such, it is not clear how successful Deleuze's criticism of Sartre is here.

While Deleuze refers to Sartre in passing, I would suggest that Merleau-Ponty is the main target of his account. Deleuze refers to several of the central mechanisms of Merleau-Ponty's account in his description of the influence of the other on the perceptual field, namely the figure-ground structure,²⁶ the law of transition between perspectives²⁷ and depth as the horizon of perception.²⁸ Each of these is a central aspect of Merleau-Ponty's account of the organization of the perceptual field, and each for Deleuze is determined by the other. For Merleau-Ponty, perceiving involves attending to a figure which presents itself against an indeterminate background. Rather than seeing space as a homogeneous field within which we find a range of determinate objects, space is instead understood perspectivally, as a field of depth from which objects become determinate by pressing themselves forward against a background of indeterminacy. It is this structure of determinacy and indeterminacy that allows us to explain what it is to attend to an object. As Deleuze puts it, 'around each object that I perceive or each idea that I think there is the organization of a marginal world, a mantle or background, where other objects and other ideas may come forth in accordance with laws of transition which regulate the passage from one to another.'²⁹ Now, Deleuze's claim is that what allows us to shift our attention from one figure to another is the possibility of another perspective, given by another individual: 'And what is *depth*, for me, in accordance with which objects encroach upon one another and hide behind one another, I also live through as being possible width for Others, a width upon which they are aligned and pacified (from the point of view of another depth). In short, the Other assures the margins and transitions in the world.'³⁰ Our perceptual field, therefore, is full of distractions that point us to the point of view of others.³¹ Deleuze's analysis here is curious, and we will return to it in due course, since in effect it elides the distinction between Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the perceptual field and his analysis of what

he calls objective thought, a term that Merleau-Ponty himself traces back to Kierkegaard.³²

Here, then, is the source of possibility for Deleuze, in the fact that the perceptual field contains within itself a reference to the other. Insofar as it does so, it includes the perspectives of others, and it is the presence of these perspectives that allows the transition between our own present perspective and future perspectives. Tournier expresses this as follows:

Each of these men was a possible world, having its own coherence, its values, its sources of attraction and repulsion, its centre of gravity. And with all the differences between them, each of these possible worlds at that moment shared a vision, casual and superficial, of the island of Speranza, which caused them to act in common, and which incidentally contained a shipwrecked man called Robinson and his half-caste servant. For the present this picture occupied their minds, but for each of them it was purely temporary, destined very soon to be returned to the limbo from which it had been briefly plucked by the accident of the *Whitebird's* getting off course. And each of these possible worlds naively proclaimed itself the reality. That was what other people were: the possible obstinately passing for the real.³³

Deleuze's thesis here, therefore, is that the synthesis of the perceptual field is not to be understood as involving intuition and an ego but rather the perceptual field is synthesized by the presence of the structure of an other. It is this other that introduces possibility into the world by generating the background against which the figure emerges. The other therefore represents another possible world, which serves the purpose of constituting both possibility and the individuated perspective of the self.

So what is Deleuze's response to this analysis? Here we get to the heart of Deleuze's project:

In defining the Other, together with Tournier, as the expression of a possible world, we make of it, on the contrary, the a priori principle of the organization of every perceptual field in accordance with the categories; we make of it the structure which allows this functioning as the 'categorization' of this field. Real dualism then appears with the absence of the Other. But what is happening, in this case, to the perceptual field? Is it structured according to other categories? Or does it, on the contrary, open onto a very special subject matter, allowing us to penetrate into a particular informal realm? This is Robinson's adventure.³⁴

In effect, we have something like the Kantian relation between intuition and the understanding, but here, instead of the understanding schematizing intuition, it

is the other that performs this role. Just as for Kant, the subject is implied once the understanding has schematized intuition to allow us to make a distinction between our representations and objects themselves, the other brings in the notion of the subject. Here, however, is Deleuze's question. If it is the other that is responsible for the schematization of the phenomenal field, what happens when the other is no longer present? Deleuze suggests the possibility that the transcendental field could either be schematized in another manner, or it could be the case that with the absence of the other, we could encounter a field that is structured, but not through the imposition of a form. Here, finally, we see the opposition to Kierkegaard in this early work. Kierkegaard rightly opposes the dialectic of Hegel for being merely a representation of motion, but since he opposes it to possibility, which still relies on the categorization of the phenomenal field by the other, we still find ourselves caught within a realm of representation:

The perverse world is a world in which the category of the necessary has completely replaced that of the possible. This is a strange Spinozism from which 'oxygen' is lacking, to the benefit of a more elementary energy and a more rarefied air (Sky-Necessity). All perversion is an 'Other-cide', and an 'altrucide', and therefore a murder of the possible.³⁵

The transcendental field

So what is the structure of the transcendental field prior to the structure of the other, and hence prior to the possible? Here, I want to introduce three aspects of the transcendental field. First, the transcendental field differs from the representations it gives rise to. Second, the transcendental field does not contain the structure of the other or of the self. Finally, the absence of the other leads to a different conception of temporality.

The first aspect is that experience is presented as something that differs in kind from our representations, but which provides a ground for them. Deleuze sets this out clearly by noting the two different forms of organization at play in Tournier's text.³⁶ First, there is the transcendental field, which is governed by process and operates prior to the other, and second, there is the field of representation, which is the transcendental field schematized by the other. For Deleuze, thinking itself operates through the movement between this transcendental field and our representations of it, even in the case of a thinker of representation such as Descartes.³⁷ What gives movement to thought is the intensive ground of

representations, and so rather than thought involving synthesis on the plane of representation, it involves an oscillation between representation and its intensive grounds. This is one of the reasons Deleuze is critical of the notion of possibility, since rather than operating through a movement between two planes that differ from each other structurally (the transcendental field and representation), possibility does not involve any transposition, since the only difference between the possible and the actual is that the actual exists.³⁸ As such, it provides a poor basis for an account of the genesis of the new. As Kant puts it, ‘the real contains no more than the merely possible. A hundred real thalers do not contain the least coin more than a hundred possible thalers.’³⁹ The transcendental field itself for Deleuze is empty of possibility, as well as its relation to representation not being structured in terms of it. In *Immanence: A Life*, Deleuze defines this impersonal field as being that which is expressed in the individual, but is itself pre-individual. The ‘a’ of ‘a life’ here does not signify generality, but rather the sense that life falls outside of the numerical distinctions that we normally take to individuate our mental lives:

A life is everywhere, in all the moments that a given living subject goes through and that are measured by given lived objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualised in subjects and objects.⁴⁰

This brings us to the second aspect: this difference in structure is played out in that the transcendental field contains neither the elements of the subject nor the other. We can see Robinson as being moved back from the economic world of time understood in spatial terms, emphasized by his invention of the water clock, with its focus on calculation and representation, to the pure becoming of the island itself. Robinson on this reading would undergo a process of returning upstream from the individuated representational thought to a field of pure duration. Within such a field of pure duration, the notions of subject and object no longer operate. Robinson would here be moving between an understanding of the world in terms of subjects, objects and others, to a world of impersonal processes. Here, consciousness becomes a mere ‘phosphorescence’⁴¹ pervading the field, a description Sartre also gives of Bergson’s account of consciousness, though Sartre gives it in a critical spirit.⁴² Elsewhere, Deleuze takes up this description as that of the central concept that underlies while giving rise to our representations, the transcendental field:

What is a transcendental field? It can be distinguished from experience in that it doesn’t refer to an object or belong to a subject (empirical representation). It appears therefore as a stream of pure a-subjective consciousness, a pre-

reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self.⁴³

Finally, these Bergsonian references to duration suggest that the transcendental field involves a different relation to time. Rather than the time of the subject, we have for Robinson something radically different. Tournier's account of Robinson, in his move away from selfhood, falls away from the temporal world:

What has most changed in my life is the passing of time, its speed, and even its direction. Formerly every day, hour and minute leaned in a sense toward the day, hour, and minute that was to follow, and all were drawn into the pattern of the moment, whose transience created a kind of a vacuum.⁴⁴

As Bogue notes, Tournier's account here is very close to the intensive time of Deleuze's reading of the eternal return.⁴⁵ Without the measured structures of linear time, Tournier describes time as involving a strange combination of repetition and singularity that accords with Deleuze's sense of the intensive as giving rise to representation while not being reducible to it.

Here we come to the conclusion of Deleuze's account. While Kierkegaard has the same aim as Deleuze in escaping from representation, because he does so in terms of possibility, he is ultimately unable to escape from the structures of representation to arrive at a proper understanding of the transcendental field. We can see something of this relation between possibility and the other in Kierkegaard's analysis of the police agent who is able to infer the concrete other on the basis of the a priori other:

One who has properly occupied himself with psychology and psychological observation acquires a general human flexibility that enables him at once to construct his example which even though it lacks factual authority nevertheless has an authority of a different kind. The psychological observer ought to be more nimble than a tightrope dancer in order to incline and bend himself to other people and imitate their attitudes, and his silence in the moment of confidence should be seductive and voluptuous, so that what is hidden may find satisfaction in slipping out to chat with itself in the artificially constructed non-observance and silence. Hence he ought also to have a poetic originality in his soul so as to be able at once to create both the totality and the invariable from what in the individual is always partially and variably present. . . . His observation will have the quality of freshness and the interest of actuality if he is prudent enough to control his observations. To that end he imitates in himself every mood, every psychic state that he discovers in another.⁴⁶

We can note that Kierkegaard's entire analysis of moods points to the importance of perspective in analysing a philosophical problem, with the account of pseudonyms likewise pointing to the importance of one's perspective in providing a point of escape from the movement of the dialectic. *The Concept of Anxiety* concludes with a discussion of the different ways in which the eternal and the temporal may be synthesized together that provides a taxonomy of different perspectives, in effect, a potential mapping of the structure of the a priori other.

The phenomenological response

How are we to respond to this account? For the rest of this chapter, I want to pursue two lines of response to Deleuze's account. First, I want to look in more detail at the structuring role of the other to see how coherent Deleuze's account is here. In this respect, I want to look at it in relation to the phenomenological tradition, which seems to be the natural target of Deleuze's detailed account. Second, I want to turn to Kierkegaard directly, and look at what appears to be Kierkegaard's own model of the transcendental field, the pre-dialectical structure of innocence which Kierkegaard sets out in *The Concept of Anxiety*.

Beginning with Merleau-Ponty, we in fact do find that for him the presence of the other leads to a schematization of the world that establishes the subject and the object. The other leads to the idea of the objective world in much the way that Deleuze suggests, where we find ourselves confronted with a crystalline world of objects. This occurs when we recognize that the object that we are considering can be seen from a number of different perspectives simultaneously:

Each object, then, is the mirror of all the others. When I see the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not merely the qualities that are visible from my location, but also those that the fireplace, the walls, and the table can 'see'. The back of my lamp is merely the face that it 'shows' to the fireplace. Thus, I can see one object insofar as objects form a system or a world, and insofar as each of them arranges the others around itself like spectators of its hidden aspects and as the guarantee of their permanence.⁴⁷

Here, already, we can immediately see a difference from Deleuze's account, however, in that the other that schematizes the object is not an a priori other that has its roots in the human, but merely the possibility of another perspective. Deleuze here illicitly humanizes the notion of perspective in

Merleau-Ponty's ontology.⁴⁸ The structure of the perceptual field for Merleau-Ponty is a figure against a background, and so operates in terms of a movement between determinacy and indeterminacy. If we were to move to the position of the fireplace, in Merleau-Ponty's example, then while another aspect of the lamp would become determinate, this would only happen at the expense of our original perspective falling back into indeterminacy. Each perspective, therefore, gives a part of the object, but only on condition of the rest of the object falling into indeterminacy. In this sense, perception is a play of immanence and transcendence. For Merleau-Ponty, it is not the other that schematizes this account of perception, but memory. With memory, we can remove from consideration the fact that each of these perspectives on the object is revealed in time, and see them all as existing simultaneously. In doing so, we leave to one side the idea that a determinate perception can only present itself against an indeterminate background. While perspectives cannot be aggregated since each necessarily operates in terms of determinacy and indeterminacy, when we *represent* perspectives outside of time, we *can* see them as co-existing. This lets us assume a fully determinate object underlying our perspectives, and as soon as one object is considered this way, then, following from Kant's third analogy, all objects become understood as objects in this sense. Once thought has travelled down this path, we have a characterization of the world as objective that indeed involves the other, since it presents a world abstracted from any individual perspective. We should note that what makes this possible, however, is that we have already moved to a position of seeing each perspective on the object as being a representation, such that they can be taken together as aggregates, and the indeterminacies of perception can be ignored. For Merleau-Ponty, therefore, representation gives rise to a problematic conception of the other, but the other does not have to be understood in terms of representation.

Deleuze recognizes that beneath our representations of the world, there may be another mode of organization that escapes the categorization of representation. Deleuze fails to recognize that what is at the heart of our representations for the phenomenologist is the removal of time, which constitutes a space free from perspective, and hence open to an equalization of all others. Here, therefore, perspectivism is the organization that occurs prior to the schematization of objective thought, and with it, and in this prior moment we also find possibility, which occurs not through a *comparison* of perspectives, but through the intention of every perspective towards others. 'My gaze can only be compared with previous acts of seeing or with the acts of seeing accomplished by others through the intermediary of time and language.'⁴⁹ The subject here is secondary,

not to the other, but to perception itself. By seeing representation as independent of our relationship with the other, rather than the other determining us to see the world in terms of representation, Merleau-Ponty opens up the possibility of a distinction between authentic relations with others, and inauthentic relations with others mediated by objective thought. 'In the experience of dialogue, a common ground is constituted between me and another; my thought and his form a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion and are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator.'⁵⁰ Dialogue sets out clearly the problem with Deleuze's account here. The analysis of transition in terms of the other assumes that all perspectives are given all at once, effectively reducing them to representations. Here, for Merleau-Ponty, the dialogue operates neither in terms of subject nor other, and is generative rather than simply aggregative. Such an account is not possible for Deleuze, for whom 'discussion has no place in the work of philosophy. The phrase "let's discuss it" is an act of terror.'⁵¹ The failure of Deleuze's analysis of the other as a site of representation in this regard should give us pause in relation to Kierkegaard. When Merleau-Ponty sets out his distinction between objective thought and perspectival perception, he cites Kierkegaard, seeing in Kierkegaard's search for a relation to the world prior to dialectic a precursor of his own efforts to understand the world prior to representation. Similarly, just as perspectives for Merleau-Ponty lack the commensurability that they would require for Deleuze's account of the structuring role of the other to be coherent, so the different perspectives for Kierkegaard are of necessity incommensurable. It is this incommensurability that disrupts the unifying role of the other, and forces Kierkegaard's use of indirect communication.⁵²

The Kierkegaardian response

In this final section, I want to turn to Kierkegaard's work directly, and to the notions of innocence and anxiety in his thought. The eponymous Robinson Crusoe understands his exile on the island in terms of his original sin of disregarding the will of his father,⁵³ while Tournier's Robinson can be seen as reversing this direction, with Robinson experiencing something like a return to innocence in the island. I want to conclude this chapter by exploring this notion of innocence, and the place it occupies in Kierkegaard's thought.

Tournier himself describes Robinson's state on the island as a 'moment of innocence.'⁵⁴ What characteristics does this innocence hold? To begin with, for

Deleuze, a world of innocence does not contain the structure of the other. This does not mean that there cannot be others in such a world (such as Friday), but rather, that such others do not conform to the structure of the a priori other. As we have seen, this in turn means that there is no structure of the possible in such a world. In turn, without the structure of the possible, I am unable to imagine a world which differs from the one I occupy, and hence to distinguish my self from the world. 'Before the appearance of the Other, there was, for example, a reassuring world from which my consciousness could not be distinguished. The Other then makes its appearance, expressing the possibility of a frightening world which cannot be developed without the one preceding it passing away.'⁵⁵ The key claim here is that without the organization of the other, we do not merely have an empty immediacy, but rather a new mode of structure opened up by the removal of the other. Here, we have something like pure intuition. For Tournier, therefore, what Deleuze calls the transcendental field is a state of innocence that Robinson returns to once freed from the influence of the other. Here we can turn to Kierkegaard, who also provides a complex discussion of the notion of innocence in relation to Adam and sin, and it is here that his 'concept' of anxiety is introduced. In this section, I want to turn to Kierkegaard's concept of innocence, since there are substantial affinities between Kierkegaard's account and Deleuze's of the transcendental field.

Kierkegaard's own account of innocence emerges in his analysis of original sin. Kierkegaard is keen to explore the ambiguous situation of Adam prior to the fall, who is in a state of innocence, yet is still responsible for the sin he commits. Since the concepts of good and evil do not come into existence until Adam eats the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he cannot understand the act as evil. Kierkegaard begins by claiming that we cannot understand sinfulness as 'an epidemic that spreads like cowpox',⁵⁶ and so Adam's move from innocence to sin needs to be understood in terms of a transition that is neither arbitrary nor fully determined. Kierkegaard describes Adam as in a state of anxiety, which he characterizes as 'entangled freedom, where freedom is not free in itself but entangled, not by necessity, but in itself'.⁵⁷ Kierkegaard's claim will be that the movement from innocence to sin through anxiety is a movement in each individual's life, and that anxiety is in fact ever present in the processes of both sin and redemption. Now, it would be tempting to see the movement from innocence to sin as the actualization of a possibility, but in fact, Kierkegaard is clear that anxiety is not possibility but 'the possibility of possibility'.⁵⁸ What is important here is that the movement from innocence to sin is not a movement within one plane of organization, but the constitution of another way of organizing the world (the form of knowledge).

While possibility presupposes the actual object as a model, as Bergson argues, anxiety has no object, and so fits badly with the kind of account of possibility Deleuze criticizes, and in his early lectures on grounding, Deleuze himself seems to recognize this movement in Kierkegaard.⁵⁹ Rather, just as Deleuze sees thinking as moving between representation and the transcendental field, anxiety operates between the planes of innocence and knowledge. Let us return now to the three characteristics of the transcendental field that we outlined above.

First, as with Deleuze, we have a genetic account here. The innocence of Adam is one that has a structure different in kind from that of one's represented world. For Hegel, innocence is equated with immediacy, but as we know from the *Science of Logic*, immediacy for Hegel dialectically transitions into mediacy, since without mediation, we cannot attribute any determinations to the object of our enquiry, and so it remains indistinguishable from its opposite. As Kierkegaard notes, Hegel's error is to represent innocence within logic according to the category of the immediate. While the immediate turns into the mediate through its own immanent development, as Kierkegaard argues, we cannot understand the loss of innocence of Adam as involving sin if guilt were immanent to his innocence. Innocence cannot be equated with immediacy, and more than this, innocence escapes any dialectical qualification. In fact, more deeply, Kierkegaard notes that innocence, qualified as ignorance, can only be understood in categorial terms by relating it to knowledge. Innocence therefore has a double nature, as a category within the dialectic, but also as a wild state that is prior to its sedimentation into the oppositional categories of Hegel's logic.⁶⁰ In its wild state, innocence is not a simple immediacy, and 'only a prosaic stupidity maintains that [innocence] is a disorganization.'⁶¹ As such, the structure of innocence differs in kind and is generative of, the structure of knowledge, in a manner which foreshadows Deleuze's account of the transcendental field.

Second, just as for Deleuze, in Adam's innocence, he exists prior to the formation of the self, and prior to the object. Prior to the fall Adam is outside of all dialectical categories, and, as with Robinson, is unable to use such categories themselves: 'here there is language, though in an imperfect way similar to that of children who learn by identifying animals on an ABC board.'⁶² Moreover, there is no subject or object in the state of innocence, just as they are absent from the transcendental field. Within the stage of innocence, neither of these categories have yet to have emerged. Spirit is 'dreaming':

the real 'self' is posited only by the qualitative leap. In the prior state there can be no question about it. Therefore, when sin is explained by selfishness, one

becomes entangled in indistinctness, because, on the contrary, it is by sin and in sin that selfishness comes into being. If selfishness is supposed to have been the occasion for Adam's sin, the explanation becomes a game in which the interpreter finds what he himself first has hidden.⁶³

Finally, we can note that in innocence, there is no temporality for Adam, but purely a stream of duration. It is only with the introduction of the moment that we can clearly divide time into past, present and future. Prior to this, time is purely infinite succession, but such a succession that, as with Bergson's duration, cannot be reduced to a discrete multiplicity of moments:

If in the infinite succession of time a foothold could be found, i.e., a present, which was the dividing point, the division would be quite correct. However, precisely because every moment, as well as the sum of the moments, is a process (a passing by), no moment is a present, and accordingly there is in time neither present, nor past, nor future. If it is claimed that this division can be maintained, it is because the moment is spatialized, but thereby the infinite succession comes to a halt, it is because representation is introduced that allows time to be represented instead of being thought.⁶⁴

As such, we find in Kierkegaard not the structure of possibility that we find in Deleuze's critique of the other but something radically different that operates across different planes of structure, rather than simply within the field of representation. Perhaps we could say here that Deleuze is simply too quick to assimilate all forms of possibility to those engaged with by Bergson. In the conclusion, I want to draw out some of the implications of these limitations to Deleuze's account.

Conclusion

So we find in Kierkegaard's account of innocence something like the 'moment of innocence' that is present in Tournier, and which mirrors Deleuze's own transcendental field. In this sense, we could view Deleuze's own philosophy as an account of the fall, with the movement from pure difference to difference as diversity, where, just as for Kierkegaard, Adam's fall is characterized by a transition to the categorial forms of language, and we find the emergence of the subject in the actualized realm of representation. Deleuze cites with approval in this regard Schelling's theory of potentials, which Schelling himself understood to be understood in terms of the myth of the fall.⁶⁵ The key differences between

Kierkegaard and Deleuze relate to the transition between innocence and representation. As Tournier shows, the path for Deleuze to innocence is one that can occur through a deliberate project of stepping back from a site of representation. The aim is a methodological solipsism.⁶⁶ As well as Robinson, we can see models in Artaud's poetry and formulation of the body without organs, and the 'crack-up' of Fitzgerald or Lowry. For Kierkegaard, innocence is something that cannot be regained. Once we are in a state of knowledge, we cannot even conceive of innocence except as already understood in categorial terms.

Ironically, this emphasis of Deleuze's on solipsism as the basis for philosophy falls away when we move beyond what we might call his juvenilia. While *Difference and Repetition* attempts to develop an imageless thought, Deleuze's later works with Guattari instead aim to replace the arborescent image of thought with the model of the rhizome. Here, as Bogue notes, Kierkegaard's analysis of the possible receives a more positive treatment, as Kierkegaard's thought is seen as one that develops novel ways of living, even if it does so in relation to a moment of transcendence. Here, a move from depths to relations allows a movement beyond the solipsism of Deleuze's early work and opens up the possibility of projects such as Deleuze's later collaboration with Guattari that rely on a new relation to the other, rather than its annihilation. Deleuze finds himself in agreement with Kierkegaard, writing now, with Guattari, that philosophy 'invents modes of existence or possibilities of life.'⁶⁷

Notes

- 1 I am indebted to Jeff Bell and David Ventura for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this piece.
William James, 'On Some Hegelisms,' in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1912), 292.
- 2 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 233. In the essay on Tournier, Deleuze simply gives the quotation (Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantine Boundas (London: Athlone, 1990), 318). The story appears in *Cinema 1*. There is a mistranslation in the English edition that attributes the quotation to *The Concept of Anxiety* rather than *The Sickness Unto Death (Traité du désespoir)* as it is in the original French.
- 3 Ronald Bogue, 'The Art of the Possible,' *Revue internationale de philosophie* 3, no. 241 (2007): 273–86, suggests the quote may be a mistranscription of the following passage from *The Sickness Unto Death*: 'but when someone wants to despair, then the word is:

- Get possibility, get possibility. . . . A possibility – then the person in despair breathes again, he revives again, for without possibility a person seems unable to breathe’ (Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 38–9). This is certainly plausible, though references to possibility run throughout Kierkegaard’s work.
- 4 James, ‘On Some Hegelisms’, 279.
 - 5 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 342.
 - 6 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. and ed. Reidar Thomte with Albert B. Anderson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 81.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, 81–2.
 - 8 G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature*, ed. and trans. M. J. Petry (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1970), §250.
 - 9 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone, 1994), xix.
 - 10 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 318.
 - 11 Michel Tournier, *Friday*, trans. Norman Denny (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 40.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, 40.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, 172.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 90.
 - 15 Tournier quoted in Susan Petit, *Michel Tournier’s Metaphysical Fictions* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1991), 18.
 - 16 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 303.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, 313.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 315.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, 316.
 - 20 Constantin V. Boundas, ‘Foreclosure of the Other: From Sartre to Deleuze’, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 24 (1993):1, 32–43, notes the importance of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre here, though focuses on Sartre. His article provides a more sympathetic reading of Deleuze’s critique of Sartre than the one offered here.
 - 21 David Ventura, ‘The Intensive Other: Deleuze and Levinas on the Ethical Status of the Other’, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 58, no. 2 (2020): 329–30.
 - 22 Petit, *Michel Tournier’s Metaphysical Fictions*, 17.
 - 23 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 366.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, 307.
 - 25 C.f. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1978), 250: ‘Human-reality remains alone because the other’s existence has the nature of a contingent and irreducible fact. We encounter the Other; we do not constitute him.’

- 26 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 318.
- 27 Ibid., 305.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 '[F]or all of us the presence of other people is a powerful element of distraction, not only because they constantly break into our train of thought, but because the mere possibility of their doing so illumines a world of matters situated at the edge of our consciousness but capable of any moment of becoming its centre' (Tournier, *Friday*, 38 quoted in Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 305).
- 32 C.f. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 74.
- 33 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 308.
- 34 Ibid., 309.
- 35 Ibid., 320.
- 36 'It will be noted that the earth and air act less as particular elements than as two complete and opposed figures, each one, for its part, gathering the four elements. The earth, however, holds and subsumes them, contains them within the depth of bodies, whereas the sky, with the light and the sun, sets them in a free and pure state, delivered from their limits, in order to form cosmic surface energy – being one and yet characteristic of each element. There is therefore a terrestrial fire, water, air, and earth, but there is also an aerial or celestial earth, water, fire, and air' (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 302). The 'figures' here correspond to the two multiplicities Deleuze discusses throughout his work, and principally in his work on Bergson. These figures would map on to the discrete multiplicity (the earth), which understands the world in terms of discrete bodies occupying a homogeneous space, and the confused multiplicity (sky), which for Bergson is determined by duration, seeing the world in terms of process and change independent of substances undergoing those changes. For Bergson, discrete and confused multiplicities are both ways of understanding the structure of the world, with the discrete multiplicity being a well-founded illusion that maps onto a world of duration in order to allow us to engage with it, while at the same time falsifying its nature.
- 37 Deleuze takes Descartes's focus on the 'everyman' to be a paradigmatic example of a philosophy founded on the perspective of the other, since it ignores the singularity of the individual. C.f. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 129–34.
- 38 Cf. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 211–14. Bergson's original critique of the notion of possibility is found in Henri Bergson, 'The Possible and the Real', in *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946).
- 39 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1929), A599 / B627.
- 40 Gilles Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', in *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 29.

- 41 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 312.
- 42 Deleuze here seems to be deliberately inverting Sartre's criticism of Bergson: 'There is no non-conscious for Bergson; there is only consciousness in ignorance of itself. There is no opacity that is opposed to light and receives it, constituting thus an illuminated object. There is pure light, phosphorescence, without illuminated material, though this pure light, everywhere diffused, only becomes occurrent by being reflected on certain surfaces that serve at the same time as screens for the other luminous zones. There is a sort of inversion of the classical comparison: instead of consciousness being a light that goes from the subject to the thing, it is a luminosity that goes from the thing to the subject' (Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imagination*, trans. Kenneth Williford and David Rudrauf) (London: Routledge, 2012, 42).
- 43 Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', 25.
- 44 Tournier, *Friday*, 203.
- 45 Ronald Bogue, 'Speranza, the Wandering Island', *Deleuze Studies* 3, no.1 (2009): 125.
- 46 Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 54–5.
- 47 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 71.
- 48 Merleau-Ponty makes this point that the other is not to be reduced to the human most explicitly in *Eye and Mind*: 'Inevitably the roles between him and the visible are reversed. That is why so many painters have said that things look at them. As André Marchand says, after Klee: 'In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me. . . . I was there, listening. . . . I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it. . . . I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out' (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', in *Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Indianapolis: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 167.).
- 49 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 72.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 370.
- 51 Gilles Deleuze, 'We Invented the ritornello', in *Two Regimes of Madness*, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (London: MIT Press, 2006), 380. Deleuze is clear in his early work that the position of the philosopher should be solipsistic. He contrasts this with Descartes's method, where the *cogito* rests on the assumption that 'everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think' (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 131). As such, Descartes operates with concepts that are already defined in terms of the other. Ultimately, the philosophical method of Descartes presupposes, for Deleuze, the pre-philosophical field of representation determined by the other: 'In this sense, conceptual philosophical thought has as its implicit presupposition a pre-philosophical and natural Image of thought, borrowed from the pure element of common sense' (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 131). In his later work, Deleuze does introduce a place for dialogue, but such

- dialogue involves a violent rejection of normal forms of discourse: 'Conversation is something else entirely. We need conversation. But the lightest conversation is a great schizophrenic experiment happening between two individuals with common resources and a taste for ellipses and short-hand expressions' (Deleuze, 'We Invented the ritornello', 380).
- 52 It hardly needs to be mentioned that the silence of Kierkegaard's Abraham as a necessary incongruity with others fits poorly with Tournier's example of the shared world of the sailors on the *Whitebird*.
- 53 'I have been in all my Circumstances a Memento to those who are touched with the general Plague of Mankind, whence, for ought I know, one half of their Miseries flow; I mean, that of not being satisfy'd with the Station wherein God and Nature has plac'd them; for not to look back upon my primitive Condition . . . and the excellent Advice of my Father, the Opposition to which, was, as I may call it, my ORIGINAL SIN; my subsequent Mistakes of the same Kind had been the Means of my coming into this miserable Condition' (Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164).
- 54 Tournier, *Friday*, 205. Robinson explicitly relates this to the story of Adam, describing it as a 'return to the lost innocence which all men secretly mourn' (Tournier, *Friday*, 107).
- 55 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 310.
- 56 Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 38.
- 57 Ibid., 49.
- 58 Ibid., 42.
- 59 In his early lectures on grounding, Deleuze writes: 'Kierkegaard's theme will be: we can never conclude sin from sinfulness. It also implies a qualitative leap. Sin is the brute apparition of a new quality. Sin must then be thought and related to anxiety, which is the relation of consciousness with the absolutely different' (Gilles Deleuze, *What Is Grounding?* trans. Arjen Kleinherenbrink (Grand Rapids: &&& Publishing, 2015), 70).
- 60 Innocence here has a structure similar to writing for Derrida where we can distinguish between a conception of innocence (immediacy) as opposed to guilt (mediacy), but also a primary account of innocence which is prior to incorporation into a structure of categorial opposition.
- 61 Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 42.
- 62 Ibid., 46.
- 63 Ibid., 79.
- 64 Ibid., 85.
- 65 See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 190–1 for his approving reading of Schelling on potentiality. Vincent A. McCarthy, 'Schelling and Kierkegaard on Freedom and Fall', in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. Robert

L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press), 1985), sets out Schelling's reading of the Fall in terms of this account.

- 66 C.f., for instance, Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 282: 'As a result, in order to rediscover the individuating factors as they are in the intensive series along with the pre-individual singularities as they are in the Idea, this path must be followed in reverse so that, departing from the subjects which give effect to the Other-structure, we return as far as this structure in itself, thus apprehending the Other as No-one, then continue further, following the bend in sufficient reason until we reach those regions where the Other-structure no longer functions, far from the objects and subjects that it conditions, where singularities are free to be deployed or distributed within pure Ideas, and individuating factors to be distributed in pure intensity. In this sense, it is indeed true that the thinker is necessarily solitary and solipsistic.'
- 67 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 72.