The Intensive Other: Deleuze and Levinas on the ethical status of the Other

Despite its conspicuous presence in *Difference and Repetition* and some of its surrounding texts, Gilles Deleuze's notion of the Other (*autrui*)[1] has received limited isolated attention in the literature.[2] As I seek to show in this paper, this omission is not without consequence, for if the Other cannot be said to be one of Deleuze's preferred categories, it does nonetheless play a significant role in specifying the content of his early ethics. The argument I want to put forward is that despite playing this key role, Deleuze's engagement with the notion of the Other remains one of the most problematic aspects of his early thought. My wager in pursuing this claim is that some of these problems can best be brought into relief by placing Deleuze's philosophy into dialogue with that of Emmanuel Levinas. Simply put, my claim is that although Deleuze's early philosophy develops a compelling notion of intensive ethics that denies a positive role to the

[1] The English word Other can be rendered into French as both *autre* and *autrui*. Where the latter usually connotes the more familiar sense of another human person, or neighbor, the former more readily refers to something which is different or alien, without any necessary human predicate. When referring to the Other, and in accordance with Deleuze and Levinas' own usage, I will here be speaking primarily of the Other as *autrui*, but I will indicate any deviations (in brackets) where they emerge.

[2] Whilst several recent studies have devoted attention to Deleuze's idea of a "world without others" (Bryant 2008, 254-262; Bogue 2011, 124-134; Gutting 2011, 117-132; Hallward 2006, 92-93, 162; Jardine 1984, 40-60; Kaufman 2011, 108-122; Moulard 2004, 288-298; Thiele 2012, 55-75), none of them provide a sustained critical engagement with Deleuze's notion of the Other in particular—as I propose to do here.

human Other, Levinas' philosophy of alterity shows that the Other can and should be part of Deleuze's ethical project. In this sense, I contend, Levinas' philosophy not only corrects some of the problems with Deleuze's early philosophy, but it also begins to point the way towards a more positive conception of ethics that does not see the human Other as being opposed to the intensive realm that Deleuze so much values.

For the purposes of this paper, I want to focus primarily on Deleuze's 1967 review of Michel Tournier's novel *Friday or The Other Island*, entitled "Michel Tournier and the World Without Others".[3] As I have already indicated, this review is not the only place where Deleuze engages with the notion of the Other. Many of its themes, and in particular the idea that the Other has a structuring effect on perception, are certainly replayed in a modified form in *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994, 259-261, 281-282). But the review of Tournier's novel also contains many analyses that remain entirely absent from the latter text. The discussions around the effects of the Other on desire and time—which, as we shall see, both possess an important ethical dimension for Deleuze—are cases in point. In this sense, the conception of the Other developed in the review of *Friday* should not simply be taken as a precursor to the positions adopted by *Difference and Repetition*.[4] That review stands on its own as Deleuze's most extensive and sustained critical engagement with the notion of the Other and, as such, merits isolated attention in its own right.

[3] This review was originally published in *Critique* under the name of "Une théorie d'autrui (autrui, Robinson et le pervers)". It subsequently appeared in modified form as one of the appendices to *The Logic of Sense* and as a postface to the Gallimard edition of Tournier's novel, both times under the title of "Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui". I here rely almost exclusively on the later edition, but I include references to the earlier edition where significant differences between the two arise.

[4] Levi Bryant seemingly adopts this position when he reads Deleuze's review as simply providing an explanation for genesis of "the dogmatic image of thought", which is a central topic of interest in *Difference and Repetition* (2008, 254-262).

With this in mind, I proceed in three stages in this paper. As a way of contextualising the ethical stance on the Other developed by Deleuze in his review, I begin by providing a brief account of the key moments in Tournier's novel.[5] Following this, I explore in some detail what Deleuze takes to be the salient philosophical and ethical points of *Friday*. Finally, I place these points in dialogue with the philosophy of the Other developed by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. As I hope to show, Levinas' work not only reveals some of the pitfalls with Deleuze's early ethical thought, but also serves as a helpful reminder of the continued significance of the Other as an ethical category.

1. Tournier's *Friday or the Other Island*

Before I attempt to outline Deleuze's ethical stance on the Other, I want to begin by providing a brief account of the novel that remains its key inspiration. And the first point to note here is that Tournier's *Friday* is a retelling of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. As such, the novel follows the adventures of Robinson, an English sailor who is shipwrecked on a desert island and who eventually comes to meet and name Friday, a native from a nearby island. Unlike Defoe's original work however, *Friday* does not seek to justify the existing social and productive conditions surrounding its publication. Indeed, as Tournier would later come to describe it, his novel is more akin to "a philosophical venture": it does not attempt to assert the value of one type of civilization over another, but provides instead a philosophically guided reflection on Robinson's creative attempts to overcome "the corrosive effects of inhuman solitude" (1989, 199).[6] This reflection, moreover, takes up a progressive, or "dialectical",

[5] This contextualisation is all the more significant given Deleuze and Tournier's long-standing friendship and their shared early interest in Sartre—who remains one of the few philosophers to be named in Deleuze's review (cf. Dosse 2010, 92-100).

[6] Tournier elsewhere clarifies the content of his philosophical inspiration, writing that at the time of

character in the novel (194). Rather than being given all at once, Robinson's creativity with respect to his condition gradually emerges out of his increasingly affirmative engagement with the elemental forces of the island on which he finds himself, Speranza.

The first stage in this process is one where Robinson, finding himself confronted with Speranza's solitude, wallows in the loss of his former human world. As Tournier describes it, Robinson initially encounters the island as "a place wholly alien and hostile" (1984, 32). Being deprived of traditional human comforts like clothing and shelter, Robinson feels himself exposed and vulnerable to the island's hostile elements. Its winds, heat, light and jagged surfaces all function as not only sources of discomfort but also as constant reminders that, as the sole survivor of the wreck, Robinson is "the orphan of mankind" (43-44). During this initial period, Robinson also begins to notice some significant changes to his personality that have been imposed by his new solitary state. He begins to recognise, for example, a narrowing of his field of concentration and an inability to focus on more than one object at a time. From these phenomena, Robinson concludes in a vaguely Sartrean key that "for all of us the presence of other people (*autrui*) 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" (33).[7] Even in his initial stage of destitution and solitude, Robinson already begins to feel some of the concrete effects of the absence of others.

Friday's publication he "had just taken the competitive exam for teachers of philosophy, and was stuffed full of Jean-Paul Sartre and Claude Lévi-Strauss" (1982, 33).

[7] That this assertion is philosophically motivated is confirmed by Sartre's argument in *Being and Nothingness* that "The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds (…) to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralisation of the world which undermines the centralisation which I am simultaneously effecting" (1989, 255).

But this initial stage is only superseded by a second, wherein Robinson, using the resources left by his ship's wreckage, begins to engage in civilising tasks—such as farming, building work, clock making and writing. Of these tasks—all of which instil in Robinson a sense of "shame" regarding his initial period of destitution—writing proves the most crucial in reconnecting him with his former humanity.[8] Indeed, as Robinson writes in a diary entry: "Language in a fundamental way evokes the *peopled* world (*univers* peuplé), where other men (*autres*) are like so many lamps casting a glow of light around them within which everything is, if not known, at least knowable" (48-49). And although the influence of those points of illumination on his life is reported as gradually waning, it nonetheless seems to Robinson that in "performing the noble act of writing (…) he had half-retrieved himself from the abyss of animalism into which he had sunk, and made a return to the world of the spirit" (41).

Crucially, however, it only *seems* that way, and Robinson only *half*-retrieves himself from his initial inhumanity. Indeed, even in attempting to rescue his humanity by establishing a strict regime of productive discipline and by creating a code of morals for the governance of Speranza, Robinson cannot help but feel within himself another force that leads him to other experiences. As one diary entry puts it,

> if on the surface of the island I pursue the work of civilisation (…), I feel that in myself I am the scene of a more radical process of creation, one which is engaged in finding new and original substitutes to fill the waste that solitude has created within me, all more or less tentative and so to speak experimental, but bearing less and less resemblance to the human model whence they came. (….) Inevitably, a time will come when an increasingly *dehumanised* Robinson will be incapable of being the governor and architect of an increasingly *humanised* estate. (96)

And for Robinson, the presence of this radical process of dehumanisation is made nowhere

[8] Tournier's equation of Robinson's feeling of shame with his engagement in civilizing tasks once again echoes Sartre, for whom shame is precisely the self's consciousness of itself *before* others (1989, 289).

clearer than in his sexual and temporal relations with the island. For example, in a significant episode where he forgets to set the clepsydra that strictly regulates his civilised life, Robinson finds himself undergoing a "moment of innocence" in relation to Speranza.[9] In this moment, Robinson feels the presence of "*another island* (*une* autre île)", one where things are not given a human signification, but are rather returned to their essence, each "flowering in their own right and existing simply for their own sakes" (78-79). This feeling, moreover, is one that returns once Robinson begins to explore the elemental aspects of his sexuality—such as when, for instance, he "burrows his sex" into Speranza's earthly "loins" (103-104). The second stage of Robinson's development is thus one that is composed of a human tendency to rationalise and dominate the island as much as by an inhuman tendency to engage with Speranza's elemental nature on the basis of creative and experimental practices.

Now, one of the significant aspects of Tournier's novel is that Friday enters it at the precise moment that these two tendencies become crystallised in Robinson's mind. As Robinson soon realises however, Friday cannot but disrupt his attempts to rationalise Speranza. Indeed, although Robinson is initially successful in teaching Friday servility, responsibility and the difference between good and bad (120-121), it nonetheless becomes clear that "beneath the show of submissiveness Friday possesse[s] a mind of his own, and that what [comes] out of it [is] profoundly shocking and subversive of discipline on the island" (132). This subversive independence from Robinson's earthly order—signified by Friday's youthful burst of laughter (121) and dance (132) and by his intuitive relations with the island's fauna (138-140)—eventually culminates in Friday causing an explosion that destroys Speranza's entire civilized infrastructure.

[9] That Tournier should grant innocence a temporal dimension is not surprising, especially given Deleuze's famous equation of innocence with becoming in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006, 22-25; cf. Tournier 1998, 80-81).

And it is this explosion that in turn brings about Robinson's third and final metamorphosis. As Robinson recognises, the destruction of Speranza's earthly order is not simply a negative moment: the explosion also reveals the "underlying wholeness of Friday's way of life", and as such begins to point the way towards "*something else* (*vers autre chose*)" (154-155). This something else is more precisely the institution of an aerial order, where the elements are no longer constrained by the "possible points of view" (46, 187) that might imposed on them by human beings, but where they are rather made to resound for themselves in all their "splendour" and "mystery" (171). This Aeolian order is one, moreover, in which the linearity and circularity of time are disrupted: Robinson is now irreversibly "fixed in a moment of innocence", where each day "stands separate and upright, proudly affirming its own worth" (174). In a similar vein, Robinson's sexuality now becomes unrecognisable: the "anthropomorphism of sexual difference" and of his past human loves becomes meaningless in the face of his newly established "sky-love" with the sun (180).

In this way, it is "under Friday's influence" that Robinson undergoes what Tournier describes as his final "salvation in communion with the elements" (178, 180). It is Friday who, despite his seemingly human presence, is responsible for divorcing Robinson from his former humanity, reconnecting him instead with the elemental nature of the island that had initially done him so much harm. Such is the power of this transformation that, when finally faced with the possibility to leave Speranza by boarding a ship that has come to land on its shores, Robinson—unlike Friday—decides instead to stay. But he stays only in the presence of Jaan, a cabin boy who is motivated by Robinson's "kind eyes" to secretly abandon his ship and remain on the island (198). It is *with* Jaan that Robinson finally comes to embrace the elemental "eternity" of his "solar ecstasy" (200)—a fact which, as we shall see, is not without consequence for our assessment of Deleuze's theory of the Other.

2. Deleuze's "Theory of the Other"

With this sketch of Tournier's novel in mind, I now want to begin to make sense of the ethical position taken up by Deleuze in his review of that work. As we have seen, one of the salient features of *Friday* is that it describes Robinson's salvation as the last stage of a gradual process of dehumanisation and desubjectification. More precisely, Robinson comes to rescue himself from his initial desolation only by seemingly ridding himself of the influence that human Others exert on his perceptive and libidinal structures. There is, therefore, an apparent devaluation of the human Other at stake in *Friday*. At the very least, the novel's message appears to be that "if the society of others (*présence d'autrui*) is a fundamental element in the constitution of the human individual, it is nevertheless not irreplaceable" (96). More strongly, we might even insist, as Mairi Maclean has done, that "Tournier implies that only by dismantling the structure of *autrui*, only by transcending dependence on the other person, can the individual return to a communion with nature and thereby hope to achieve plenitude" (Maclean 2003, 235).

Now, all this holds significance for Deleuze in 1967 because this is a time when he sees himself as challenging the humanism that has traditionally dominated philosophy. As Deleuze insists in his many of early works, the tendency to engage with the world on the basis of purely human significations remains one of the most flawed aspects of the philosophical tradition. As he puts it in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, the traditional exaltation of the human not only prevents a truly perspectival engagement with the world (2006, 60), but also overlooks the extent to which "the whole human phenomenon" functions as an expression of those reactive forces that prevent a joyful affirmation of difference (86). Now, if we take these formulations seriously, then we must also recognise that the difficulties engendered by humanism possess an important *ethical* dimension for the early Deleuze. Indeed, according to this early Deleuzian schema, to adopt the limited perspective of humanism is to jeopardise ethics itself: it is to separate thought from the very powers of difference, and to thereby prevent it from engaging in the ethical task of

creating new modes and potentialities of life (101). In this way, Deleuze's early thought dictates that philosophy can become ethical only by shedding its conceptual dependence on the human. In Deleuze's own words: "to go beyond the human condition: this is the meaning of philosophy" (2002, 28).

In the context of these reflections, it is not difficult to see why Deleuze finds Tournier's philosophical novel so compelling. On Deleuze's reading, what *Friday* concretises is precisely an attempt to live beyond the human condition. As Deleuze insists at the outset of his review, the disavowal of the human is one of the key ways in which Tournier's novel differs from Defoe's original work. Where Defoe's novel portrays Robinson as simply recreating the human conditions of his earlier world, Tournier's work takes as its central "thesis" the elemental or cosmic relations between a solitary Robinson and his island (1990, 303-304). This thesis, moreover, is one that refuses to devote any significant attention to the relations between human characters and their respective internal psychologies. As an "experimental, inductive novel", *Friday* focuses instead on the world that Robinson comes to inhabit in the absence of all human others: the world without others (*le monde sans autrui)* (305). And for Deleuze, this lack of a human focus is the great ethical advantage that Tournier's *Friday* possesses in relation to the philosophical tradition.[10] The novel invites its readers to undertake the cosmic adventure of thinking beyond the human condition and the fundamental distinction between a human self and its Other (Thiele 2012, 58). In this way, Robinson's adventures provide more than a simple imaginative exercise. As Deleuze reads it, the real strength of Tournier's novel emerges from its ability to point beyond the philosophical tradition towards an affirmative, ethical engagement with the world that is unmediated by the reactive categories of humanity.

[10] As Valentine Moulard helpfully notes, "for Deleuze, it is precisely this process of dehumanization of Robinson Crusoe, in and through a world without others (since it is a desert island), which reveals the very structure of not just the possibility of ethics, but of its reality" (2004, 294).

According to Deleuze, the ethical stakes of Tournier's novel can be philosophically cashed out in terms of what he calls "a certain theory of the Other" (318). Broadly speaking, Deleuze's contention is that since *Friday* points beyond the human by positing the world without others, it can also tell us something about the ethical implications of living in a world *with* Others. More accurately, there are three major conclusions regarding the Other that "philosophical reflection can garner [from] what the novel reveals with so much force and life" (305). With Tournier, we can first begin to indicate the "effects" that Others have on our habitual world, noting in particular the role that they play in our perceptive encounters with the world. Secondly, we can come to a conclusion regarding "what the Other is" by specifying its formal structural role in perceptive encounters (305). And finally, we can draw out the ethical implications of this analysis by explaining "what it means for the Other to be absent" (305).

With respect to the first of these three points, Deleuze's central claim is that Tournier enables us to grasp the primary effect of the presence Others as "the organisation of a marginal world" (305). As we saw above, Robinson himself initially describes other people as illumining matters that would otherwise remain simply at the edge of his consciousness. Now, for Deleuze, this observation suggests that Others have an important organisational role in our habitual experience. As he explains this point, when a subject (who is in the presence of Others) comes across an object in the world, that object is not simply encountered in itself but it is rather "posited" by that subject as an object that is "visible to Others" (305). In this sense, the Other not only creates the distinction between subjects and objects, but it is also the foundation of objectivity itself. The Other effectually determines what counts as an object for a subject, just as it determines the content of the relations that are borne by that object. This is how subjects habitually live depth, for example: "what is *depth*, for me (…) I also live through as being *possible width* for Others" (305). And what this means, Deleuze insists, is that the Other effectually operates as a relativising force in the world: by providing the subject with a possible

conception of what might be seen as an object, the Other organises that subject's perceptual field in accordance with the categories of expectation and possibility. Indeed, there is little that a subject can be struck by or encounter whilst in the presence of Others.[11] In its primary effect, "the Other assures the margins and transitions in the world. He is the sweetness of contiguities and resemblances. He regulates the transformations of form and background and the variations of depth" (305). And for Deleuze, it is in this context that Robinson's initial desolation on the island is to be understood. What Robinson initially experiences as his exposure to the island is not a simple effect of his lack of clothing or shelter. More precisely, Robinson also begins to feel the collapse of the mediating role played by the Other in perception. For the first time, he comes into direct contact with an elemental world where only "insuperable depths, absolute distances and differences" reign (307). He begins to directly experience the *intensity* of an elemental world that is no longer relativised or rendered "livable" by the expectations and resemblances that are normally imposed upon it by the Other (315).[12]

From this initial analysis, Deleuze contends, we can infer a second point regarding the Other, which relates to what the Other is. On this front, the important conclusion to take from the reflection on the effects of Others is that the Other can be neither an object of perception nor another perceptive subject. If the Other were simply an object, it could not—simply *qua* object—play the organisational role in perception that even Robinson attributes to it. Similarly, if the Other were simply another subject, it would be impossible for its perceptive effects to continue

[11] As Deleuze specifies in *Difference and Repetition*, an encounter cannot be mediated by the categories possibility but must proceed "always by means of an intensity" (1994, 144-145).

[12] Although in his review Deleuze does not explicitly equate Speranza's elemental nature with the order of the intensive, this is precisely what is at stake in his description of the former as a world of "distances" and "depths". As Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*: "depth and distances (…) are fundamentally linked to the intensity of sensation" (1994: 230, cf. 50-51).

in absentia. But as we saw above, although Robinson is not initially in the presence of other subjects, he is nonetheless able to continue living in accordance with some of the perceptive categories that they effectually impose (his sense of temporal continuity, for example, is partly regained in his civilised state despite the continued absence of Others). And according to Deleuze, this entails that the Other must be seen as a *structure* that organises perception: "the Other is initially a structure of the perceptual field, without which the entire field could not function as it does" (307). As such, the Other is not the concrete person—or the concrete Other—that a given subject meets in the world. Instead, the Other is an "absolute structure" of perceptual organisation that operates "before" its relative "actualisations" or "expressions" in concrete Others (307).

As Deleuze argues, however, we should not take this perceptual structure to be merely one structure among others. Given that the primary effect of the Other is the organisation of the perceptive field in accordance with the categories of possibility, the Other is more accurately described as the very "structure of the possible" (307). Once again, though, this does not simply mean that the Other imposes his or her own possibilities onto the subject—as Sartre, for example, might hold (1989, 263-265). On Deleuze's reading, what the Other imposes onto the subject's perceptive field is instead the very *structure* of possibility itself.[13] This imposition, moreover, fundamentally describes what the Other is: "Filling the world with possibilities, background, fringes and transitions; inscribing the possibility of a frightening world when I am not yet afraid (…); constituting inside the world so many blisters which contain so many possible worlds—this is the Other" (1990, 310). But if this inscription of possibility describes the Other, we can in turn understand its operation only by linking it to the social phenomenon of language.

[13] According to Deleuze, Sartre never quite achieves this structural reading of the Other because he continues to define it by means of the "look", which once again places the Other within the dynamic of subject and object relations (366n).

Indeed, for Deleuze, if Other is capable of organising the world in accordance with the possible, this is because that organisation always bears an "inseparable" relation to the communicative exercise of language.[14] If, for example, the Other's frightened face comes to function for the subject as "the expression of a frightening possible world, or of something frightening in the world", it is only by means of language that that expression comes to have a reality for the subject (307). As Deleuze writes, "[l]anguage is the reality of the possible as such", and it is "precisely by speaking" that the Other "bestows a certain reality on the possibilities which he encompasses" (307, trans. modified). Although Deleuze does not explain this point further in his review, his main idea here seems to be that language has this power because it is essentially the transmission of order-words that express certain ready-made ideas and concepts about the world (2002, 15). Otherwise put, language functions as the diffusion of possible ways of engaging with the world, and it is as this communication of possible worlds that language imposes on speaking subjects the very structure of possibility. When Robinson begins to feel reconnected to his former humanity by writing, we must thus explain this feeling by appealing to the structure of possibility that the Other is. That is, we must understand the act of writing as Robinson's attempt "to maintain the effects of the presence of Others when the structure [of possibility they impose] has failed" (1990, 314).

Now, it is important at this stage to acknowledge that the association of the Other with the possible carries a strongly negative connotation for Deleuze. As *Bergsonism* had argued prior to the review of Tournier, "the possible is a false notion, the source of false problems", and that is so because by explaining the emergence of difference through the notion of possibility we effectively reduce that process to the concepts of identity and resemblance (2002: 98). As Deleuze explains, under the terms of possibility, real difference is always understood as that

[14] As Deleuze (and Guattari) would later come to define it in *What is Philosophy?*, the Other possesses "three inseparable components: possible world, existing face, and real language or speech" (1994: 17).

which bears an essential similarity to a set of pre-existent possibilities: “For the real is supposed to be in the image of the possible that it realises”, and here the process of realisation simply adds existence to a possibility that was already given in advance (97). But in fact, Deleuze contends, real difference always emerges through a process of genuine creation—a process of which the category of possibility is nothing more than an abstract or sterile representation. In the context of perceptive encounters, this means that to sense the world on the basis of possibility (i.e. the Other) is to grasp it only in terms of similarity and resemblance, and to thereby exclude from perception other, more creative dimensions of existence that might otherwise have made themselves felt. As Deleuze writes, in a world where the Other plays a role in organising objects, “[t]hese objects exist *only* (*n’existaient que*) through the possibilities with which Others filled up the world, (…) *only* (*qu’en*) in relation to possible worlds expressed by Others” (1990, 312, emphasis added).[15] Put differently, we might say that through the structure of possibility or resemblance that it imposes, the Other necessarily limits Robinson’s direct contact with the elemental forces of Speranza. Whilst Robinson is under the influence of Others, he can relate himself *only* to that which resembles the structure of possibility that is imposed by the Other; his contact with Speranza’s elements *only* passes through this “strange detour” that the Other is (317). And once again, according to Deleuze, this limiting function of the Other manifests itself nowhere more clearly than in Robinson’s relation to time and desire. As he notes, the subject who is under the influence of Others can “desire nothing (*ne désire rien qui*) that cannot be seen,

[15] When speaking of the negative structuring effects of the Other, Deleuze repeatedly makes use of the restrictive “ne…que” expression (cf. 306, 312, 313, 317, 318). This repetition performatively indicates that, for Deleuze, there is a certain necessity to the distorted shape that desire and perception take under the structuring influence of Others. Under such conditions, perception and desire become entirely “*dependent* on this structure [that the Other is]. I desire an object *only* (*Je ne désire d’objet que*) as expressed by the Other in the mode of the possible; I desire in the Other *only* (*je ne désire en autrui que*) the possible worlds the Other expresses” (318, emphasis added).

thought or possessed by a possible Other. (….) It is always Others who relate my desire to an object" (306). In the presence of Others, our desires thus bear upon nothing that is not *already* expressed by an Other's "little possible world" (313, trans. modified). In this way, the Other inevitably excludes a whole elemental dimension of desire that does not pass through structure of possibility that it habitually imposes upon subjects. Similarly, since it is the Other that "assures the distinction between consciousness and its object as a [successive] temporal distinction (….)—[as] what comes before and what comes after in time", the Other also unduly limits an elemental relation with time in accordance with the false categories of succession (311). In both cases, the Other is revealed by Robinson's adventures as "the grand leveler" of the elemental aspects of perception and desire—or of that intensive field where only pure depths and distances reign (312).

In all these respects, then, the Other appears for Deleuze as the factor that prevents the creative and inhuman relations established by Robinson through his experimental practices on the island. And it is with reference to this conception of the Other that we can finally explain the meaning of the absence of Others. The first thing to note here, according to Deleuze, is that the absence of Others does not simply usher in the collapse of the world. Indeed, although the Other clearly holds an immense power in organising perception, the subject's perceptual field does not simply become disorganised in its absence. Instead, and insofar as the absence of Others motivates the subject to live beyond the limiting structure of possibility, "things end up being organised in a manner quite different than their organisation in the presence of Others" (319). Now, crucially, as Deleuze recognises, the full sense of this new organisation is not simply given through Robinson's isolation. Although isolation certainly motivates Robinson to enter into new and creative relations with Speranza, it is only Friday who completes Robinson's process of dehumanisation by providing it with "its sense and its aim" (316). In other words, it is only under Friday's influence that Robinson comes to fully discover the meaning of the new

organisation imposed by his solitude; only Friday reveals to Robinson what it means to truly live in a world without Others. And for Deleuze, if Friday is capable of fulfilling this role, this is because—despite his seemingly human presence—he "does not at all function like a rediscovered Other" (316).[16] Indeed, even if Friday possesses a body that resembles that of a person (and even if Robinson is at times tempted to contemplate Friday's body as such), what his mischievous ways reveal is that he functions in an entirely different way to the structure of possibility normally imposed by the Other. As Deleuze puts it, since Friday's way of life not only "reveals pure elements" but also "dissolves objects", Friday should be taken not as "an Other, but [as] something wholly other than the Other (*pas un autrui, mais un tout autre qu'autrui*)" (317). Friday should be taken, that is, as the inhuman presence that finally leads Robinson towards a new organisation or "a new surface energy without possible others" (315).

In this new organisation, the elements that the Other had until now structured and organised become liberated: "the de-structuration of the Other is not a disorganisation of the world, but (…) the detachment of a pure element which is at last liberated" (313). Elements become liberated because they are no longer subordinated to the structure of resemblance or possibility that the Other previously imposed upon them. This newly liberated order therefore brings about some of its own distinctive effects. In it, perception can no longer be taken as that which is relativised by the Other. The absence of the Other "allows consciousness to cling to, and to coincide with, the object in an eternal present" (311). It allows the entry into a present, that is, where each thing resounds in all its splendour and mystery. But the effects of this new order are not merely perceptive. The effects also extend into the realm of desire itself, which now becomes equally liberated from the structuring imposed upon it by the Other. Where desire previously related itself to objects "*only* as expressed by the Other in the mode of the possible", it now becomes

[16] In the earlier edition of his review, Deleuze adopts a stronger tone with respect to Friday's lack of status as an Other: "He is not an Other (*autrui*), no more than he is a double of Robinson himself" (1967, 523).

liberated from the restrictions that this passage through the Other entailed (318, emphasis added). As Deleuze conceives it, this liberation consists of nothing else than the very abolition of the difference between the sexes. Beyond this difference, desire becomes related to its true elemental cause: "It is initially in the Other and through the Other that the difference of the sexes is founded. To establish the world without Others (…) is to avoid [this] detour. It is to separate desire from its *object*, from its detour through the body, in order to relate it to a pure *cause:* the Elements" (317).

But if Friday finally enables Robinson to establish contact with an elemental world without Others, what, more precisely, is the *meaning* of this absence of Others? For Deleuze, the meaning of this absence is the opportunity for cultivating a relation to the world that does not pass through the Other. Properly speaking, it is the discovery of an ethics that cannot be called human but only elemental. It is an ethics where what matters is not the Other, but that realm beyond the Other where the latter no longer plays a role in the constitution of objects and desire. It is a creative way of living, that is, where what counts is not our investment in the human significations of possibility and expectation, but rather our affirmative relation with an inhuman realm that fundamentally "precedes" any such categories. As Deleuze puts it, this is the sense of Tournier's fiction:

> A world without Others. Tournier assumes that Robinson, though much suffering, discovers and conquers a great Health, to the extent that things end up being organised in a manner quite different than their organisation in the presence of Others. (…) This is Robinson's discovery: the discovery of the surface, or the elemental beyond, of the "otherwise-Other" (*de l'Autre qu'autrui*) (319).

To be sure, this ethics of the elemental beyond is not one that any subject can enter into by simply ridding itself of Others (Bryant 2008, 261). As Deleuze readily recognises, there is never simply a world without Others: that world is always a fiction. But the world without others is also a "*necessary fiction*": it is a fiction that we *must* entertain, precisely because, in a way, it is

possible for us to do away with the Other (318, emphasis added). More accurately, it is possible for us to call into question the primacy that the Other has in structuring our perceptive world and desires. It is precisely this "possibility for salvation (*possibilité de salut*)" that is opened by Robinson's adventures (315). In this way, just as Robinson necessarily continues to edge into dehumanisation despite his encounter with a seemingly human Friday, so too must an ethics of the elemental necessarily be cultivated beyond the seemingly imperative demands imposed by existing Others. Only through this cultivation can the intensive aspects of perception and desire become liberated from the leveling effects of the Other; only through such an ethics can the intensive become well and truly sensed. On Deleuze's reading, then, the sense of Robinson's adventures is not the salvation of humanity in the face of adversity. It is rather the salvation of that intensive or elemental realm that necessarily "precedes" the structure of possibility that is expressed by any given human Other.

3. Responding to Deleuze's Other

How far are we entitled to be convinced by Deleuze's notion of the Other, and in particular by his claim that the Other functions as the grand leveler of perception and desire? This is the question that I want to consider for the remainder of this paper. My contention is that this question is crucial because the stance on the Other developed by Deleuze in his review of Tournier strongly structures the content of his early ethics. When Deleuze comes to speak of an ethics of intensive quantities in *Difference and Repetition,* for example, the Other remains one of the central pivots around which that notion revolves. As Deleuze describes it, one of the goals of that intensive ethics is the creation of a "pedagogy of the senses, which (….) reveal[s] to us that difference in itself, that depth in itself or that intensity in itself at the original moment at which it is

neither qualified nor extended" (1994, 237).[17] Put differently, what Deleuze's intensive ethics attempts to establish is a contact with those intensive regions of existence that form the conditions of real experience (232). Yet, and insofar as the Other continues to be defined by Deleuze as the structure that enables transitions and continuity, the Other can only be conceived as a hindrance to that type of contact with the intensive conditions of experience. In Deleuze's own words:

> The delineation of objects, the transitions as well as the ruptures, the passage from one object to another, (…) all this is made possible only by the Other-structure and its expressive power in perception. (….) As a result, in order to rediscover the individuating factors as they are in the intensive series (…), 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 (…) individuating factors [are] distributed in pure intensity (281-282).

What is interesting about this passage is not only its claim that the discovery of intensive factors must follow a reverse path to that made possible by the Other. It seems that that ethical

[17] Deleuze alters his conception of what may be called the site of the intensive between *Difference and Repetition* and the later *The Logic of Sense*. Where the earlier text sees the intensive as operating at the level of the "depths", the latter more closely relates that domain to the "surfaces". Significantly, this change is also reflected in the two editions of Deleuze's review of Tournier: where the earlier version stays in line with *Difference and Repetition* in conceiving Robinson's process of dehumanisation as taking place at the level of the "depths" (1967, 517), the later edition, as we have seen, positions Robinson's final discovery as the discovery of the "surfaces". Although these changes are certainly significant in terms of Deleuze's metaphysics, they nonetheless do not alter the goal of Deleuzian ethics. In both cases, Deleuze's primary ethical concern remains that of establishing a creative relation with the "preindividual" and "nonpersonal" conditions of existence, which he invariably equates with the intensive.

discovery also relies on the very logic developed by Deleuze in his review of Tournier: we discover intensive factors by moving from the effects of Others, towards a definition of the structure-Other, to finally encounter intensity in that region where the Other is absent.

But if this logic describes the movement of Deleuze's desired ethics of intensity, we must also ask whether this movement is able to withstand alternative visions of the Other. This is particularly significant because, as we have seen, Deleuze is able to identify the Other as the negative structure of possibility (and thus, the meaning of the absence of Others) only on the basis of what he takes from *Friday* to be the effects of Others. Moreover, it is Deleuze's analysis of those effects that determines the opposition established between the Other and the elemental: those two dimensions are shown as mutually irreducible because one effectually disturbs or limits the other.[18] But if Others can be shown to have other—no less legitimate—effects beyond those identified by Deleuze, would we then not also to have revise his ethical schema in accordance with those alternative effects? This would indeed seem to be the case. And it is at this juncture, I argue, that engaging Deleuze's stance on the Other in dialogue with Levinas' ethical philosophy can become a productive exercise. What Levinas' philosophy provides is precisely a conception of the Other which, despite retaining the idea that the Other is a structure that is fundamentally linked to language, departs in significant ways from the effects of Others posited by Deleuze. In this way, Levinas provides an ideal standpoint from which to evaluate not only Deleuze's theory of the Other, but also the ethical stance that emerges from it.

Now, we must begin this dialogue by insisting that Levinas in fact agrees with much of Deleuze's assessment regarding the effects of others.[19] To begin with, Levinas concurs that it is

[18] Or, as Deleuze puts it in *Difference and Repetition*: "The Other is not reducible to the individuating factors implicated in the system [of intensity], but it 'represents' or stands for them in a certain sense" (281).

[19] Gary Gutting provides an informative discussion of these similarities (2011, 128-132).

the presence of the Other that effectually organises the world into objects. As he puts this point in *Totality and Infinity*, "objectivity is correlative not of some trait in an isolated subject, but of his relation with the Other (*Autrui*)" (1969, 209). As Levinas clarifies, this means that objects have no light of their own *qua* objects: they always receive or borrow that light from another person (74). Indeed, if we could imagine a world where the Other was absent, there would also be no objects or things to speak of: we would be faced with "the world of things as pure elements, as qualities without support, without substance" (137).[20] We would be faced, that is, with what Levinas calls a pure relation of enjoyment, where the only thing to be sensed would be the elements themselves, and not their mediated images or forms *qua* objects. In the presence of Others, however, the subject is not only faced with objects, but it also experiences those objects as part of "a common world" that it shares with Others (173). That is, with Others, the subject experiences the world as continuous with certain ideas or concepts that those Others might feasibly hold. And we can in turn explain the possibility for this commonality by referring to the linguistic nature of the relation with the Other. As Levinas describes it, "the relationship with the Other (…) is cast in the relation of language, where the essential is the interpellation, the vocative" (69). And one of the aspects of this discursive relation, Levinas continues, is that it "*effectuates* the entry of things into a new ether in which they receive a name and become concepts" (174). Names and concepts that represent the world can be communicated and exchanged in conversation, and it is thus by means of language that the Other creates a world of commonalities for the subject. Much like for Deleuze, then, for Levinas, it is through language that the Other effectually imposes on the subject a possible structure for engaging with the world.

[20] We must speak in the conditional here, for if *Totality and Infinity* still implicitly posits the possibility of a world without Others in its analyses of enjoyment, this position, as we shall see, is effectively overturned in Levinas' later *Otherwise than Being*.

Where Levinas begins to disagree with Deleuze is in refusing to conceive these as the *only* effects of the Other. Indeed, according to Levinas, it is crucial that philosophy does not simply settle for an objective or optical interpretation of the Other. And the reason for this is that although the Other certainly operates to create and illuminate objects through language, it also produces a series of alternative effects that cannot be reduced to these functions. Most notably, when we are faced with an Other, we are not simply faced with the expression of a concept or a possible world. We are also faced with the expression of a being of flesh and blood, who, like the subject, is itself incarnated and "exposed to the cold and the heat of the seasons" (1998, 91). In other words, what we come across in the face of another is the expression of a kind of nudity or exposure to the elements which speaks for itself independently of any of the words or the light that it also utters (1969, 74). As Alphonso Lingis, commenting on Levinas, notes, "[w]e communicate to one another the light our eyes know, the ground that sustains our postures, and the air and the warmth with which we speak. We face one another as condensations of earth, light, air, and warmth and orient one another in the elemental in a primary communication" (1994, 122). And it is for this reason, according to Levinas, that we cannot reduce the effects of the Other to the common worlds it realises by means of language. Beyond what is said in another's discourse, there is also a dimension of language—a saying or a proximity—that is irreducible to the possibility and expectation that is expressed by order-words. Because the Other always faces the subject "as a skin with wrinkles", there is always, in the language that it speaks, an irreducible disturbance of the visible order that it also makes possible (1998, 93). Hence, for Levinas, the full sense of the relation between beings of flesh and blood "is not the fact that they take form for a look, present an exterior, quiddities, forms, give images, which the eye absorbs" (78). Beyond their positing of a common world, Others also carry effects that might, from a Deleuzian standpoint, be called intensive. They also carry effects that disrupt the sense of continuity and possibility that is communicated by language. Beyond the words that it utters, the face of the Other also speaks to the subject as the expression of a particular human-

elemental field of intensity.

If we accept such propositions regarding these alternative effects of Others, then we cannot, like Deleuze, simply equate the Other with the structure of possibility. Indeed, although for Levinas the Other remains "the structure upon which all other structures rest", the relation with the Other is also much more expansive than Deleuze's formula allows (1969, 79). Given that in the relation with the Other the subject is faced not simply with the images or concepts of the Other, but also with the elemental dimension of the Other's own incorporation, that relation can never simply consist of possibility as defined by Deleuze. Insofar as the Other also communicates to the subject "the light and the warmth and carnal substance of his or her face", the Other also gives the subject more than a simple limitation of the elemental (Lingis 1994, 123). The concrete Other also effectually communicates the elemental dimension that its embodiment bears; the concrete Other is itself a particular human-elemental field of expression.[21] To deduce from this concrete situation that the Other is merely a structure of possibility is therefore to abstract away from its other—no less legitimate and no less real—

[21] In his review, Deleuze appears to hint at a recognition of this point, particularly when he writes that "Proust says of the perceived Albertine that she encompasses or expresses the beaches and the waves" (307-308). This reference to Albertine is closely related to Deleuze's claim in *Proust and Signs* that, for Proust, Others "express a possible world or worlds, landscapes and places" (2000, 120). Nevertheless, as Deleuze also clarifies in that text, because these worlds or landscapes that the Other expresses "are made valid *only* by the [Other's] viewpoint of them, which is what determines the way in which they are implicated within the [Other], the [subject] can never be sufficiently *involved* with them without being thereby excluded from them as well, because he belongs to them only as a thing seen" (138, emphasis added). Otherwise said, for Deleuze, while it is true that Others can perhaps express elemental aspects, because the subject's exposure to these aspects is always and only mediated by the vision the Other has of them, that exposure inevitably falls short of the immediate communion with the elements that Deleuze sees Robinson as achieving. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me on this crucial point.

effects. And on this basis, much less are we thus entitled to claim that the Other exclusively functions as a levelling structure of perception and desire. Indeed, even if we agree with Levinas and Deleuze that the Other structurally creates a world in common for subjects, we must also recognise that there is more to the Other's operation than that particular function. If, as Levinas claims, the Other also concerns me before the images that it gives me, if, that is, the Other also expresses those intensive or elemental fields that Deleuze so much values, then the Other does not simply limit but also *enriches* my perception of the world. As Levinas puts it, beyond the common objects that it makes possible, the Other also establishes a temporality that disturbs "the common time of clocks, which makes meetings possible" (1998, 89). Moreover, a desire that passes through the Other does not simply have to become separated from its elemental cause; it no longer has to be a desire for "an object only as expressed by the Other in the mode of the possible", as we have already seen Deleuze insist (1990: 318). Since the Other, as a being of flesh and blood, also expresses its elemental nature, the desire it creates can also become "a desire of the non-desirable, (…) a desire of the strange in the neighbour (*un désir de l'étranger dans le prochain*)" (Levinas, 1998: 123, trans. modified). It can also become a desire, that is, of that which from the perspective of objects is not desirable because it is not yet an object; it can become a desire of that strange, intensive or elemental dimension that is also expressed by the Other's face.[22]

What becomes of Deleuze's intensive ethics if we accept this alternative definition of the Other? The first radical change effected by this definition concerns the site for the creative or ethical practices advocated by Deleuze. If the Other does not simply convey possibility but also a fundamental disturbance thereof, then it makes little sense to continue to claim that the only site for discovering intensive factors is that region where the Other-structure no longer functions.

[22] As Levinas clarifies in *Otherwise than Being*, this type of desire that is also non-desire from the perspective of objects is "a possibility included in the unity of the face and the skin" (192n).

It no longer makes sense to insist, as Deleuze and Deleuzians tend to do, that "an opening onto an impersonal and inhuman perceptual space (…) is entirely beyond the realm of other people" (Kaufman 2011, 112). Following the definition of the Other that we have developed, that opening can also be created *through* a relation with the Other, and in particular, through the elemental dimension that its embodiment bears. Now, one of the interesting aspects of Tournier's *Friday* is that it also seems to recognise the inherent value of this sort of alternative ethical model. In a particularly striking passage, Tournier describes how it is by studying the cuts and bruises of Friday's face and, in particular, the "intricate" and "infinitely precious" play of "light" in his eyes, that Robinson first comes to realise the possibility of "*another Friday* (*d'un* autre Vendredi)"—just as he had once suspected the presence of another island in his experimental practices with the island (1984, 147-148). To be sure, Tournier's novel never quite has Robinson return to this thought, since it is presented as soon dispelling itself in his mind. But the fact that it is included in the novel at all itself speaks to the intensive ethics that is proposed by Deleuze. What that ethics misses by casting the Other as a structure of possibility is precisely the set of creative opportunities that is hinted at by Tournier in this passage.[23] Excluded in Deleuze's assessment of the Other is that set of ethical potentialities for new styles of life that is also presented by the Other's elemental expression.

Above and beyond this, however, what the alternative definition of the Other developed above also enables us to grasp is that Deleuze's intensive ethics remains predicated on an unsustainable distinction between the human and the elemental. Indeed, if the Other, as a being of flesh and blood, can be a site for intensive or elemental expression, then we must also

[23] Deleuze glosses over the human significance of this passage in *Friday* when he claims that if Robinson looks into Friday's eyes, this is not because the latter possesses any ethical status *qua* embodied Other, but, on the contrary, "it is only in order to grasp (…) the free elements which have escaped from [Friday's] body' (317).

recognise, as Levinas insists, that the elemental itself bears traces of the human. As Levinas puts this point in *Otherwise than Being*,

> It is as possessed by a neighbor, as relics, and not as clothed with cultural attributes, that things first obsess. Beyond the "mineral" surface of things, contact is an obsession by the trace of a skin, the trace of an invisible face, which the things bear and which only reproduction fixes as an idol (1998, 191n).

What Levinas means here is that, since the elemental is always imbricated in the traces of another's skin, or in the traces of another's face, the human signification of those mediums of expression itself comes to inhabit the "purely" elemental or mineral surfaces of things. In other words, there is a constant contamination or imbrication between the human and the elemental—and this contamination runs *both ways*. As such, just as there is no human Other that does not already express a multiplicity of elemental traces, so too there is no elemental expression that is not already mediated by a range of human significations. In this sense, there is no purely elemental or intensive realm to which the subject can open itself up outside of the Other, as Deleuze insists. Because the human and the elemental constantly imbricate themselves in each other, any openness or exposure to the intensive always already involves a human dimension: "the immediacy of the sensibility" to the elements is, as Levinas argues, *also* "the immediacy or the proximity of the Other (*autre*)" (74). To found an ethics on the position that either one of these dimensions can exist purely in itself and in isolation from the other is therefore to found it on an arbitrary distinction that need not be sustained. It is to found ethics on precisely the type of distinction that Deleuze in his review equates with the limiting effects of the Other.

And once again, it is striking that Tournier's novel appears to recognise the necessity for breaking with this distinction between the human and the elemental. Indeed, if, as Deleuze holds, the lesson of *Friday* was simply that ethics should exclusively direct itself to an elemental realm, we might also have expected the novel to end with the figure of a lone Robinson

communing purely with the elements.[24] As Susan Petit notes, this possible ending would have granted Robinson a purely elemental existence (1991, 18). Yet, as we saw above, Tournier rejects this ending by placing a human Other—that is, Jaan, the cabin boy—alongside Robinson in his final elemental communion.[25] And what this decision reveals, I contend, is Tournier's sensitivity to the idea that ethics cannot simply limit itself to activity in *either* a human dimension *or* an elemental realm. Because those two realms necessarily contaminate or exist alongside one another, any successful ethical enterprise must also do more than simply posit the need for engaging with only one of their two sides as an ultimate point of reference. Instead, ethics must not only account for the imbrication between human and the elemental, but it must also be seen as taking place at precisely that level where those two dimensions overlap and co-exist. Regarded in this way, ethics becomes an enterprise that involves both an ontology of the elemental and a metaphysics of the face. Ethics becomes a task towards which the philosophies of *both* Deleuze *and* Levinas can positively contribute. And it is in this sense, I contend, that the notion of the Other should continue to play a role in ethics—even if that ethics is explicitly Deleuzian.

4. Conclusion

It has not been the aim of this paper to reduce the entirety of Deleuze's early ethical philosophy to the position he develops in his review of Tournier's *Friday*. However, as I hope to

[24] As Tournier reveals in a later interview, this was indeed his original conception for *Friday*'s ending: to have a lone "Robinson become a sort of stylite, standing immobile on top of a column, in the sun" (1979, 14).

[25] Although the earlier edition of Deleuze's review mentions Jaan in passing as someone who Robinson will have to "guide in the absence of Others" (1967, 519), the later edition remains entirely silent on Jaan's presence in the novel.

have shown here, that review plays a significant role in Deleuze's early thought, and it does so insofar as it establishes that Others cannot form part of an affirmative ethical enterprise. As we have seen, for Deleuze, the Other can only act as a fundamental barrier to a more immediate contact with what he calls the intensive or elemental conditions of existence, and it is largely for this reason that the Other's role in ethics should be restricted. Yet, as I also hope to have demonstrated by engaging Deleuze in dialogue with Levinas, although this position on the Other is certainly compelling, it is also unsustainable. What Levinas' philosophy reveals is that the Other can also have those intensive or elemental effects that Deleuze so strictly equates with its absence. And in this sense, Levinas' philosophy not only shows that Deleuze is mistaken in removing the Other from his conception of ethics, but it also points the way towards a more positive conception of ethics that actively recognises the mutual imbrication between the domains of the human and the elemental.

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