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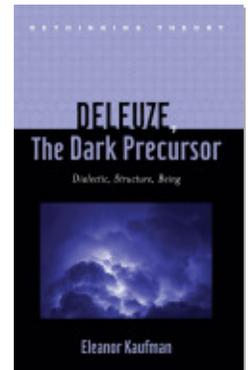
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Extreme Formality and the World without Others

THERE ARE NUMEROUS WAYS in which Deleuze's thought might be aligned with a generally recognizable form of ethics: from his beautiful Nietzschean meditations in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* on the ethics of good and bad forces as opposed to the morality of Good and Evil, to Foucault's famous designation of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* as a "book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time," to what are profoundly ethical late reflections on conceptual personae, philosophical friendship, and even an ethics of "life."¹ This is not to mention the Stoic dictum from *The Logic of Sense* "not to be unworthy of what happens to us."² While it is specifically the single-authored work from the late 1960s—if not the year 1967—under consideration in this chapter, at issue is a notion of ethics that might arguably not be recognized as one at all or recognized as in any way resonant with Deleuze. This ethics, perhaps more aptly labeled an "anethics," is a stranger and darker one than the more palatable examples listed above; it is an ethics more in resonance with Lacan as well as a certain structuralist imperative.

Lacan proposes a counterintuitive if not perverse definition of ethics in his 1959–60 seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*: "And it is because we know better than those who went before how to recognize the nature of desire, which is at the heart of this experience, that a reconsideration of ethics is possible, that a form of ethical judgment is possible, of a kind that gives this question the force of a Last Judgment. Have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you? . . . Opposed to this pole of desire is traditional ethics."³ If a Lacanian model of ethics is thus to not "give ground relative to one's desire,"⁴ I would propose that Deleuze of the late 1960s—and arguably the Deleuzian oeuvre in its entirety—twists such a dictum to the following formulation without ever stating it as such: *to not*

give ground relative to that place where desire is stopped in its tracks. In his extended consideration of *Antigone* in the ethics seminar, Lacan emphasizes the way in which Antigone's "strange beauty" stops desire in its tracks,⁵ and similarly it will be emphasized here the way in which the Deleuze who with Guattari would seem to be preoccupied with desire is in fact equally preoccupied with those zones where desire is arrested and, more often than not, arrested at that point where it resonates with a higher notion of structure itself.

The structure in question takes on different forms, which I attempt to delineate in what follows. But all such forms hinge on what Deleuze characterizes as an "extreme formality," and this combination of the formal and the extreme is central to the alternative Deleuzian ethics — or anethics — in question. This combination of formal and extreme is perhaps best articulated in the disjunction Deleuze repeatedly emphasizes between sadism and masochism and, beyond that, the disjunction inherent in the structure of sadism itself, one side of which is precisely that place where desire is stopped in its tracks, a place that is entirely above and beyond the structure of masochism, or even the first order of sadism.

Gilles Deleuze's 1967 essay "Coldness and Cruelty" first appeared in the context of a work devoted to Sacher-Masoch and featuring the latter's *Venus in Furs*. It was translated into English under the title *Masochism*, and in this context the rubric of masochism not surprisingly overshadows that of sadism.⁶ What I hope to draw attention to is the curious fact that, in a work that must necessarily speak to the question of masochism, Deleuze brings particularly acute attention to outlining the structure of sadism. Of course it might be argued that such an attention is critical to the understanding of masochism, and to some extent this is the case; but if the two forms do not rely on each other for their definition, why does Deleuze keep returning to the question of sadism in his exposition of masochism? This chapter claims that the structure of sadism, above and beyond that of masochism, is in strong resonance with a series of terms that traverse, in subterranean fashion, Deleuze's work from the late 1960s. Each of these structures points to a modality of ethics that is more nearly something akin to an anethics, insofar as it eschews the categories of the human and even of life but instead focuses on the highest structural order that can be reached within a given system (in this sense, it is not that far removed from Foucault's 1966 *The Order of Things*). Thus, Deleuze's

concepts of sadism, the world without others, the third synthesis of time, and the death instinct all mirror one another and reveal not only an extreme formality but an extreme state of stasis and nonbecoming at the heart of Deleuze's early work.

As I discuss in part 3, Deleuze has a somewhat fraught relation to the question of movement. Although he and Guattari are always careful to insist that there need not be actual physical movement for flights or becoming or nomad thought to take place, there is nonetheless a privilege accorded to becoming and the implicit movement it entails, so that a certain dialectic of movement and stasis tends to result, with movement being the favored term. This might be mapped onto Deleuze's privileging of the time of Aion in *The Logic of Sense*, which is that of the past-future conjunction that he opposes to Chronos, the time of the present. In his discussion of the event, we see an implicit premium placed on the movement of becoming:

The event in turn, in its impassibility and impenetrability, has no present. It rather retreats and advances in two directions at once, being the perpetual object of a double question: What is going to happen? What has just happened? The agonizing aspect of the pure event is that it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening.⁷

In the realm of the Aion, what counts is what has just happened and what is about to happen. There is a movement in two directions at once, but it is not a movement of cancellation. It appears that even in the intemporal form of time that is Aion, there is still a hint of movement—and this is what distinguishes the Aion from Deleuze's third synthesis of time in *Difference and Repetition*.

As I suggest on the chapter on Blanchot in part 3, Maurice Blanchot embraces more fully than Deleuze, at least in the twentieth-century French tradition, a being of pure inertia and immobility, so that, for Blanchot, movement or action ultimately leads to a more radical state of inertia, an *inertia of being* (as opposed to a seemingly more Deleuzian notion of becoming). Blanchot's fictional works present, much like those of Kafka, Beckett, and Melville's "Bartleby," characters who remain stuck in a hemmed-in interior space, a hotel room or apartment or concentrationary universe from which there is no escape, even if in some instances it would seem that the charac-

ters are free simply to walk away. This Blanchotian state of arrestation surpasses even the intemporality of Deleuze's *Aion* and invokes an interminable and immobile present over and above a convergence of past and future. Such an endless present marks a radical dwelling in being that in no way resembles the *parousia* of being or presence that is often under assault by Derrida and others. (Indeed Derrida's *Demeure*, as the culmination of a series of writings on Blanchot throughout his career, captures this Blanchotian modality of dwelling, of remaining, or living on — but as *désœuvrement* rather than *parousia* — as perhaps nobody else has done, though without an open embrace of its ontological ramifications.)⁸

Thus, in comparing Deleuze and Blanchot, it is not difficult to affirm that Blanchot has a more developed notion of stasis, immobility, and inertia, especially compared to the Deleuze of becoming over being, of nomadology, of lines of flight, deterritorialization, and so forth. But I want to suggest that there is a register in Deleuze's early texts that runs entirely against this divide and is often best discerned by registering which terms receive a positive or a negative valence in Deleuze's thought. (Of course that does sometimes change.) So, for example, in "Coldness and Cruelty," when Deleuze writes, "while Sade is spinozistic and employs demonstrative reason, Masoch is platonic and proceeds by dialectical imagination" (CC, 22), any reader remotely familiar with Deleuze's philosophical trajectory would know that Spinoza is always cast on the side of the good and Plato more nearly (though not uniformly) on that of the bad. Similarly, the dialectic (here associated with Masoch) is for Deleuze generally, though not exclusively as I have tried to show, cast on the side of the bad. Of course, it is never this simple: Deleuze has some surprisingly good things to say about Plato (this reader would even claim that Deleuze is perhaps, after Badiou, one of the most Platonic philosophers in the twentieth-century French tradition, although this study is if anything an attempt to recuperate his more Aristotelian side). Still, we have to take note, when seeing Sade so blatantly tethered to Spinoza and Spinozist ethics, that there must be something of enormous appeal for Deleuze in the structure of sadism, which, as he emphasizes at practically every juncture in "Coldness and Cruelty," is fundamentally different in kind from masochism. For Deleuze argues that sadism and masochism are not complementary structures, and to lump them together is conceptually inaccurate.

I will return to “Coldness and Cruelty” in what follows, but for now I ask the reader simply to consider the hypothesis that there may be something that Deleuze finds particularly compelling about sadism in terms of its structural purity — and it must be emphasized that these are impersonal structures above and beyond anything else, more than they are attributes of individuals. This is in no way to claim that Deleuze unilaterally disfavors the structure of masochism, to which he gives greater attention in this early study, for in fact sometimes masochism (as well as the neurotic, to take another somewhat comparable example) is described with epithets to which Deleuze gives negative valence (Platonic, dialectic, etc.) and at other times with epithets that are favored (humor, suspense, suspended gestures). To this end, masochism is the harder structure to pin down because it goes in several directions at once, whereas sadism has a purity that masochism can only aspire to.⁹ And, as we shall see, sadism and its attendant ethics, or anethics, has a remarkable affinity with at least three other distinctive structures in Deleuze’s early works, works written in the late 1960s and concentrated in the year 1967.

Published that year is the essay noted previously on Michel Tournier’s rewriting of the Robinson Crusoe story in his acclaimed novel *Friday*, entitled “Michel Tournier and the World without Others.” This essay provides a crucial if indirect elaboration of the structure of sadism, which is also a structure or space of extreme intemporality and stasis (and such a space recurs in Deleuze’s single-authored work from the 1960s and even appears to some degree in the joint works with Guattari, above all *Anti-Oedipus*). Here, Deleuze describes the world that the protagonist Robinson comes to inhabit on the desert island, which is the world without others. It is not simply that the Other is missing from the desert island, which it is, but at stake is the opening that this absence provides, an opening onto an impersonal and inhuman perceptual space that is entirely beyond the realm of other people. Deleuze writes:

In the Other’s absence, consciousness and its object are one. . . . Consciousness ceases to be a light cast upon objects in order to become a pure phosphorescence of things in themselves. Robinson is but the consciousness of the island, but the consciousness of the island is the consciousness the island has of itself — it is the island in itself. We

understand the paradox of the desert isle: the one who is shipwrecked, if he is alone, if he has lost the structure-Other, disturbs nothing of the desert isle; rather he consecrates it.¹⁰

Evoked here is something akin to a pre-Kantian notion of the thing in itself, a vision precluded by what Quentin Meillassoux terms the “correlationism” that is inaugurated by Kant, in short the idea that everything must be described as *relative* to the perceiving consciousness and not in and of itself.¹¹ We see something like Sartre’s “in-itself,” a level of pure being or essence that is not usually equated with Deleuze. And this vision of thing-being, of island-consciousness, is also an opening to an ontology of nonrelation. If ethics might be said to be about relations, and human relations at that, then the particularly Deleuzian ethology of this period is an ethics beyond anthropomorphic being and relation, an ethics beyond ethics, indeed what I am also calling anethics.

The realm of the world without others is notably intemporal yet also eternally present. It is hard to know where to fit it into the temporalities mapped out in *The Logic of Sense*, whether it would fall into the past-future conjunction of becoming that is Aion or the disfavored chronological time of the present that is Chronos. Ultimately, it is not clear that the world without others fits into either of these temporalities. Deleuze notes that, under the regime of the structure-Other (which is a highly Lacanian, if not Hegelian and Sartrean, model of the other as a structural field, one that is endemic to language and falls under the register of the possible — a term that, on the whole, appears in Deleuze’s work as pejorative),¹² spatial and temporal distribution and organization dominate the field, but in the absence of the structure-Other they no longer obtain. As Deleuze writes: “How could there be a past when the Other no longer functions?” (WwO, 311). It would seem that the past, or even the past-future conjunction of Aion, is something like a preliminary stage that is then subsumed by the world without others.

Furthermore, this world without others is curiously described as an “eternal present.” Deleuze writes, “[L]acking in its structure, [the Other’s absence] allows consciousness to cling to, and to coincide with, the object in an eternal present” (WwO, 311). Such a notion of the present is decidedly not the time of Chronos, which is another kind of present, but rather an eternal present. As outlined in the introduction, Aquinas, one of Del-

euze's proclaimed enemies, evokes a divine temporality that has striking affinities with Deleuze's eternal present. In God's time, there is no past or future and no succession. For Aquinas, God cannot be the result of anything, since he is the prime mover, inhabiting an intemporal eternal present that is very much like the world without others.¹³ The crucial point of distinction between Aquinas's eternity and Deleuze's notion of the "eternal present" as accessed in the world without others can be accounted for by Deleuze's concept of difference. Because the world without others is itself generated through a process of difference (it is not itself the primary substance, or first mover) and is itself the *product* of genesis, it is formed by an entirely different process than Aquinas's divinity, which by definition cannot be preceded by anything. It is this that distinguishes Deleuze's intemporal eternal present from a purely theological one: for Deleuze the world without others (or third synthesis of time) is not a primary order but a secondary one, which for Deleuze generally makes it better, something that is not the case for Aquinas.

Therefore, unlike Aquinas, Deleuze's eternal present is not primary but secondary or tertiary. While Deleuze is critical of a certain dualism present in modern psychology, and even in Husserl, a dualism for example between the matter "of the perceptual field and the pre-reflective syntheses of the ego" (WwO, 308), he affirms a dualism inherent in the workings of the structure-Other, one that is produced through a genetic process that stems from a difference in kind. Thus he insists:

The true dualism lies elsewhere, it lies between the effects of the "structure Other" of the perceptual field and the effects of its absence (what perception would be were there no Others). We must understand that the Other is not one structure among others in the field of perception. . . . *It is the structure which conditions the entire field* and its functioning, . . . [it is] the a priori principle of the organization of every perceptual field. . . . Real dualism then appears with the absence of the Other. (WwO, 308–9)

Not only is this a consummate articulation of Deleuze's particular form of dualistic but nonmediated dialectic, but it is also an articulation of the hierarchical structure of the succession of orders, the paradox being that the higher secondary order crucially dispenses with a notion of temporality based on succession. In short, the structure-Other is primary, whereas

the world without others, which is the higher order for Deleuze, is secondary. One might think that the world without others would be some sort of primordial, chaotic state from which the proper structural relation to the Other emerges (like an elemental Imaginary from which the Symbolic order issues, or something of the sort, though Lacan is never that straightforward). But that is not at all the case, for it is the reverse principle of order and process of genesis that is critical to the concept, because the world without others is a product, and a higher product, of the structure-Other.¹⁴

As discussed above, we see this same ordering in *The Logic of Sense* with respect to the incorporeal, which is at a higher level than the corporeal but also issuing from it, and the same holds with the rather elaborate hierarchies of art in the Proust book (all of these notably works from this same period in the 1960s).¹⁵ Almost invariably in Deleuze's work from this period, it is the second order, or the third order if there are three, that is the higher one, the more intemporal, immaterial and pure order, and the one generated from the preceding order or orders. Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition* of "the formless as the product of the most extreme formality," and this is the relentless if not cruel logic that connects all the examples at issue here.¹⁶ It is thus the recognition and description of this higher level that takes on its own sort of anethical imperative in early Deleuze.¹⁷

Such a logic traverses *Difference and Repetition*, more systematically than in *The Logic of Sense*, where it appears at its most acute in the appendixes. If the time of the Aion in *The Logic of Sense* might still fall under the category of a generalized movement or becoming, the third synthesis of time in *Difference and Repetition* falls squarely outside of it and resonates in profound fashion with the description of "the world without others" that concludes *The Logic of Sense*. Moreover, if *The Logic of Sense* anticipates some of the major thematics of *Anti-Oedipus*, above all in the early formulation of the body without organs, then *Difference and Repetition* reads as a quasi-paeon to Freud in a fashion that is no longer operative in *Anti-Oedipus*.

To begin with the third synthesis, it is delineated in opposition to the first synthesis, which is that of habit and the more Chronos-like present, and even to the second synthesis, that of memory and the past (which to a certain degree resembles the time of Aion in *The Logic of Sense*). By

contrast, Deleuze characterizes the third synthesis, invoking Hamlet, as “time out of joint”:

[T]ime out of joint means demented time or time outside the curve which gave it a god, liberated from its overly simple circular figure, freed from the events which made up its content, its relation to movement overturned; in short, time presenting itself as an empty and pure form. . . . [Time] ceases to be cardinal and becomes ordinal, a pure *order* of time. . . . We can then distinguish a more or less extensive past and a future in inverse proportion, but the future and the past here are not empirical and dynamic determinations of time: they are formal and fixed characteristics which follow *a priori* from the order of time, as though they comprised a static synthesis of time. The synthesis is necessarily static, since time is no longer subordinated to movement; time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change.¹⁸

Of import here, in addition to the articulation of the concepts, is the order of their presentation. Just as the cinema books might be said to be ordered according to the overcoming of movement by time, so too the height of Deleuzian genesis entails first a surpassing of movement and secondly a surpassing of time. The ultimate attainment is an empty and pure form, which is also a pure order, and with that, static. Time at its most radical is divorced from movement and is static. As we proceed, then, through the Deleuzian syntheses of time, we ascend to the higher, intemporal, static third order.¹⁹ Indeed, if much of what is considered to be Deleuzian ethics revolves around a type of becoming that avoids the stasis of morality, then at stake here is a rarefied kind of stasis that approximates being above and beyond becoming yet also in its formless (*informe*) quality escapes the realm of morality and its attendant judgments. It is the triumph of Kant’s second critique, which Deleuze himself alludes to in select moments in his writings on Kant, and this is taken up in what follows.

It is in this context that I wish to come full circle (though Deleuze’s notion of the circle in *Difference and Repetition* is ambivalent at best) and return to “Coldness and Cruelty,” because it is through Freud, of all unlikely Deleuzian models, that we can see formulated most clearly the connection between the third synthesis, the world without others, the structure of sadism, and the question of ethics. This connection is made via Freud’s

notion of the death instinct, as outlined in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which “masterpiece,” according to Deleuze, “is perhaps the one where [Freud] engaged most directly—and how penetratingly—in specifically philosophical reflection” (CC, 111). In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze clearly links the third synthesis of time to the Freudian death instinct, where he writes in the abovementioned discussion of the three syntheses of time: “Time empty and out of joint, with its rigorous formal and static order, its crushing unity and its irreversible series, is precisely the death instinct. The death instinct does not enter into a cycle with Eros, but testifies to a completely different synthesis. . . . [It is] a death instinct desexualised and without love.”²⁰ And these are precisely the terms used to characterize Robinson on the desert island. In the third synthesis, we see all at once the alignment of (1) time out of joint; (2) a rigorous, formal and static order; and (3) the death instinct. Rather than dwelling on *Difference and Repetition* and the complexities of its syntheses of time, which have been capably treated elsewhere,²¹ I wish to use this alignment of concepts to argue that, despite the neutrality of tone and evenhandedness with which sadism and masochism are taken up in “Coldness and Cruelty,” it is above all the structure of sadism that resonates most fully with this extreme space of stasis and intemporality in the work from the late 1960s.

Although Deleuze links both sadism and masochism simultaneously to the pleasure principle and to the death instinct, he takes care to distinguish between, on the one hand, death or destructive instincts, which are in a dialectical relation to Eros and governed by the unconscious, and, on the other hand, the Death Instinct (which he puts in capital letters), which is a pure, silent, and absolute negation that is not connected to the unconscious, since, as Freud puts it, there is no big No (or pure negation) in the unconscious (CC, 30).²² Deleuze links such an absolute negation to the second-order negation in Sade. The first order is a personal form of Sadean negativity that is imperative and descriptive (good sense?), and the second and related but higher order is one that is impersonal and absolute, even delusional (CC, 19). Deleuze writes that “the second and higher factor represents the *impersonal* element in sadism and identifies the impersonal violence with an Idea of pure reason, with a terrifying demonstration capable of subordinating the first element. In Sade we discover a surprising affinity with Spinoza—a naturalistic and mechanistic approach imbued with the mathematical spirit” (CC, 19–20). As indicated above, for Del-

euze one cannot surpass “the Christ of philosophers” and author of the *Ethics*, and it seems that this passage must be read, above all, as an extraordinary paean to the second level of sadism and its surprising Spinozisms.

In a similar vein, we also see the gesture toward an absolute if not divinely violent form of pure reason that in its extremity might explode and overcome reason’s law, and here it is not insignificant that Deleuze cites Lacan’s 1963 essay “Kant with Sade” (CC, 137n26). Deleuze develops this connection to Kant in the section of “Coldness and Cruelty” titled “Humor, Irony, and the Law,” when he notes that Kant’s second critique is more revolutionary than the first, for if the first weds us to the subject, the second establishes the law at such a level of pure form that it opens the path — a formal one — to its overturning. I quote this passage in its entirety:

The Copernican revolution in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* consisted in viewing the objects of knowledge as revolving around the subject; but the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where the Good is conceived as revolving around the Law, is perhaps even more revolutionary. It probably reflected major changes in the world. It may have been the expression of the ultimate consequences of a return beyond Christianity to Judaic thought, or it may even have foreshadowed a return to the pre-Socratic (Oedipal) conception of the law, beyond to the world of Plato. However that may be, Kant, by establishing that THE LAW is an ultimate ground or principle, added an essential dimension to modern thought: the object of the law is by definition unknowable and elusive. (CC, 83)²³

This passage sets up the paradox of the form or structure that, when pushed to its extreme, is static and formless, essentially Deleuze’s claim in his essay “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?” that Lévi-Strauss’s “empty square” is at once the arrival point and motor force (the “secret glue”) of his structuralist project. Are there not so many occasions when one does something out of principle, out of a strange and possibly even self-destructive loyalty to the form something should take, above and beyond the content or value? If push comes to shove, can it be explained *why* the principle is held to with such tenacity, even if the outcome matters little? It is this imperative to hold to form, and the attendant stasis or dissolution that may be produced — quite literally stuck on the formality — that Del-

euze explains on an ontological level. But following Lacan, can such an imperative be divorced from desire, and when it is divorced from any desire for content, does it not become an insistent ethics of form, one which then leaves desire itself somewhat stranded and by the wayside? Clearly such an insistence on laws of form can be taken to very bad ends, but it is hoped that the unflinching pursuit of an understanding of the *structure* may pave the way for different — and more positive — alternatives.

Deleuze continues his discussion of Kant and law with an analysis of the way in which masochism and sadism, each in its way, subvert the law. In masochism this is done through humor, through the downward movement of exploding the law from within by observing its very letter to the point that its absurdity is brought into full relief. But with sadism it is an issue of principle, and the overturning is transcendental. Through Sadean institutional anarchy, evil subverts Platonism and transcends the law from on high. Whereas the masochist is “the logician of consequences,” the ironic sadist is “the logician of principles” (CC, 89). While the relation between heights and depths is indeed a fraught one, above all in *The Logic of Sense*, I would claim that, without ever stating this as such (indeed Deleuze writes that the masochist “overthrows law as radically as the sadist, though in a different way” [CC, 89]), it is hard to come away from a thorough reading of Deleuze’s work from this period without remarking on the Deleuzian proclivity for heights over depths, for the superego over the ego, for the raging molecules over the agrarian, for thought over imagination, and for the thinker over the visionary. The former terms are all used to describe sadism, the latter terms masochism. Admittedly, there may be some ambivalence in the terms, and certainly they are not simple opposites of one another, to return to the oft-reiterated central thesis of “Coldness and Cruelty.” It may be contentious to claim that the thinker or philosopher takes precedence over the visionary or artist, but is anything ever higher than thought for Deleuze?²⁴ Even in the book on Proust, where art would take on the loftiest space in all of Deleuze’s works, it is art’s formality and purity, things accessed by the philosopher, that give it its high status. Creativity, after all, may proceed dialectically, but pure form, and pure thought, do not. Pure thought is the product, and the higher project, of an initial and more primary structure.²⁵

It is also notable that in his brief discussion of Kant, Deleuze introduces a rare form of speculation as to what produced this shift between the first

and second critiques, making the second more revolutionary. Leaving aside the Judeo-Christian hypotheses, which might be mapped more decisively into thinkers such as Derrida, Agamben, and even Badiou, it is notable simply that Deleuze makes a fleeting reference to “forces in the world,” for the world is decidedly not the realm that serves as the backdrop for his analysis (and on this point I concur with the focal point of Hallward’s *Out of This World*, if not its precise conclusions). Indeed, like the libertine sequestered in his “*tour abolie*,” Deleuze does not present a program for “applying” the structures of sadism and masochism to the “real world,” not that they cannot be so applied in his wake. Rather, he focuses on the question of structure as such, at least in the work from this period, and on this count alone, sadism, in its purer and more absolute structural logic, must necessarily be the higher form.

On the concluding page of “Michel Tournier and the World without Others,” Deleuze notes that in Sade’s work, victims are not at all grasped as others (WwO, 320) and he goes on to note that “the world of the pervert” (i.e., Robinson on his desert island, with his “desert sexuality,” as Deleuze calls it) “is a world without Others, and thus a world without the possible.” (Again, Bogue’s argument notwithstanding, the possible is almost always inflected negatively for Deleuze, so this seems to be a solid tribute to that world without others.) He continues, “This is a strange Spinozism from which ‘oxygen’ is lacking, to the benefit of a more elementary energy and a more rarefied air” (WwO, 320). This is an extreme state of negation, lack of oxygen, death, purity, sadism, intemporality, incorporeality, and an eschewal of the other and of communication and relation that traverses the work from the late 1960s and forms the hidden kernel of Deleuze’s philosophical project, which is on some level quite a dark one. It is Deleuze’s own dark precursor,²⁶ which is not so clearly visible from the vantage point of the later work or the joint work with Guattari, and which does not present a palatable ethics in the form of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* or some of the late writings. In fact it presents something quite contrary to these easier ethics, but something that is nonetheless an ethics of relation, if not to others then to the forces of the impersonal, the law, and structure itself.

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