



PERFORMANCE  
PHILOSOPHY

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## THE TRAGEDY OF THE GREEK DEBT CRISIS: TO BE DONE WITH JUDGMENT

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Since the first memorandum “agreement” between Greece and its international creditors—the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the “tragedy of the Greek debt crisis” has become one of the most popular narratives that frame Greece’s condition of indebtedness. Representatives of the Greek joint government of SYRIZA-ANEL, of Greece’s creditors, of Greece’s official opposition, members of the Parliament of Greece, members of the European Parliament, journalists, activists, and so forth, all use notions of “tragedy” in order to associate the indebtization of Greece with what appears to be a “debt crisis.”

Highlighting the interplay between appearances of “debt crisis” and notions of tragedy as its point of departure, the first section of this essay builds on Nietzsche’s thought and introduces a rigorous philosophy of tragedy that understands what appears to be a “debt crisis” as, in fact, a crisis of the creditor’s capacity to appropriate their debtor. For Nietzsche, in order for the creditor to find new ways to appropriate their debtor, the creditor stages a series of acts of judgment (κρίσις) that introduce masks and appearances of their debtor’s redemption. Drawing upon the interplay between the notion of mask and its performative capacities, Nietzsche’s philosophy of tragedy frames redemption in terms of an appearance and an illusion that conceals and perpetuates the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor. Nietzsche’s emphasis on the interrelations between masks of redemption and the reproduction of creditor/debtor power differentials, allow me to argue that Nietzsche’s works on tragedy lay the ground for the emergence of becomings that are beyond indebtization, judgment and redemption.

In the second section of this essay I make the case that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari draw upon Nietzsche’s philosophy of tragedy in order to grasp the interdependencies between capitalistic

modes of production and the production of infinite debt. I argue that just like redemption in Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy, exchange in Deleuze and Guattari introduces appearances of equalization that render debt infinite. I closely examine how, within frames of capitalistic production, the interdependencies between the production of infinite debt and appearances of exchange give capital the opportunity to generate itself from credit.

In the third section of this essay I build on Deleuze and Guattari's readings of Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy and on Maurizio Lazzarato's works on Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari and I argue that what appears to be a "Greek debt crisis" is a crisis of capital's capacity to secure its growth. I understand the austerity projects that were launched in Europe of the so-called financial crisis of 2008–9 as capital's experimentations with new ways of exploitation. In the fourth and final section of this essay I place particular emphasis on the "YES" and "NO" demonstrations that occurred two days before the Greek bailout referendum of 2015. I make the case that while the "YES" demonstration reenacted the infinitization of Greece's indebtedness to its creditors, the "NO" demonstration celebrated collective conceptualizations of politics that exceed debt and austerity.

If the indebtization of Greece builds on appearances of debt resolution then we need scholarship that grasps the interconnections between the performative capacities of these appearances and what is often promoted and experienced as "the reality" of indebted Greece. In *What is Philosophy?* (1994), Deleuze and Guattari call for a philosophy that profits from "donning a mask" (43) by turning the force of the mask—a force that, I contend, is both theatrical and performative—towards the mask itself. From this point of view, the "task" of philosophy is to keep scattering the mask into multiple masks by continuously dressing it up. As a scholarship concerned with the common grounds between performance and philosophy, Performance Philosophy not only sheds light on the interconnections between the "real" aspects of the mask and the masked aspects of "reality" but also grasps the revolutionary potentialities that the scattering of the mask into multiple masks entails. In the comments that follow I introduce a philosophy of tragedy that draws upon the works of Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari and that, I argue, understands debt resolution as a mask the performative capacities of which are linked to the reproduction of the asymmetries between Greece and its international creditors. I trace the disruption of these asymmetries in the diffusion of the masks of redemption into multiple masks that move beyond notions of resolution.

### **Nietzsche's Philosophy of Tragedy and Performances of Redemption**

In *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche introduces a philosophy of tragedy that grasps that redemption can often perform as an illusion, a mask, and an appearance of resolution that conceals and perpetuates the non-resolvability of the power relations between a creditor and a debtor. From this point of view, the relation between resolution and the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor is not a relation of opposition or contradiction. The masks and appearances of resolution are part of the production of the creditor/debtor power differentials.

The notion of “redemption by illusion” first appears in *The Birth of Tragedy* ([1872] 1993) where Nietzsche conceptualizes attic tragedy in terms of two forces: the Apolline and the Dionysiac. Apollo is the one who finds “pleasure” and “delight” in “longing for illusion and for redemption by illusion” (24). Additionally, according to Nietzsche, that illusion performs as if it is not an illusion but reality. Nietzsche writes “an illusion that we, utterly caught up in it and consisting of it—as a continuous becoming in time, space and causality, in other words—are required to see as empirical reality” (24). However, this grasp of illusionary redemption as appearances and performances of reality does not imply that the destruction of the illusion will reveal a supposed actual reality that lies underneath.

On the contrary, for Nietzsche the disruption of the Apolline “redemption by illusion” can only emerge from the Dionysiac affirmation of the Apolline mask. The force of Dionysus is a force that affirms that redemption is an illusion that performs as the one and only reality that there is. As Nietzsche writes, with Dionysus “the spell [...] is broken” (71). However, the force of Dionysus is not negatively defined by and through the destruction of the Apolline illusion. Dionysus affirms that the Apolline illusion is just a mask (and not the only empirical reality that exists), not through the destruction of the one mask, but through the creation of multiple masks. The destruction of the Apolline mask is a contingent outcome of the multiplicities of masks that Dionysus creates.

If the destruction of the Apolline “redemption by illusion” occurs, it occurs because of the Dionysiac “excess” of masks and “multiplicities of figures” (51). For Nietzsche the “doctrine of tragedy” (52) lies in this continuous interplay between “the Apolline deception [...] which has the effect of relieving us of the burden of Dionysiac surge and excess” (103)—the Dionysiac excess becomes a burden since Dionysus affirms that redemption is by design illusionary and thus unreachable—and the Dionysiac excess and multiplicities of masks that, as Nietzsche writes, “is capable of intensifying Apolline effects” (102) that regard the effects of the mask. Tragedy is a continuous and simultaneous dramatization of illusions of redemption in the making (Apollo) and of the scattering of these illusions that emerges from the excessive multiplicities of masks that affirm the illusionary foundations of redemption (Dionysus).

What Nietzsche leaves implicit in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and makes more explicit when he revisits his philosophy of tragedy in *The Genealogy of Morals* ([1887] 2013), is that redemption performs as a seeming appearance and an elusive promise of resolution that conceals, produces and perpetuates the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, the Apolline notion of “redemption by illusion” that was introduced in *The Birth of Tragedy* becomes “the (debtor’s) impossibility of paying the debt” (62). Debt resolution becomes an “adamantine impossibility” (62) so that debt is rendered unpayable and the power of the creditor over the debtor is never challenged.

The non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor are hidden and concealed beneath appearances and seeming promises of resolution that, nevertheless, remain elusive. For Nietzsche “it is at this juncture that the very hope of an eventual redemption has to put itself once for all into the prison of pessimism, it is at this juncture that the eye has to recoil and rebound in

despair from off an adamantine impossibility" (61). Once the debtor affirms that debt resolution performs as a mask in order to never be reached—it is the unreachability of redemption that Nietzsche describes as "the prison of pessimism"—then the debtor will turn both against themselves and the creditor (62). The debtor will no longer define themselves through notions of impossible redemption and the creditor will no longer be able to extract profit from imposing unpayable debt onto the debtor.

Tragedy dramatizes how the creditor imposes excess of credit onto their debtor. The creditor's goal is to bond their debtor and perpetuate the non-resolvable power relations between them. Earlier I argued that Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy grasps that redemption performs as a mask that produces and reproduces unpayable debt. Un-payable debt needs to appear as concrete debt—in order to introduce the possibility of its resolution—and simultaneously to perform in abstract terms—to turn continuously that possibility (even when that possibility occurs) into what Nietzsche described as an "adamantine impossibility."

The debtor is evaluated by their creditor both for their ability to keep paying without ever fully repaying their debt and for valuing their indebtedness to their creditors. The creditor not only evaluates their debtor's value and but also judges their debtor's values of values. For Nietzsche these acts of judgment carry a "double distinction: first, the relatively permanent element, the custom, the act, the 'drama' a certain rigid sequence of methods of procedure; on the other hand, the fluid element, the meaning, the end, the expectation which is attached to the operation of such procedure" (52). The "relatively permanent element," the "drama," the "act" regards the staging of processes of evaluation that build on appearances of concreteness. The "fluid element of the expectation" regards acts of judgment that conceal beneath appearances of concreteness the fact that are founded on abstract values of values.

For Nietzsche the interplay between the "permanent procedures" of evaluation and the "fluid expectations" of judgment provides the debtor with a memory of their "debt" (40). Because of this mnemonic production the debtor remembers not only their promise to endlessly repay an unpayable debt but also the creditor's elusive promise to redeem them. As a result both the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor, and the debt that these relations produce are carried to infinity.

Tragedy is the worst enemy of the creditor's power over their debtor because it dramatizes the diffusion of these masks of concreteness into more masks of abstraction. To sum up, Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy grasps that redemption performs as an illusion, an appearance, and an elusive promise of resolution of a so-called debt crisis that builds on series of acts of judgment. Furthermore, Nietzsche's works on tragedy demonstrate how these acts of judgment conceal their basis on abstraction—abstraction that can also be understood as the values of values—beneath masks of concreteness.

From this point of view, tragedy dramatizes both the theatricality of redemption—a theatricality that regards the performance of redemption as mask and illusion—and the performative capacities and potentialities of redemption that regard the interdependencies between masks of

resolution and the reproduction of the asymmetries between a creditor and a debtor. I contend that for Nietzsche it is the affirmation that the performative force of redemption draws its momentum from a mask, an appearance, and an illusion, that entails revolutionary potentialities. From this point of view, revolution occurs not when the performative capacities of a mask are disrupted or even appropriated but when the mask is affirmed as a mask and is diffused to multiplicities of masks.

Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy demonstrates that when it comes to redemption and conditions of indebtedness the affirmation of debt resolution as a mask lays the ground for the emergence of becomings that are beyond indebtedness, calculability, and judgment. In *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form* (1994), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that "the many contemporary attempts to employ 'performance' or 'performativity' as a paradigm for social analysis and social practice [...] highlights the social importance of signifying or discursive practices" but cannot grasp "value-creating practices," or, in other words, "the production of production" (8). Contrary to Hardt and Negri, in this section I made the case that Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy grasps the interdependencies between the production of values and performances of redemption. The next section builds on Deleuze and Guattari's readings of Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy in order to grasp the links between appearances of debt resolution, the production of the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor, and capitalism. Connecting this theorization back to the Greek situation I contend that the indebtedness of Greece builds on masks of debt resolution that reproduce the asymmetries between Greece and its creditors.

### Deleuze, Guattari and the Tragedy of Capitalism

For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the production of the asymmetries between a creditor and a debtor that Nietzsche grasps in his philosophy of tragedy also understands how capitalistic modes of production often perform. In the previous section I demonstrated that for Nietzsche tragedy is the dramatization of the affirmation that redemption is an illusion that "needs to be out once for all into the prison of pessimism" (Nietzsche [1872] 2003, 61) in order to stop reproducing the asymmetries between a creditor and a debtor. In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari build on Nietzsche and argue that, within frames of capitalism, the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor remain hidden beneath appearances of exchange. Just like redemption in Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy, exchange in *Anti-Oedipus* introduces elusive promises of equality in order to reproduce inequality. The tragedy of *Anti-Oedipus* lies in Deleuze and Guattari's multiple, ongoing, and restless calls for understanding exchange as an appearance that perpetuates asymmetries.

According to Deleuze and Guattari understanding the irresolvable asymmetries between a creditor and a debtor in relation to exchange is one of Nietzsche's most important contributions to theories of contemporary capitalism. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that, "Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* [...] is an attempt—and a success without equal—at interpreting economy in terms of debt, in the debtor-creditor relationship, by eliminating every consideration of exchange" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 180). However, every consideration of exchange as a process of

equalization needs to be “eliminated” because what remains is the deceptive performance of exchange.

Just like Nietzsche wanted to put once and for all the illusion of redemption into a “prison of pessimism,” Deleuze and Guattari want to eliminate once and for all the appearance and the elusive promise of exchange that implies equalization. For Deleuze and Guattari, “Exchange is only an appearance: each partner or group assesses the value of the last receivable object (limit-object), and the apparent equivalence derives from that” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 439). The “assessment” of the pre-existing or pre-established value—the value of the last receivable object—does not transform an unequal distribution to an equal distribution. On the contrary it reproduces the asymmetrical relations between the involved parties. This does not mean that the asymmetries remain the same since mobility within the power relations between the involved parties might occur, but that asymmetry is reproduced.

Similarly to the mask of redemption, the appearance of exchange carries performative potentialities. The appearance of exchange does not perform on a level of artificiality or similitude that is opposed to reality. On the contrary the appearance of exchange acts upon lived experience by reproducing debt. Deleuze and Guattari are very clear about that: “Far from being a mere imitator, the artisan of the signs accomplishes a work” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 189). The work that “the artisan of the signs” (i.e., the appearance of exchange) accomplishes is the production and reproduction of debt: “Far from being an appearance assumed by exchange, debt is (an) immediate effect” (180). The most important characteristic of the debt that is produced by appearances of exchange is that it is irresolvable and infinite.

Nietzsche’s philosophy of tragedy grasps that what appears to be an accumulation of debt, or, in other words a debt crisis, is an excess of credit built on judgment (*krisis*). Additionally, according to Nietzsche, the abstract aspect of judgment—“the fluid element and expectation” as Nietzsche called it—is concealed beneath the “drama,” and the “act” of concreteness. Drawing upon Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari understand credit excess—“money begetting money” (227) as they call it—and thus irresolvable debt and debt crises as integral parts of capitalistic modes of production. For Deleuze and Guattari capitalism reinvents itself every time “debt is rendered infinite” (197) through simultaneously introducing the appearance of and eliminating any possibility for a “final discharge” (132). Within frames of capitalism, “the infinite creditor and infinite credit have replaced the blocks of mobile and finite debt [...] the creditor has not yet lent while the debtor never quits repaying” (197). Debt remains infinite and the power relations between a creditor and a debtor infinitely irresolvable.

The infinitization of debt and thus of the asymmetries between a creditor and a debtor is so important to reinventions of capitalism because it enables capital to create and generate more capital without necessarily relying on material production. Infinite credit is a form of production that “operates less on a quantity of labor than by a complex qualitative process” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 492). Deleuze and Guattari are arguing that the production of infinite credit appropriates, and does not oppose, labor. Deleuze and Guattari understand this process of

appropriation as “anti-production (production that builds on excess of credit) operating retroactively on (*se rabattre sur*) productive forms and appropriate them” (31). The most important characteristic of anti-production is that it “does not oppose production [...] on the contrary, it insinuates itself everywhere in the productive machine and becomes firmly wedded to it in order to regulate its productivity and realize surplus value” (235). Production and anti-production are part of the endless production of capital generating capital.

Capital generating capital or, echoing Deleuze and Guattari, “money begetting money,” builds on the appropriation of production by anti-production. According to Deleuze and Guattari the appropriation of production by anti-production is the “signs of the power of capital, flows of financing, a system of differential quotients of production that bear witness to a prospective force or to a long-term evaluation, not realizable *hic et nunc*, and functioning as an axiomatic of abstract quantities” (228). In order for the evaluation that defines the profit that emerges from profit to remain a “long-term” and open-ended evaluation it needs to perform in terms of judgment. Therefore, in order to produce infinite debt, capitalistic modes of production not only require masks of debt resolution and appearances of “equalizing” exchange but also a theatre of judgment of the debtor by their creditor.

For Deleuze it is the infinitization of debt and the “long-term” evaluation of the debtor by their creditor—a process that is designed to remain infinitely without a *telos* while the process itself becomes the *telos*—that stages a theatre of judgment. In “To Have Done With Judgment”—an essay in which Deleuze reflects both on Nietzsche’s philosophy of tragedy and Antonin Artaud’s radio play *To Have Done With the Judgment of God* (1947)—Deleuze argues that “it is not as if the judgment itself were postponed, put off until tomorrow, pushed back to infinity; on the contrary, it is the act of postponing, of carrying to infinity, that makes judgment possible. The condition of judgment lies in a supposed relation between existence and the infinite order of time” (Deleuze 1997, 127). In *Anti-Oedipus* this relation between existence and the infinite order of time—a relation that forms existence in terms of the creditor/debtor asymmetries—becomes a relation of appropriation of anti-production by production.

In order for this relation to remain, it needs to “create a memory for a man”: a memory according to which all modes of existence are calculable, redeemable, and shaped by and within the power relations between a creditor and a debtor. Drawing upon Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari argue that this production of memory of calculable existence performs in terms of “marking” and “inscription.” In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche argues that in order for any kind of power relations to last—especially the ones between a creditor and a debtor—a “system of mnemonics” is required. For Nietzsche “something is burnt in so as to remain in [man’s] memory: only that which never stops hurting remains in [their] memory” (Nietzsche [1872] 2003, 37). Deleuze and Guattari understand this kind of production of memory as an “other memory, one that is collective, a memory of words and no longer a memory of things, a memory of signs and no longer of effects” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 145). This memory of “words” and “signs” is also a memory of masks that fuels the forgetting of the direct effects of the masks.



In the case of the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor what needs to be remembered is the mask and the appearance of debt resolution and not the direct effect of the infinite debt that this mask produces. The production of infinite debt needs to be inscribed, marked and internalized in ways that it becomes forgotten as the only reality that can be. For Nietzsche, tragedy, understood as a continuous affirmation of the mask as a mask, can potentially disrupt the production of infinite debt. This affirmation is both cruel and celebratory. Celebratory because it disrupts the power relations between a creditor and a debtor by recognizing redemption as an illusion that carries performative capacities—for instance infinite debt—and cruel because it no longer hides behind “pleasurable” illusions that perpetuate pain by numbing it. Nietzsche writes “Without cruelty no feast” (Nietzsche [1872] 2003, 42). The cruelty of the feast involves the painfully “ecstatic”—the taking out of the condition of stasis—diffusion of the stasis of one mask to ongoing movements of multiplicities of masks.

According to Deleuze, this cruel affirmation of the appearances as appearances that perform and produce direct effects is also found in Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty. In “To Have Done With Judgment” (1997), Deleuze writes “Artaud will give sublime developments to the system of cruelty [...] the system of cruelty expresses the finite relations of the existing body with the forces that affect it, whereas the doctrine of infinite debt determines the relationships of the immortal soul with judgments. The system of cruelty is everywhere opposed to the doctrine of judgment” (128). The next two sections closely investigate whether this system of cruelty that exceeds judgment and redemption can be found in indebted Greece and in what appears to be a “Greek debt crisis.”

### The Crisis/Krisis of Indebted Greece

Since the launch of the euro in January 1999 the private banks of the eurozone’s core—Germany, France, Italy and the countries of the former Benelux—have been building their growth on the indebtization of the eurozone’s periphery: Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain also known as PIGS (Castells 2017, Galbraith 2016, Varoufakis 2016, Phillips 2014). In order to generate cheap debt in the periphery of the eurozone, the private banks of the eurozone’s core borrowed in US dollars at low rates and lent this money at higher rates to the eurozone’s periphery (Phillips 2014, 35). After the US financial crisis of 2008, the European credit bubble burst.

Due to that burst, the capital that derived from the credit issued by the private banks of the eurozone could no longer increase its growth. In the previous section I made the case that what I understand as the “tragedy of capitalism” builds on Deleuze and Guattari’s understandings of the interdependencies between the profit that emerges from the generation of debt, or, in other words from credit, and the appropriation of production by anti-production. In *Governing by Debt*, also drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari, Maurizio Lazzarato (2015) makes the case that the roots of the crisis lie in the fact that capital could “no longer ensure new forms of exploitation/appropriation” (38). According to Lazzarato the causes of the co-called European Sovereign Debt Crisis do not lie in the inability of several eurozone member states to pay off their debts, as it often appears. On the contrary what appears to be a crisis of debt accumulation caused



by increased public spending is a crisis of excessive credit and, more particularly, a crisis of credit's capacity to generate profit.

However, credit's inability to "increase in value" (38) is simultaneously an opportunity for credit, and also for the capital produced by credit, to use different means in order to grow. A crisis of the means of appropriation is simultaneously an opportunity for the exploration of new ways of appropriation. According to Deleuze and Guattari "capitalism [...] was able to interpret the general principle according to which things work well only providing they break down, crises being 'the means immanent to the capitalistic mode of production'" (Deleuze 1983, 230). I contend that the austerity projects that were launched in Europe of the so-called financial crisis of 2008–9 were experimentations for the capital that derives from credit accumulation to find ways to keep securing its growth.

In brief, austerity policies include heavy taxation, wage reductions, cuts in any kind of spending that involves the welfare programs, and privatizations. Lazzarato understands austerity policies as "forced levies" (2015, 39) that use secure heavy taxation in order to experiment with new ways of exploitation. Even though European austerity projects are promoted as necessary means for the indebted member states of the eurozone's periphery to pay back their debts, austerity imposes more loans, heavy taxation, reduces wages, enforces privatizations, and annihilates welfare in order to bail out the banks since the banks are considered "too big to fail." What appeared to be public debts are private debts that have been imposed to the taxpayer. From this point of view austerity becomes the "new" common ground between monetary experimentations and fiscal policies.

In *Anti-Oedipus*—where I contend Deleuze and Guattari contextualize Nietzsche's elaboration on the performative capacities of appearances of debt resolution to reproduce the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor, within frames of capitalism—Deleuze and Guattari argue that taxation enhances the production of infinite debt and keeps the creditors alive. They write, "As if the Greeks<sup>1</sup> had discovered in their own way what the Americans discovered after the New Deal: that heavy taxes are good for business. In a word money—the circulation of money—is the means for rendering the debt infinite" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 197). Austerity uses the heavy taxes that are imposed on the member states of the eurozone's periphery in order to do "good" to the business of the creditors.

Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari Lazzarato argues that, during the so-called financial crisis in Europe, heavy taxation was a way for capital to explore new means for its growth. According to Lazzarato, "During the crisis, taxation has served both to destroy the forms of (constant and variable) capital that fail to conform to the logic of financial valorization and, from this destruction, to establish a possible new phase of accumulation" (2015, 39). Financial valorization refers to capital assessing and expanding itself. What appears to be a "debt-crisis" is an opportunity for credit to overcome its burst and find new ways to appropriate production.

The "Greek debt crisis" was an opportunity for the indebted banks of the eurozone to be saved. Especially since the first memorandum agreement—the first austerity package—between Greece

and its international creditors, public discourse is saturated with narratives of the so-called “Greek debt crisis” that are often associated with notions of tragedy. Advocates of austerity associate the “Greek debt crisis” with notions of tragedy in order to “legitimize” severe austerity measures as necessary and inevitable. However, the philosophy of tragedy that builds on Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari conceptualizes becomings that are beyond indebtedness and disrupt the imposition of the supposedly “inevitable” austerity.

Let’s take a closer look at what appears to be the “debt crisis” of Greece. In February 2010 the Greek governing party of P.A.S.O.K—an acronym that stands for Panhellenic Socialist Movement—announced that the statistics regarding the debt of Greece had been falsified so that Greece could enter the euro area in 2001. In response to this “revelation” Troika—“the group of three”—was established in May 2010. Troika was a committee containing representatives of the world’s international creditors. In the case of Greece these creditors were the EC, the ECB, and the IMF. The role of Troika was to evaluate and assess Greece’s implementation of the severe austerity measures, often promoted as economic adjustment programs, assistance or bailout packages, that come in the form of memorandum agreements, imposed by Greece’s international creditors. What is of particular importance is that Troika is not answerable to any elected government either on a national or on a European level.

Between 2010 and the Greek snap elections of January 2015 Greece had signed two memorandum agreements and a series of complementary additions collectively called “medium-term budgetary framework” in exchange for loans that were literally more debt. Bridging Greece’s memoranda to the thought process that was elaborated in the previous sections I contend that in the case of Greece the elusive promise remained the same: Greece’s debt resolution “achieved” through the infinitization of debt. During the years of the two memorandum agreements Troika’s representatives kept coming to Greece in order to evaluate Greece’s “progress” regarding the implementation of the austerity measures imposed by its creditors.

Public discourse often described Greece’s evaluations by Troika as “choreographies” staged on a theatre of judgment. Every time Troika came to Greece the streets were kept empty for the “safety” of its representatives. Troika’s representatives spent days behind the closed doors of the Greek ministries and administration buildings, and the results of the evaluations were announced as “facts” by the government. Every evaluation asked for more imposed debt, more wage reductions, more privatizations, more pension cuts, and less welfare. Every evaluation performed as an appearance and an elusive promise of debt resolution that reproduced the non-resolvable power relations between Greece and its international creditors.

Echoing Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari, Troika’s evaluations were acts in an endless theatre of judgment where judgment is a way for the creditor to find new ways to exploit their debtor. In indebted Greece judgment became the solution to the crisis of appropriation. As one Greek etymology suggests *κρίσις* (*krisis*) is the activity of judgment the outcome of which is to be determined. However, in the case of the so-called “Greek debt crisis” *krisis* is transformed to a tool used by Greece’s creditors to experiment with their debtor’s exploitation. The crisis of the creditor’s

capacity to profit from their debtor entails a kind of *krisis* the outcome of which is not to be determined but it is always-already in favor of the creditor. The *krisis* of Greece as a debtor is part of a theatre of judgment staged by Greece's creditors so that Greece's indebtization continues. For Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari in order for the theatre of judgment to simultaneously be "carried to infinity" while also performing as the "final authority" it needs to be inscribed in memory. The memorandum agreements between Greece and its international creditors are produced and imposed memory that shapes existence merely in terms of the asymmetries between a creditor and a debtor.

For Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari, the inscribed memory of judgment helps judgment perform on a level of infinity through appearances of finitude: the "final authority" as Deleuze calls it. The memoranda between Greece and its creditors set the scene for the theatre of judgment of Greece by its creditors; a theatre that uses appearances of debt resolution in order to infinitize Greece's debt. What appears to be a "Greek debt crisis" is a crisis of debt's appropriation by credit that relies on *krisis* (judgment) in order to overcome itself.

Earlier I argued that according to Nietzsche, because it affirms masks as appearances that carry performative capacities, Dionysian tragedy can disrupt any theatre of judgment that builds on and reproduces the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor. I also made the case that Deleuze and Guattari relate Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy to Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. According to the authors of *Anti-Oedipus*, both Nietzsche and Artaud conceptualize becomings that "escape judgment" (Deleuze 1997, 131). The question then that I contend needs to be addressed asks whether and how Greece can stage its own theatre of cruelty and escape judgment.

### The Theatre of Cruelty of the "NO" demonstration and the Theatre of Judgment of the "YES" demonstration

*No*  
then  
to negation;  
and this point  
comes when they press me

Antonin Artaud,  
*To Have Done With the*  
*Judgment of God* (1947)

Endless austerity led to intense political turmoil. As a result, on December 29, 2014, the Greek parliament failed to elect a new president. The Greek snap elections of January 2015 were a direct result of this failure. The left party of SYRIZA—an acronym that stands for Greece's radical left—won the elections because of its promise and commitment not to sign a third memorandum agreement, to put an end to austerity, and to actualize political visions that are beyond politics of

debt. However SYRIZA did not form an absolute majority. As a result they collaborated with the right wing party of ANEL (Independent Greeks) in order to form a government.

Between January and June 2015 the tensions between the newly elected joint government of SYRIZA-ANEL and Greece's international creditors kept increasing. One of the most catalytic moments was when, during a joint press conference between the, at the time, Greek minister of finance Yianis Varoufakis, and the, also at the time, president of eurogroup<sup>2</sup> and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), Jeroen Dijsselbloem, Varoufakis stated that "with this (Troika) if you want—and according to the European Parliament—implausibly-constructed committee we have no intention to cooperate. Thank you" (newsIT.gr 2015). Up to the eurogroup meeting that was scheduled for June 27, 2015, SYRIZA kept pushing for no austerity while Greece's creditors kept pushing for more austerity.

On June 28, 2015, the Greek Prime Minister and President of SYRIZA Alexis Tsipras froze the negotiations with Greece's creditors and called for a Greek referendum scheduled for July 5, 2015. According to Tsipras's announcement the referendum would ask the citizens of Greece whether they accept (NAI, YES vote) or reject (OXI, NO vote) the most recent proposal of austerity measures "suggested" by Greece's international creditors. On Friday, July 3, 2015, two different and massive demonstrations were staged in the city of Athens: the NAI (YES) demonstration and the OXI (NO) demonstration.

The estimated numbers of the participants provided by the media vary, since the "accurate statistics" that referred to the demonstrations depended on the different political orientations of the individual media outlets. According to research that determined the participants based on the capacity of the occupied spaces, between 360,000 and 400,000 people participated in the "NO" and between 25,000 and 30,000 people participated in the "YES" demonstration. The "NO" demonstration was staged on Syntagma Square in Athens—the Square located directly in front of the Greek Parliament and that in Greek means "constitution." Historically the Syntagma Square has staged various uprisings, protests, occupations, and demonstrations. Some of the largest and longest series of occupations occurred during the first two years of Greek austerity. Mostly known as Κίνημα Αγανακτισμένων Πολιτών (Movement of Indignant Citizens), between 2010 and 2012, thousands of people that had no ties to any political party and that wanted to directly challenge austerity and politics of debt had been living on the square in tents and self-organizing street performances, public festivals, strikes, protests, demonstrations, and so forth. Three years after the disappearance of the Indignant Citizens from the Syntagma Square, the "NO" demonstration refueled the anti-austerity movement in Greece.

The "YES" demonstration took place at Παναθηναϊκό Στάδιο (Panathenaic Stadium) also known as Καλλιμάρμαρο (Kalimarmaro). As opposed to Syntagma's long history of staging protests against European politics of austerity, Kalimarmaro performs as a reminder of Greece's "Europeanness." As the last Greek venue from where the Olympic flame is handed over to the country/host of the Olympic games, the Kalimarmaro is "admired" and "celebrated" as part of classic Greece and an "origin" of Western civilization. I contend that Greece's indebtization is closely linked to the

construction of “classical Greece” as the “origin” of Western civilization. “Classic” Greece “helped” Greece to perform its “modernity” and “Europeanness” for the European gaze, and concealed its dependence upon its European creditors beneath narratives of independence. This however can be the topic of another paper.

Going back to the two demonstrations, in spite of their major differences, the “NO” and “YES” demonstrations had one thing in common: they both moved beyond the communicated language of “no” and “yes.” While both the “NO” and the “YES” demonstrations were associated with either a “NO” or a “YES” answer to the question that the upcoming referendum was going to address, the “NO” demonstration became a celebration of politics beyond debt and austerity and thus beyond judgment and creditor/debtor power relations, and the “YES” demonstration became a reactionary response to that praxis of collective and public politics beyond conditions of indebtedness.

For the “YES” demonstration any alternative conceptualization of politics that exceeds the non-resolvable relations between a creditor and a debtor, or, more particularly that does not define Greece via and by these relations, would lead not only to the immediate exclusion of Greece from the eurozone—a process known as Grexit—but also to the exclusion of Greece from Europe. According to the “YES” demonstration Greece can be part of Europe as long as it remains indebted to its creditors and it conceals this relation of indebtedness beneath narratives of nationally oriented “independence.” The “YES We Are Staying in Europe” slogan of the “YES” demonstration not only indicated but also reproduced this perceived interdependency between “European” and indebted Greece.

From this point of view the “YES” demonstration exceeded the seemingly affirmative “YES” by defining and shaping existence, and more particularly Greek citizenship, merely through the negatively charged position of the debtor in relation to their creditor. In this essay I made the case that Nietzsche understands tragedy as a potential disruption of the debtor’s judgment by their creditor. I argued that according to Deleuze and Guattari the common ground between Nietzsche’s tragedy and Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty lies in both tragedy and Theatre of Cruelty’s capacities to conceptualize and actualize becomings that exceed the asymmetries between a creditor and a debtor. I made the case that for Deleuze and Guattari the becomings that move beyond the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor can directly challenge the capitalistic modes of production that generate capital from credit.

Drawing upon this thought process I contend that the “YES” demonstration reenacted a theatre of judgment that kept the memory of the debtor alive. Because of the affirmative appearance of the “YES” demonstration—which is not an affirmation of the appearance as an appearance but a continuation of the preexisting performative functions of the appearance—the “YES” demonstration re-performed, and thus reproduced, the non-resolvable power relations between Greece and its international creditors. Earlier I built on Deleuze and Guattari and Lazzarato in order to argue that what appears to be a “Greek debt crisis” is a crisis of the appropriation of Greece by its creditors. From this point of view the “YES” demonstration reminded Greece’s creditors that

they could continue their experimentation until they find new efficacious ways to appropriate their debtor.

While the “YES” demonstration reenacted the infinitization of Greece’s indebtedness to its creditors, the “NO” demonstration celebrated collective conceptualizations of politics that exceed debt and austerity. Manifesting Nietzsche’s philosophy of tragedy and Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty, including Deleuze and Guattari’s readings of Nietzsche and Artaud, the “NO” demonstration affirmed any appearances of debt-resolution as masks that conceal and perpetuate the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor, and envisioned politics beyond notions of judgment. Put differently, the “NO” demonstration imagined becomings that are not defined through and by their negatively charged condition of indebtedness to their supposed creditors. The “NO” demonstration dramatized the collective imagination of becomings that exceed redemption by choosing to experience the cruelty of the effects of the appearance of debt-resolution over the illusory happiness of masks of redemption.

One should take into serious consideration that after Tsipras’ call for the Greek referendum on June 28, 2015, the ESM stopped providing the Greek banks with money causing their immediate closure. On the day of the “NO” demonstration the banks had been closed for a week. Capital controls were introduced reducing the maximum amount for daily withdrawals down to 60 euros so that deposits did not get transferred to banks outside of Greece. As a result employees were not getting paid, grocery stores were running out of groceries, hospitals were under-functioning, and so forth. I contend that the 400,000 people that participated in the “NO” demonstration celebrated the praxis of envisioning politics beyond notions of debt and redemption not in spite of but because of this uncertainty. This, however, does not imply a relation of causality. On the contrary it understands the “NO” demonstration not as a reaction to but as a celebration of this uncertainty.

The 400,000 people together with the dozens the representatives of the joint government SYRIZA-ANEL and the dozens of artists that performed during the demonstration all affirmed and celebrated the shattering of the masks of debt resolution that infinitize Greece’s indebtedness to its creditors. The “NO” demonstration disrupted the production of memory of the debtor—a production that, as argued, builds on appearances of debt resolution—by remembering, experiencing, and celebrating the cruelty of the direct effects of masks of redemption. Even though representatives of Greece’s creditors, Greece’s official opposition, and the media kept arguing that the referendum would radically increase Greece’s debt, the “NO” demonstration celebrated the emergence of becomings beyond indebtedness and redemption.

Earlier I argued that what appears to be a “Greek debt crisis” is a crisis of Greece’s appropriation by its creditors. I also made the case that Greek austerity was an experiment that tried to provide the creditors with new means of appropriation. Since the beginning of the closure of the banks on June 28, 2015, Greece became impossible to appropriate not because of an oppositional response to its creditors but because of experiencing time that is beyond the time of infinite debt and introducing becomings that are beyond notions of debt, judgment, and redemption.

According to the results of the Greek bailout referendum of 2015 the turnout was 62.5%: a turnout that far exceeded the turnout of the Greek snap legislative elections of January 2015, which was 56.6%. Some 61.31% of the referendum's voters voted "NO" rejecting the austerity measures "suggested" by Greece's international creditors; 38.69% voted "YES" and only 5.8% of the votes were blank or invalid. In spite of Greek people's vote and resistance—as described earlier the Greek banks had remained closed and thus money stopped circulating for approximately two and a half months—on July 13, 2015, Tsipras ended up agreeing to a third memorandum of understanding between Greece and Greece's international creditors. On August 13, 2015, the Greek Parliament approved that memorandum agreement.

### Anti-Conclusion

One could argue that the "NO" demonstration performed as a pressure valve that ended up reproducing the asymmetries between Greece and its international creditors. However, the "NO" demonstration was a collective celebration of not performing as a debtor within conditions of imposed indebtedness. The negation in that sentence is not a product of hetero-determination. On the contrary it emerges from the affirmation of existence beyond debt, judgment and redemption. To echo Deleuze, the negative aspect of not performing as a debtor is not the source but one of the many manifestations of becomings that exceed the non-resolvable power relations between a creditor and a debtor and becomings that are done with judgment.

The emergence of becomings that are done with judgment is what remains of the "NO" demonstration. Many would say that what remains is not important since it never became structuralized. I contend otherwise for two reasons: one, because not having become structuralized means maintaining certain revolutionary potentialities that any kind of absorption by a structure—even the most radical one—would take away, and two, because we know from performance that what remains haunts and, just like the mask, what haunts performs.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Deleuze and Guattari here refer to Michel Foucault's research on certain tyrannies of Greece. According to the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* Foucault's work demonstrates that in Greek tyrannies heavy taxes on the rich distribute money to the poor only to return more money back to the rich and to perpetuate the indebtization of the poor.

<sup>2</sup> eurogroup are series of informal meetings among the ministers of finance of the member states of the euro area that are both not minuted and not answerable to any kind of elected body



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## Biography

Christina Banalopoulou recently defended her dissertation *TragedyMachine(s): Performances of Power and Resistance in Indebted Greece* at the University of Maryland, College Park. She is a Certified Movement Analyst (CMA), a salsa dancer and a zumba instructor.

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