

A pervert's guide to species extinction

Joff P.N. Bradley

Teikyo University
joff@main.teikyo-u.ac.jp
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Abstract

This article is structured in two parts. In the first part there is a focus on Deleuze's philosophy and in particular the question of desert(ed) islands. Running throughout this section is a consistent concern with empathy and sociality, with the changing structure of alterity in the identified movement from neurosis and psychosis to perversion. In this section, I make the argument that several forms of contemporary philosophy are carrying out acts of philosophical autism with regards to species extinction and the question of the absence of the other. I try to counter this trend in the second part of the paper, where there is a concern with thinking the structure "Us-without-world," which is my original contribution. In the time of the coronavirus pandemic, in the time of our forced solitude, in the time of our intoxication with technology, there is a real problem of the life-world, of thinking we-experience in common life, in this new hermetic reality. This is encapsulated in the thought-experiment of the structure "Us-without-world".

Keywords: island, alterity, Deleuze, isolation, neurosis.



Introduction

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Part I

The film *Cast Away* (Hanks *et al.*, 2001), the American survival drama film directed and produced by Robert Zemeckis and starring Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt, and Nick Searcy, is about an American man, Chuck Noland, a FedEx executive, who becomes marooned on a desert island after an air crash. Towards the end of the film, there is a scene where the protagonist wails the following at a FedEx package, a volleyball of all things, which during his time on the island, he became his mirror, simulacrum, and companion. He screams bizarrely and forlornly at the volleyball with a red-colored human face drawn with a permanent marker. As this last resemblance of substitute humanity floats away from Chuck's ill-made boat, he says:

Wilson, where are you? Wilson! Wilson! Wilson! Wilson! I'm coming! Wilson! Wilson! Wilson... Wilson! Wilson! Wilson! Wilson! Wilson! I'm sorry! I'm sorry, Wilson! Wilson, I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Wilson! I can't! Wilson! Wilson! I'm... I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry

Why am I considering this scene? In some ways, it explores Chuck's final physical and emotional metamorphosis. It explores deep-seated trauma, the trauma of being without others, without the World, without coordinates to think of the future. This mirrors the time of the coronavirus, which has made *our world* uninhabitable. The

consequent forced solitude or hermitage makes us withdraw into ourselves; we enter into communion with ourselves. We are adrift. Our island universes are adrift.

It seems that this film helps us to explore what we might call the neurotic trauma of the absence of others. What is it like to be on an island without humans, without the Other, without the face of the Other? What does it mean to become hermetic and isolated? What does it mean to be deserted of human relations? Furthermore, what happens to the hermit when Others are missing from the structure of the World? What does it mean to be in "an abandoned place" or instead to be abandoned by humankind?

Chuck understands this sense of abandonment and crisis of communication. He invents. He must do so. He invents an interlocutor. He exteriorizes his schizophrenia. This has a structure of a manufactured object. Chuck wards off madness by giving the object a name, Wilson. Nevertheless, like Robinson, Chuck cannot shake off his capitalist subjectivity. He cannot just learn to be on the island. He remains destined to return to the gleaming commercial archipelago of urban technopolis of work and reason (Lingis in Sheppard, Sparks & Thomas, 2005).

Cast Away is an excellent example of Deleuze's rumination of perversion, which appears in the section 'Michel Tournier And The World Without Others' in *Logique du Sens* [*The Logic of Sense*] (1990). I will turn to this below, where I will address three phases of psychical change, two of which pertain to depth, the other to surface. This is to explore the passage from neurosis to psychosis and the third to perversion, or what we might call schizophrenia, which is the discovery of a surface or what Deleuze will call "great health." I am trying to make sense of the possibility of conserving this "great health," whence contrasted with what Eugene Thacker (2015) calls the "great beyond" in his work *In The Dust of this Planet* or with what Quentin Meillassoux calls "the great outdoors" – the absolute outside – the eternal itself - in *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (Meillassoux & Brassier, 2017), which is his rumination on noncorrelationist philosophy.

Why is this important? I argue that the Deleuzian sense of "great health" retains the possibility of something new coming into the World. This will be explored in part 2 of this paper. Noncorrelationist

philosophy is entirely conditioned on necessity, on the impossibility of the possible. As such, nothing new can come into the World, whereas “great health” speaks of possibility and the Spinozist question of what the body can do (Deleuze, 1990). In the time of the coronavirus, and as we are all in our rooms and homes, in our own “island universes” (Shima chu 島宇宙) - (Miyadai Shinji, 1995), I went and looked at what we can broadly call island studies and the particular works there. I looked at Deleuze's reception of these seminal works. One such work is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Deleuze does not like this story very much and prefers Michel Tournier's *Friday or, The Other Island* (Tournier & Denny, 1997). A discussion about the island of *Speranza* (Hope) appears into Deleuze's work, principally in two short essays *Causes et raisons des îles désertes* [*Causes and Reasons of Desert Islands*] in *L'île déserte et autres textes* [*Desert Islands and Other Texts*] (Deleuze, Lapoujade, & Taormina, 2004) and *Michel Tournier et le monde sans autrui* [Michel Tournier and the World without Others] (1984), which appears in *The Logic of Sense*.

My thoughts about a pervert's guide to species extinction are as follows: In contemporary philosophy, there is a tendency or movement from a “world without Others” to a “world-without-us”. Furthermore, it seems there is a more profound perversion at work in this passage as we move towards a new structure which I shall coin “Us-without-world.” Indeed, this might be considered a kind of autistic philosophical thought experiment. In it, we find how a new form of perversion emerges. The Japanese philosopher Koichiro Kokubun has recently explored Deleuze's interest in islands in his book *The Principles of Deleuzian Philosophy* (2020). Kokubun refers to the phenomenologist Yasuhiko Murakami and his work *The Phenomenology of Autism* (自閉症現象学) (Murakami, 2008) to make a case for a less than coincidental proximity between phenomenology and Deleuze. Autism is taken because the World does not extend behind the things perceived. In other words, nothing is lurking beyond what appears to be consciousness. Kokubun writes:

We can now state why this is the case: mere habitation is not enough because for the desertion of the desert island to give way, we require the Other qua structure of the perceptual field, for it is the Other that brings about the division between myself and the objectile World. Lacking the Other, no such division can take place. (2020, p. 42)

Kokubun cites Murakami on the essence of objectiality, which is understood as not to consist “in what meets the eye” but “in establishing a permanence which transcends explicit ‘seeing’,” that is to say, “[o]bjectiality is not a given of sensation, it is a concept” (2020, pp. 63-64, n15). Continuing, Kokubun writes, “it is perfectly natural that Murakami's new phenomenology (a genetic phenomenology) and Deleuzian philosophy should resonate with each other” (2020, pp. 63-64, n15).

With these thoughts in mind, it strikes me that when one looks at Eugene Thacker's *In the Dust of this Planet* (2011), for example, there is a similar movement from a “world for us,” which he names the World, to the sense of the “world in itself” which is deemed the Earth. Moreover, following this structure is a “world without us,” a designated planet. At work in this thought-experiment, it appears that a kind of anti-humanist perversion and delight propels headlong into nihilism and entropic heat death. Furthermore, there is a nihilistic *jouissance* at work, an anti-humanism that delights in species extinction. For Thacker, we should not be here.

Nevertheless, Thacker's thought-provoking work is receiving a broad audience in and outside philosophy circles. In terms of the latter, the influence of Thacker's work is evident in season one, episode one of the HBO drama *True Detective* (Pizzolatto et al., 2014; see Graham & Sparrow, 2018). The writer of the show Nicholas Austin Pizzolatto has ruminated on the nihilism of Thacker's position and expressed it in the dialogue between the Louisiana State Police detectives Cohle and Hart in the TV episode *The Long Bright Dark*: We hear the following dialogue on the extinction of the species:

Rustin Cohle: Look. I consider myself a realist, all right, but in philosophical terms; I'm what's called a pessimist. I think human consciousness was a tragic misstep in evolution. We became too self-aware. Nature created an aspect of nature separate from itself. We are creatures that should not exist by natural law. We are things that labor under the illusion of having a self, this accretion of sensory experience and feeling, programmed with total assurance that we are each somebody when, in fact, everybody's nobody. The honorable thing for species to do is to deny our programming, stop reproducing, and walk hand in hand into extinction, one last midnight, brothers and sisters opting out of a raw deal.

Martin Eric "Marty" Hart: So what's the point of getting out of bed in the morning?

Rustin Cohle: I tell myself I bear witness, but the honest answer is that it's obviously my programming, and I lack the constitution for suicide.

Compared to this apparent will to extinction and nihilistic desire, which curses everything, as the character Yevgeny Bazarov says in Turgenev's *Father and Sons*, what might the "great health" look like? Deleuze will say that the idea of the absence of the other inheres the question of schizophrenia. When the other, the other person, and alterity as such are absent, this is precisely what prompts a crisis in subjectivity itself. So what avails us is a movement, expressed in Robinson Crusoe's life, from the neurotic nature of the structure-other to the psychotic nature of the absence of others *as structure* and, from that point, the perversion of thinking the "world without us." To further sketch out what this means, the neurotic perceives the Other as the *a priori* structure - a "world without Others." For the psychotic, the *structure* can be understood as the absence of the other.

Moreover, from this psychotic structure, the pervert or the perverse as such has the structure of the World without us. Let us look and consider further the sense of the Other structure. Deleuze says this has the sense of a transcendental structure. This is what differentiates and retains all possibilities, all possible worlds. In other words, there is always something structuring the subject.

Moreover, this will be how we can get to the other structure. This is what takes on a transcendental aspect. A key point here to stress is the possibility of possible worlds. As we have seen, the other, the structure, is the condition that sustains the separation of subjectivity from the World of objects. This is a condition that undergirds the break between the subject and object. However, when no other exists, the ego gradually dissolves or dissipates. The transcendental is dehumanized in the case of Robinson Crusoe, a newly sexualized Robinson, and the transcendental meet. Robinson becomes the island itself; he embraces and delves deep into its structures. While still exuding neurotic behavior, there is the effort to retain the structure of the other, despite its radical absence; we might think of this absence of the other in terms of despair. Deleuze says, "The structure-other is still

functioning, though there is no longer anyone to fill it out or actualize it" (1990, p. 313).

To return to *Cast Away*, in suffering and existential crisis and profound despair, Chuck has some form of a schizophrenic episode and creates *Wilson the volleyball* as the simulacrum for the other, as a simulacrum for the structure of the other, that is, the radically absent other *as structure*. Wilson, in effect, is the *structure-other*. In the neurotic loneliness of the island, when marooned away from the World and others, the question of pain, suffering, and regret lingers. There and then, the subject or the self reflects on past memories. Wilson is the mirror to draw back into memory, into the vortices of the infinite unconscious, into that which the other is, into that which alterity is.

Psychosis emerges From this neurotic episode. As this could be considered the production of the schizophrenia object, in some sense, the object becomes useless and has no place in the structure of the World. There is a corresponding dissolution of the structure of the other. There is a turn to "the bottomless abyss" (Deleuze, 1990, p.188). We might say that the island is the bottomless abyss and schizophrenia here takes the place of loneliness and despair. The "great health" might be the schizophrenic's *Friday* tude, found in the communion with the island *qua* transcendental structure. There is a movement from the structure of the other to the absence of the other *qua* structure itself. Correspondingly this is a move towards the "great health," a move towards *possibility*; the happy solitude of the person with schizophrenia is still such a possibility.

Thus far, we have discussed the movement from neurosis to psychosis, but in this happy solitude of the person with schizophrenia, one finds a peculiar kind of perversion of work. Deleuze famously writes (1990, p. 320): "The World of the pervert is a world without Others, and thus a world without the possible. The other is that which renders possible. The perverse World is a world in which the category of the necessary has completely replaced that of the possible." To reiterate, the World of the pervert is a world without Others, and this a world without the possible as such because the other is that which renders the possible possible. The other is what secures appearances before consciousness. The perverse World is a world in which necessity has completely replaced that of the possible. The pervert destroys or kills the Other. There is an Other-cide or altrucide at work

(1990, p. 320). In the *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze considers what happens when Others are missing from the structure of the World. He cites Tournier: "Everywhere I am not, total darkness reigns."

Furthermore, for Deleuze, this is "a harsh and black world, without potentialities or virtualities" (1990, p. 306). In such a world, the category of the possible has collapsed. He writes: "Instead of relatively harmonious forms surging forth from, and going back to a background in accordance with an order of space and time, only abstract lines now exist, luminous and harmful - only a groundless abyss, rebellious and devouring. Nothing but Elements" (p. 306).

The phenomenologist and Deleuze expert Alphonso Lingis writes in his philosophy of the elements how in Deleuze's reading of Tournier's *Friday*, it is Robinson's encounter with Friday which enables Robinson to be restructured according to the island's imperative. We can say Friday, like *Winston, the volleyball* averts the "catastrophe" or the complete absence of structure for Robinson or Chuck. Lingis writes in the essay 'The Elemental That Faces':

His eyes cease to function as a light source that circulates among objects visible before he comes upon them and remains visible on the margin of what he now sees. The colors and the shadows invade his eyes like opacities inhering in them, which the eye can no longer situate outside. His sight becomes a tube where a fragment of the visible abruptly blazes like a blow struck without warning. When other eyes were there, they kept the light luminous beyond the narrow radius of what was actually visible to him. (Lingis, 2018, p. 326)

In what follows, I will make some general points about how this argument contrasts with the speculative realism in Quentin Meillassoux's work and some of the literature around that new form of philosophy. I am principally interested in how to think about the movement from the "world without us" to what I will call the "Us-without-world." It seems that in the time of the coronavirus, in the time of enforced solipsism and the disturbance of ipseity (from the Latin *ipse* as self), in our "machinic solitude" as Guattari says in the essay *Remaking Social Practices* (Guattari & Genosko, 1996), and as we are marooned or cocooned in our island universes, what emerges is a new structure and foreboding prospects ahead of us, that is, of a structure of "Us-without-world." The question is: Is it a structure with or without possibility? This reading shows that this is an exhausted

world without possibility, a world of extinction. The exhausted World is a world without possibility. "There is no longer any possible," as Deleuze says. A perverse world is exhausted without "oxygen" (1990, p. 320). We can no longer breathe the air of possibility in this necessary World. However, what is the becoming of this new World without oxygen when the World of work and reason is radically cut off?

One sense of what the other is or what alterity is we can derive from Jean-Paul Sartre, who states *dogmatically* that the other is precisely the condition of our freedom. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre says there is no possibility and freedom without the other. The other is the condition of possibility for freedom as such. It is here that Sartre adopts a kind of philosophical autism. Sartre (1964) says that one needs the other to fully realize all the structures of one's own most being. The For-itself refers to for-others.

I need the Other to fully realize all the structures of my being. The For-itself refers to the For-others. (1964, p. 222)

The other[person] functions to provide depth, to undergird what lies behind those appearances presented to the subject. The other sustains those appearances and provides the backdrop to those appearances. Without this, we move toward autism. The other offers security that there is something beyond and behind those appearances as such. With the subject, the depth structure can stay strong. In a similar manner and regarding Robinson Crusoe, Lingis writes in his *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*:

In solitude, Robinson Crusoe learns the frightening nakedness of his eyes. He realizes that the eyes of others have extended beyond the narrow radius of things he sees, fields of things already seen or being seen by us; alien eyes extend the map of the visible. His solitude means that these other lights are gone, and black night narrows the visible to what he himself actually sees. (Lingis, 1994, p. 129)

Much anti-humanist philosophy of late has considered the possibility of reality without humans. Moreover, for some people, this is a radically new thought in the history of philosophy. However, before we address this view, we should note that such seductions already have a precedent. One example is found in the work of H. G. Wells, who, in *The Extinction of Man* in 1897 (Wells, 2019) writes:

It is part of the excessive egotism of the human animal that the bare idea of its extinction seems incredible to it. "A world without _us_!" it

says, as a heady young Cephalaspis might have said it in the old Silurian sea. However, since the Cephalaspis and the Coccostëus, many a fine animal has increased and multiplied upon the Earth, lorded it over land or sea without a rival, and passed at last into the night. Indeed it is not unreasonable to ask why a man should be an exception to the rule.

This great British science fiction writer considers what the planet might be without the other as such. However, in H.G. Wells's work, there is no delight in thinking of this World *without us*. There is no delight in this thought of species extinction. Compare this to the gleeful delight of a world without us found in the work of several modern thinkers who explore forms of nihilism to think about what the planet might be like without man as such. To restate the structure, Thacker's work has a structure of a world for us, which he calls the World. The world-in-itself is designated the Earth, and the world-without-us is named the planet. Schematically, we might explain this in the following way: the World is anthropocentric, the Earth is natural, and the planet is supernatural, fantastic, pure horror, or the anomalous in H. P. Lovecraft's language. In this reading, this is the planet without humans. The question is how can there be a joyous passage from the "great health" to the "great outdoors" or the World apart, as Quentin Meillassoux names it in his speculative realism? "great health" can be considered as pertaining to rejuvenation *by the Earth*. Dolphijn explains the sense of the "great health":

The feeling of being in a place more alive, warmer, and more fraternal, or better, to create one's life on another island, to rise from its wholly other, ungrooved soil, is conceptualized by Deleuze as 'a Great Health'...

[A] Great Health is mainly considered to be the future state that Robinson is anticipating: the new life he hopes to establish: the dehumanized Robinson, the ethereal double liberated by the island (along with the rest of the World). (Burns & Kaiser, 2012, p. 208)

Indeed, Tournier explores the state of pure joy of being welled up by the "great health" and overcoming.

He pictured his own lungs growing outside himself like a blossoming of purple-tinted flesh, living polyparies of coral with pink membranes, sponges of human tissue [...]. He would flaunt that intricate efflorescence, that bouquet of fleshy flowers, in the wide air

while a tide of purple ecstasy flowed into his body on a stream of crimson blood. (Tournier, 1969, pp. 193-194)

Tellurium subjectivity

Here we can think of Robinson's vegetative system as passing beyond the tellurian stage of propagation "without objective" to a becoming uranian, otherworldly, and sexualized (Lingis, 1994, p. 208). This is life in a zone of decomposition of the World of work and reason, "teeming in orgasmic decomposition and contaminations" (Lingis, 2000, p. 149). A summons from the elemental is heard. There is an escape from the organization of the World to the Tellurian, solar, and Uranian to find a new type of living (Lingis, 1994, p. 211). On this point, Dolphijn clarifies the argument.

Robinson knew he had the first to die to realize a new type of living order to find his Great Health. Death was his only route towards sustainability, to pick up the island's movement prior to humankind, to be released from religion and capitalism, to be released from the others, from the mundane preoccupations that turn us into minds in a groove. The oceans had to devour his boat and let it sink to the bottom of the sea without leaving a ripple at its surface. (Burns & Kaiser, 2012, p. 208)

Ray Brassier touches upon the "great outdoors" or World without us in his book, *Nihil Unbound* (2010), in which he draws on Jean-François Lyotard to make several bleak arguments regarding the depiction of the World without us. The world-without-us lurks in a form of "cosmological deep time," according to Brassier, who is often cited as being a proponent of speculative realism. This view sees the World as deep and futural, and despite the opposite tense, is akin to the ancestral World of the past in Meillassoux's work. The World without us is not bound by the anthropological time of subject-oriented correlation. Instead, for Brassier, following Lyotard, "everything is dead already" (p. 223).

Moreover, in his work, there remains the search for the "intelligibility of extinction." As he says: "[S]enselessness and purposelessness are not merely privative; they represent a gain in intelligibility" (Brassier, 2007, p. 238). In his essay 'The Voices of Things' (2011, p. 75), Lingis explores this strange and deep sense of cosmological time *phenomenologically*:

We exist on a chunk of rock and minerals whirling about in empty space where we see scattered in the dark voids a few other rock planets and stars, concentrations of fiery gases. We have hardly begun work into our conception of ourselves, our values, and our pleasures, the revelation by astronomy that the sun is burning itself out as fast as it can and that in another billion years, all animal and plant life on Earth now already 4.5 billion years old, will be incinerated before the exploding end of the sun. We must find a new conception of material reality and recognize the destination and destiny to which it summons us.

Let us return to the work of Thacker for a moment more to address his suggestion that the planet – the World without us – is logically inaccessible by the subject. The World is a real, withdrawn object. However, this is a world filled with hyper objects, as conveyed by Timothy Morton (2014). Thacker argues:

The world-without-us is not found in the 'great beyond,' that which is exterior to the World, that is the world-for-us, nor is it found in the Earth as the world-in-itself, but rather, the planet is the abyss, the interkingdom, between the World and the Earth. (2011, no page)

Without access to the withdrawn object, the object is beyond thought. Why so? In this view, is there not a perverse desire at work, a desire or fantasy that stems from the rejection of the possibility of the *human World* itself? This is fantasy at its purest, as Slavoj Žižek will say in his critique of Alan Weisman's *World Without Us* (2014).

[F]or its 'world without us' portrayal of 'the Earth itself regaining its pre-castrated state of innocence,' anchored around a conceit of desiring to witness one's non-existence.

The World without us" is thus fantasy at its purest: witnessing the Earth itself retaining its pre-castrated state of innocence before we humans spoiled it with our hubris.

The irony is that the most prominent example comes from the catastrophe of Chornobyl: the exuberant nature taking over the disintegrating debris of the nearby city of Pripjat, which was abandoned and left the way it was. (Žižek, 2014, no page; see Taylor & Hughes, 2016)

I hope I have made a distinction here between what the “great health” might mean in Deleuze’s work when compared to the “great beyond” in Thacker’s work or the “great outdoors” in Quentin

Meillassoux's work. However, the issue is clouded as art preempts reality during the coronavirus. In a work called *Human Disqualification*, artist Yuan Guang-ming shows images of Taipei, where humans are absent, airbrushed out of existence. However, life goes on without humans. The lights are on, you could say, but humans are no more. Again, there is a civilization at work, but there are no humans as such. Like the thinkers above Thacker and Brassier, Yuan Guang-ming's art expresses curiosity and delight in addressing landscapes and vistas eerily without the World of humans. There is still some semblance of order, even though humans are entirely absent. There remain the structures of roads and railways but without transportation as such. These images are also found in the everyday photographs taken during the coronavirus. Like messages in a bottle sent by those on desert(ed) islands, they are taken by people stunned by the absence of the other. When life on Earth has literally stopped, images are disseminated exploring subways, tourist spots, and train stations, entirely without movement. The cities represented are depopulated and deprived of vitality. The everyday rushing to and fro is halted, the usual throng of people falls away, and trains are evacuated of customers. There are tours without people. There are congregations without people. We also have the perversion of a university without students, without a student body. We cannot even ponder, as Deleuze does following Baruch de Spinoza in his *Ethics*: "We do not even know what a body is capable of..." and again, "We do not even know of what affections we are capable, nor the extent of our power" (Deleuze & Joughin, 1990, p. 226).

I agree with Steven Swarbrick (2018) here that the "world without others" that Deleuze ponders in the appendix to the *Logic of Sense* is thought-provoking as it acts as a "philosophical guide" or prelude to the "world-without-us" (p. 105). It suggests a rumination on the deep, cosmological time of the World without humans. Swarbrick writes: "The 'world without Others' that Deleuze theorizes is thus a philosophical guide to the 'world without us' that the Anthropocene forecasts" (p. 105). It seems to me that what I have been thinking about is how to criticize the perversion of thinking "Us-without-world." If somehow the World is radically cut off from us and we are marooned or cocooned in our own ipseity, in our *machinic solitude*, with no way to communicate with the other, no way to communicate face to face, no way to form a relationship with the outside world as

such, what is fundamental is to understand that the object is essentially cut off from the subject, which is to say, what we are left with is necessity itself and the loss of possibility.

Thus it is timely to think about what the World means in terms of the possibility of what might emerge from the structure of "Us-without-world." Here I am less inclined to celebrate necessity or the exhaustion and impossibility of the possible. From my point of view, if the object is entirely withdrawn and inaccessible, it is untimely to think *perversely* about the Us in the "Us-without-world." It is time to return to subjectivity and the question of the much-maligned creature – *the human and its becoming*. This I shall address further in Part II below.

Part II

I return to the question of ipseity. I am writing in my own solipsistic enchainment, my own hermetic island of withdrawal, quarantine, confinement, isolation, and loneliness. In this deserted space, there is an absolute perversion in this new World of mine, not so much a "world without Others" as a "Us-without-world." Thinking from the "world without Others" to the "world-without-us" and then "Us-without-world" has taken on a life of its own in the time of the coronavirus pandemic because it is in this time that the question of the island or the desert even has taken on a real existential quality. What is my island of withdrawal? This is explicated brilliantly by French philosopher Catherine Malabou (2020), who, in her own quarantine, spoke about the island of the self in withdrawal, in isolation, in confinement. For her, it became clear that one has to find the possibility of building a world with and for others in one's own moment of withdrawal. In my language, this is to struggle against the deadly centripetal cycles of the self, what one can call the *deadly cycles of ipseity*. This sense of a deadly form of ipseity is clearly at odds with the arguably insurrectionary exoticism of Lingis, who describes ipseity as:

Torments of pleasure separate and turn on themselves, engendering spirals of ipseity. Pulses of pleasure and spasms of pain vibrate on themselves, feel themselves. The eddy of a self is formed in this conjunctive synthesis-multiple vagabond ipseities, here today, gone tomorrow, circulating on the surface of the body without organs. (Lingis, 2002, p. 98)

My sense of a deadly form of ipseity is the self that turns inwards, burrows itself deeper into itself, feasts on its own narcissism and melancholia, and festers in its own brooding obsessions. We must resist this gnawing, aching, toiling sense of *désœuvrement* or desolation.

In the time of the coronavirus pandemic, Malabou has spoken beautifully about the thought experiment of withdrawing into the self, into “the island of the self,” and from there to begin to ruminate upon new forms of sociality, new forms of understanding of alterity as such. It is in the “bracketing of sociality,” in the *epokhē* or “suspension of judgment,” that one can access alterity. She says: “I am trying to be as solitary as possible in my loneliness.” In her lecture on Rousseau and quarantine, Malabou (2020) says that it is only in withdrawing into the self in a time of isolation that one can truly understand what alterity is as such. For me, this is the beginning of the reconstruction of transindividuation circuits in Bernard Stiegler's sense – circuits between the generations. It is only by withdrawing into the self that one can come to understand what the Other is and what being-with is as such. As Malabou says: “I noticed that writing only became possible when I reached such a confinement within confinement, a place in the place where nobody could enter and that at the same time was the condition for my exchanges with others.” You might call this a philosophical or phenomenological task, perhaps even a moment of grace or epiphany, but another way to put this is to say that the *epokhē*, suspension, and interruption, which the virus has prompted, has opened up a “third world” of thought, as Bernard Stiegler says following Popper (Stiegler, 2020), which is to say, the possibility of sublimation, the possibility of new forms of negentropic knowledge (Stiegler, 2018). This is a form of knowledge that cannot be anticipated, that is, a form of thought brought into the World for the first time, at once incalculable and incomprehensible. There is resistance to the World of necessity. In this crisis, a time of the breaking down of the every day, reorientation is possible. Malabou invokes Foucault's ethics of the self, the care of and technologies of the self to understand isolation. Moreover, she sounds Heideggerian when she says that knowing how to find “society within oneself” to understand politics is necessary. In terms of the latter, her suggestions prompted me to look at *Being and Time* again and think about the existential found there differently.

Out of this poverty of living a life without the World, there is an opportunity to reflect on this radical and conspicuous absence of a life without a world. This suggests that we can *think otherwise* regarding the crisis of living a life without the World, of being outside the World and not with a world; we can think beyond it. In the poverty of living a life without the World, there is the opportunity to think about the possibility of future worlds; indeed, we can pose a radical critique of the present World in the name of a future world as such. Containment thus proves to be an opportunity to think about the concept of "Us-without-world" – that is, the World subtracted from the self. That we are without a world suggests that we are "poor in the world," as Heidegger says of the animals, and "without world" in the case of inanimate objects like rocks, that we do not have a world, that we are somehow subtracted from the World, that we are somehow despairingly deficient, that we have a deficient mode of solicitude or being (*defizienter modus*). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that being-alone is a deficient mode of Dasein's being-with:

Being-alone is a deficient mode of being-with; its possibility is proof of the latter. On the other hand, factual being alone is not changed by the fact that a second instance of a human being is "next to" me, or by ten such human beings. Even when these and still more are present, Dasein can be alone. Thus, being-with and the facticity of being-with-one-another are not based on the fact that several "subjects" are physically there together. (Heidegger, 2010, p. 121)

And again

Being for-, against-, and without-one-another, passing-one-another-by, not mattering- to-one-another, are possible ways of concern. Moreover, precisely the last named modes of deficiency and indifference characterize the everyday, average being-with-one-another. These modes of being show the characteristics of inconspicuousness and obviousness, which belong to everyday inner-worldly Dasein-with of others and the handiness of useful things taken care of daily. These indifferent modes of being-with-one-another tend to mislead the ontological interpretation into initially interpreting this being as the pure objective presence of several subjects. It seems as if only negligible variations of the same kind of being lie before us. However, ontologically, there is an essential distinction between the "indifferent"

being together of arbitrary things and the not-mattering-to-one-another of beings who are with one another. (Heidegger, 2010, p. 122)

However, in the existential of "Us-without-world," we are not of the World if the structure of *Mitsein* or being-with is remote or distant. Where I dwell, there was once a world around me that had the structure of everydayness. That has gone. The abstract, impersonal, and automatic signals, alerts, messages, and announcements of my every day working and commuting World have all fallen silent. I no longer move. I no longer travel. I am hermetic, which is to say isolated. There is no outside. The collapse of this everydayness reveals through its present-at-handedness that the World is not there around me; it is not there around us. I am alone. Cocooned in my funk at home, through the zooming in and zooming out of technology, the World is *de-severed* from me further. Yes, the World comes to me, and I become a far-seer of the World. The zooming in and out of the World of technology brings the far-ness of the World into close proximity. Technology zooms in on me, brings others from far-ness into nearness, into close proximity, manifesting much anxiety and paranoia *for both parties* in the process of bringing to the nearness that which is far away. This has become something of a mirror.

From this shared mutual trauma, what is revealed in the breakdown of the every day is a tendency to eliminate remoteness, to undermine the intimacy of where one dwells. Intimacy has absconded too. My dwelling is no more. What is far away is brought nearer and nearer to the extent that its present-at-handedness is disclosed. In my withdrawal, there is a de-severance of both the self and the World. There is a deadly ipseity of the self. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger says being alone is a deficient mode of *being-with* as there is no leaping over to the other. The is leaping *in for him*, displacing the other, rendering the other dependent and dominated, and leaping *ahead of him* to authentically give care back as such (122). Alternatively, there is no leaping over to the other in the zooming in and out of technology. If it were the case that there could be a leaping over towards the other through technology-mediated solicitude, then the other would become transparent to itself and thus emancipated, as Heidegger says. But no. In the zooming in and zooming of technology, there is a commandeering of the other, control of the other; we are left marooned, existentially quarantined by this unfreedom.

However, can we think of this pulverizing state of affairs otherwise? We can. In the collapse of the World and the everyday, do we not find a certain sense of openness in solicitude and, in that existential space, the possibility of rethinking the World as it is? Rosi Braidotti recently (2020) has responded to the so-called extinction enthusiasts, to the purveyors of worlds without us, without others, and without empathy. In this World, there is neither morality nor sociality. There is no experience and consciousness as such. There is nothing but necessity. There is no *we-experience* but only a phenomenology of the One, pure immanence, replete, pure inert being-in-itself – death and extinction. There is no memory, subject or object, or inter-subjective relation. The *Lebenswelt* is entirely erased as this universe of purported self-evident givenness is a world without subject and experience as such. There is no possibility of “we” or “us.” Writing against this toxic form of thought, Braidotti speaks of affirmative ethics in the wake of this orgy of extinction fever. I have interpreted her in the following way to help make sense of my ownmost isolation. We must think of new forms of affirmative ethics and action in isolation. This means to use Braidotti’s language, to take “suffering as a source of information.” We must understand our collective suffering, the being-alone as a deficient mode of being-with during the coronavirus. Alternatively, in my words, we must understand the suffering of Us-without-world and draw out its possibilities from that. There is a clarion call in Braidotti’s work to think beyond the negative passions, starting from acknowledging pain and suffering. There is no time to indulge or wallow in this moment as these are real, fundamental structural issues to change. Isolation is an opportunity for all people who suffer from isolation to make isolation and suffering a source of information and, thus, a source of renewal: She says: “Out of our serious difficulties, we must extract ways to understand our position as being worthy of our times.” Braidotti asks what kind of ethics we need in times of crisis. Her answer, following her teacher Deleuze, is to be worthy of what happens to us in the wound of the present, a wound which, if we follow the etymology of the word, is a plague on us all, or in our time, a virus on us all. In other words, one must know deserted islands, that is to say, to first face our ownmost deserted state of being. During the coronavirus, the collective task is to create a sense of hope or renewal. She argues that isolation is a way to reconstitute community, find “the missing people,” and create other alternative ways of living and becoming.

Conclusion

With the loss of the lifeworld and the impossibility of “we,” the “I” takes on a floating, spectral presence. The subject is desubjectified, and the object deobjectified. Without alterity to sustain the constitution of the subject, there can be no inter-subjective foundation of the social. We fall into solipsistic, petrified relations without common life. There is a deactualization of "I" - a closing in on the self, a deadly spiral of ipseity. Against this, I propose and designate Us-without-world, a world with possibility.

We must find new ways to zoom in and out of alterity during the coronavirus pandemic to return subjectivity to itself as a source of creation and sufficiency. This is to resist the deficiency of a world-without-us. Instead, in the bleak moment of finding ourselves Us-without-world, we must find islands of recuperation as we zoom across oceans of toxic, nihilistic information if only to return subjectivity to itself and to begin our innermost and outermost downgoing again.

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