Christos Marneros

TOWARDS AN *AN-ARCHIC* ETHOS

ABSTRACT
The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze has never stated his intention to write or create a work of ethics or moral philosophy, at least not in the traditional sense of the term used to describe a 'genre' of the discipline of philosophy. However, this paper argues that a close attention to Deleuze's philosophical thought manifests an *ethos* which calls us to ponder the possibility of creating a way of being that is profoundly *an-archic* (without an ἀρχή [*archē*]), in a sense that it opposes any form of dogmatism and/or hierarchies. In other words, it opposes a notion of 'a ground' or origin – an ἀρχή [*archē*]. The examination of this *an-archic ethos* is manifested through Deleuze's distinction between ethics and morality and his reading of the works of two of his main philosophical predecessors, Friedrich Nietzsche and Baruch Spinoza.

Introduction

The task of talking about ethics and/or morality relation to the philosophical thought of one of the most significant French philosophers of the 20th century, Gilles Deleuze, is not an easy one. This is because – and despite the vast multiplicity of subjects he examined – both in his solo works and in his collaborations with the militant psychoanalyst Félix Guattari – Deleuze has never stated his intention to write or create a work of ethics or moral philosophy, at least not in the traditional sense that the term is used to describe a 'genre' of the discipline of philosophy. Thus, a moral or ethical programme, 'a manifesto,' based on certain rules or codes is not to be found in any of his writings (indeed, the idea of such a manifesto-type work by Deleuze would have been quite the opposite of his general understanding of what it means to do philosophy and politics or even, to a certain extent, of what it means *to live*). As such, any discussion of ethics and morality in Deleuze's work is reduced to brief and sporadic statements – albeit, quite insightful and important as I will argue below.

Christos Marneros: Lecturer in Law, Department of Law and Criminology, Royal Holloway, University of London; christos.marneros@rhul.ac.uk.

Despite all the 'silence' and the seemingly marginal place of ethics in Deleuze's thought, a statement from Michel Foucault provokes us to (re)think this very place of ethics in his contemporary's works. In his preface of Deleuze and Guattari's ground-breaking volume *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault writes that "*Anti-Oedipus* (may its authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first to be written in France in a quite long time" (2013: xli). Similarly, Daniella Voss (2018: 868) suggests that Deleuze's philosophy "makes a practical difference in ethics as well as politics. Immanence provides an orientation for thought, which is removed from normative regimes of transcendence and tends to be critical of religious and political authorities." Indeed, such a grand, yet enigmatic statement calls us to ponder further on the issue of ethics in Deleuze's work.

To that extent it can be claimed that the work of Deleuze is characterised by a certain notion of an *ethos*. This notion of an *ethos* is precisely what Deleuze's contribution to an ethics has to offer. But why does such a notion of an *ethos* differ from any call to 'fixed' or 'grounding' moral or ethical principles? In other words, how can someone talk about 'ways of being' without prescribing 'a normative code'? Deleuze did not manifest a particular interest in providing an account (let alone a philosophical system) which can be described as a normative school of thought, whether in the form of a moral philosophy or even a mere discussion of moral norms (e.g. the discussion of the 'good' or the 'just') (Jun 2011: 1, 89; Smith 2012: 146–159). Perhaps this is the reason why he never engaged in a philosophical examination which could be classified as 'a philosophy of ethics or of morality.' Instead, Deleuze's contribution to an ethical way of life is manifested as an alternative way of life, that questions these higher, transcendent norms – a process of a constant and affective *becoming-ethical* (Braidotti 2006: 123–129).[1]

Unsurprisingly, the complexity of the matter has provoked certain questions and criticisms. For example, the view that Deleuze escapes any reference to fixed norms is contested by Todd May who suggests that there is (a sense of) normativity in Deleuze's thought (May 1994). May supports that view by presenting an 'inconsistent' Deleuze who, on the one hand, wants to do away with "the project of measuring life against external standards" but who, on the other hand, supports (as an alternative to this reference to external standards) an obscure call to "experimentation" (May 1994: 127–128). May reads such a call to experimentation as something which cannot be totally free from relying on a framework of normativity and values, because the experimentation is grounded on particular moral or ethical principles. Hence, he concludes that behind the Deleuzian call for experimentation we can extract "several intertwined and not very controversial ethical principles" (May

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1   The feminist contribution to the reading of the place of ethics in Deleuze has been immense. Especially, through the reading of Deleuzian becoming and affective theory. See, for example: Braidotti (2001), Ahmed (2014), and Grosz (2017). My approach here is different, as I focus on the distinction between ethics and morality and how ethics lead to *an-anarchic* way of life.

1994: 128). Alternatively, Deleuze and many of his contemporaries, such as Michel Foucault and Jean-Francçois Lyotard, have often been the target of criticism through accusations of 'relativism' which leads to 'moral nihilism.' According to these critics, by refusing to recognise certain principles as values, these philosophers end up incapable of offering a substantial criticism as to any worldly affairs that call for taking a decisive stand. For instance, Jürgen Habermas' position reflects such a view. Habermas, commenting on Foucault's approach towards an ethics, writes that the latter "resists the demand to take sides" and to that extent, Foucault (and this can also apply to Deleuze) ends up in a position of 'strong relativism' where "there is no right side" (1982: 282). In that sense, Habermas' critique echoes similar accusations against Deleuze which portray him as a 'mystique' or an 'elitist,' who is completely indifferent towards 'common affairs.' Such an indifference, according to the critics, is not only culpable of impotence and of lacking any substantial 'solutions' or 'methods' of resistance towards the machineries of 'world's elite' and the domination of the capitalist market, but also, through its impotence, ends up being an accomplice to these machineries and the predicaments of the world's marginalised. Such a view is supported by Slavoj Žižek. Žižek, after offering examples that, according to him, illustrate the supposed 'indifference' of Deleuze and Guattari towards the unfolding of 'actualities' that take place in the world (such as revolutions), concludes that such an indifference is not only a manifestation of impotence to account for any revolutionary action but also a blessing for contemporary capitalism (2007: 204–205). As he states, "the conceptual machinery articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, far from being simply 'subversive,' also fits the (military, economic, and ideologico-political) operational mode of contemporary capitalism" (Zizek 2007: 205). While these critiques are easier to counter (compared to May's one) by a simple juxtaposition of Deleuze's engagement with several political or social movements and also the fact that Deleuze does not shy away from expressing a position on multiple, even highly controversial issues, their critiques have gained a certain popularity and approval within multiple academic and activist circles.[2] Hence, an examination of Deleuze's ethical account is paramount in order to show that not only he is not indifferent to matters of 'this world' but, on the contrary, his account of ethics – being closely connected

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2   See also Badiou (2000: xi, 2, and 11). Here, Badiou attacks "the superficial *doxa* of an anarcho-desiring Deleuzianism making of Deleuze the champion of desire, free flux, and anarchic experimentation, is the first of the false images he sets out to shatter (xi)." Nonetheless, it does not seem Badiou, directly, attacks Deleuze or his thought as such (at least in that instance). According to Eleanor Kauffman (2000: 87) what Badiou attacks is "the position of the Deleuzian disciple[s]." Indeed, Badiou (2000: 11) is, ferociously, critical towards a popular image of Deleuze "as the philosophical inspiration for what we called the 'anarcho-desirers' ...". The problem with these 'disciples' and this dominant image of Deleuze is again the impotence to account for a 'realistic' political programme and to that extent to offer any revolutionary alternative to capitalist and neoliberal policies.

to his account of immanence – can be characterised as a 'practical' or a 'lived' philosophy *par excellence*.[3]

On the other hand, May's criticism is, indeed, a far more challenging one. If he is right on his claim that Deleuze relies upon a notion of 'not very controversial ethical principles' – and as such those principles can be found in several accounts of normative philosophies – then Deleuze's account of ethics runs the risk of falling back into the same problem that it tries to overcome, namely the problem of transcendent moral values. However, I aim to show that May's argument is problematic because it fails to acknowledge that a Deleuzian *ethos* does not rely upon 'fixed,' 'grounded' or 'totalised' suppositions that come from above and exist *a priori*. This may, indeed, look contradictory, even 'paradoxical,' but as I will show below, one of the main factors that distinguishes Deleuze's ethics from a notion of morality is the fact that such a notion of an ethics engages with the particularity of an *encounter* and not with pre-existing values, cemented upon an *a priori* ground, an ἀρχή [*archē*]. Hence, it is in this sense that I refer to Deleuzian ethics by calling them *an-archic* (without an *archē*).[4]

This paper delves into the distinction made by Deleuze between ethics and morality. It then aims to show how this distinction originates from Deleuze's reading of two of his philosophical predecessors, Friedrich Nietzsche and Baruch Spinoza and their polemic against any form of transcendence, hierarchy and dogmatism. Such an examination aims to show that Deleuze's philosophical thought points towards an *an-archic ethos* which could potentially be an answer to our nihilistic age, defined by dogmas and fascistic tendencies.

1. "To Have Done with the Judgment of God"[5]

Deleuze made most of his statements regarding ethics in his earlier writings and these comments were made with regards to the philosopher's distaste for

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3   This view is, often, supported by The Invisible Committee (2015, 2017) Deleuze is a huge influence in their work, despite only being, explicitly, mentioned three times. On the matter of their call for a practical ethics, the language they use is, evidently, Deleuzian with phrases such as ethical truths as "affirmations" or as a way of "experimenting" (2015: 46, 125).
4   I do not aim to argue that Deleuze himself was an anarchist and I am not interested in such mundane discussions which are trying to present an image of an author to serve certain political and non-political (or mere 'gossiping') purposes. I, simply, want to argue that Deleuze's thought may have something interesting to offer to the efforts to (re) think anarchy in terms of an *ethos* and a related politics. This is, of course, not a radically novel view, with Deleuze's relation to anarchy and his huge, direct or indirect, influence on many theorists of anarchy, anarchist group and movements being well-known. In fact, only within the last year, an edited collection on Deleuze and anarchism also a lexicon of anarchic concepts, which places Deleuze within the broader anarchist tradition were published. See respectively, Vasileva (2019), Gray van Heerden and Eloff (2019), Colson (2019), and, more recently, Gray van Heerden's (2022) excellent book.
5   The phrase belongs to the homonymous essay, which was written and performed by Antonin Artaud (1976 [1947]: 571). Artaud's writings, plays and performances,

a notion of transcendence, which, according to him, dominates Western philosophical thought since the days of Plato. On the other hand, Deleuze supports 'a philosophy of immanence.' However, I need to stress that – and despite the fact that the direct discussion of his understanding of a notion of immanence takes place in later writings – such a turn to the earlier works aims at the manifestation of a dynamic sequence in Deleuze' immanent and ethical 'accounts' which can help us form a more coherent account of a Deleuzian *ethology* based, in part, on his account of immanence. This method of inquiry not only shows that an immanent mode of thought was an extremely influential notion – albeit remaining in the background – from the very beginning of his writings but also that, through the proximity of Deleuze's ethics with immanence, his immanent philosophy is not another 'utopian' and 'occult' narrative for 'a sect' of a 'select few' but, it is instead, a mode of thought which is interested in the very particularities of life, of 'this world,' and remains 'a practical philosophy' at its core.

The two distinct definitions that Deleuze gives to ethics and morality shall function as our point of departure for such an inquiry. These definitions are given in his discussion with Foucault's biographer Didier Eribon. Discussing Foucault's account of ethics in his examination of the Ancient Greek and Roman practices of 'the care of the self' (Foucault 1990), Deleuze makes the following illuminating statement:

> Yes, establishing ways of existing or styles of life isn't just an aesthetic matter, it's what Foucault called ethics as opposed to morality. The difference is that morality presents us with a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to *transcendent values* (this is good, that's bad...); ethics is a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved. We say this, do that: or say through mean-spiritedness, a life based on hatred, or bitterness toward life. Sometimes it takes just one gesture of word. It's the style of life involved in everything that makes us this or that ... (1995: 100).

Evidently, the above statement offers two clear-cut definitions of how Deleuze understands 'morality' and 'ethics' respectively. However, it seems that the complexity of the above quotation is hidden in its very simplicity. Deleuze, on the one hand, manages to draw a straightforward distinction between the

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significantly, influenced Deleuze and Guattari's thought. For example, in this particular essay ('To Have Done with the Judgment of God'), Artaud refers to the notion of the 'Body without Organs' as the 'the way out,' the liberation of man from God's judgment, from divine commandments and moral rules. Artaud writes: "When you will have made him [meaning man] a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom." A. Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari would later adopt and expand on the concept of the 'Body without Organs' in their collective works, notably in their *Anti-Oedipus* where they devote a whole chapter on the notion ('The Body without Organs'). Furthermore, Deleuze (1998: 125–136) wrote an essay entitled 'To Have Done with Judgment' which explicitly refers to Artaud essay and the idea that transcendence dominates Western philosophical tradition, as "the triumph of the judgment of God."

ethical and the moral, but on the other hand, and because he does not comment further on the matter in the particular interview, we do not get much information on how he arrives to that distinction, and, more importantly, what the meaning of these 'optional rules' is. What we can, at least to some extent, infer from the statement, is that the ethical is manifested as something which does not rely upon 'fixed' or 'eternal' norms – 'You should do as I say because it's *the right* thing to do!' 'That's *wrong*, don't do it!' Instead, it is a matter of *evaluating* or *assessing* each situation and each encounter in their specificity – '*How* does a particular situation or a particular encounter with an external body or an idea *affect* me? On the other hand, moral rules claim to manifest a universality because they act as 'judges' of any actions – irrespective of an action's singularity – based on presupposed eternal values, what Deleuze calls *transcendent values*. Hence, there is a 'personal' or a notion of relativity in Deleuze's account of ethics, contrary to the 'claim of universality' made by moral values. It is precisely at this point that the complexity of the argument arises. Does this 'personal' element of the ethical entail a chaotic call for 'everything is permitted?' Furthermore, does the statement that these moral values are whatever contributes towards 'a hatred for life' suggest, in part, a kind of a so-called 'moral nihilism' that Deleuze's critics point out as 'a black spot' in his philosophical thought? In order to offer answers to the above question, it is paramount to examine further the origin, or the influence, behind this distinction between ethics and morality.

Deleuze's ethology draws significantly on the writings of two of his main philosophical influences, Baruch Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche.[6] Indeed, the presence of these two philosophers can be traced in the vast majority of Deleuze's writings through various issues. This view is presented by Deleuze himself when, in conversation with Raymond Bellour and François Ewald, he states that:

> I did begin with books on the history of philosophy, but all the authors I dealt with, had for me something in common. And it all tended toward the great Spinoza-Nietzsche equation (Deleuze 1995: 135).

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6   Commentators support that Deleuze's ethical account is based on either the one or the other, to a certain degree. For example, Michael Hardt (1993) focuses his account of a Deleuzian ethics on a 'Nietzschean' Deleuze. On the other hand, Julian Bourg (2017: 45) talks about an account of Deleuze based on 'Spinozist Ethics.' More specifically he reads Deleuze's shift from the direct engagement with Nietzsche to that of Spinoza as "a departure or a development." Bourgh recognises that despite Deleuze "continued to explore Nietzschean themes … later works were more explicitly Spinozist …". I am not making a distinction between the Spinozist or Nietzschean influences on Deleuze's ethical account, but I follow a route akin to the one followed by Daniel W. Smith (2007, 2012). Smith does not focus on one or the other philosopher, but he illustrates a Deleuzian ethical account based on both. Similarly, I read the ethical account of Deleuze as an outcome of a combination of the thoughts of the two philosophers. Hence, we can say that Spinoza and Nietzsche supplement each other on the matter of Deleuze's understanding of an ethics.

Nonetheless, the choice of those two philosophers as his 'precursors,' especially on the matter of ethics and morality, is a particularly interesting one. This is because both thinkers are usually considered controversial figures for their ideas and were a target of contempt by their contemporaries, even leading to an enforced exile in the case of Spinoza. They have often been accused as "atheists, but even worse, for being immoralists" (Smith 2007: 67). Consequently, and unsurprisingly, these two thinkers remained for a long period of time an unpopular point of reference in the so-called mainstream philosophical circles' discussions on morality. Hence, according to Daniel Smith, "at best the Spinozistic and Nietzschean critiques [within these philosophical circles] were accepted as negative moments, exemplary of what must be fought against and rejected in the ethico-moral domain" (2007: 77). Indeed, these statements show that there is not any sense of exaggeration when Deleuze writes for Spinoza that, "no philosopher was ever more worthy, but neither was any philosopher more maligned and hated (2001: 17)." Perhaps it is this element of worthiness and 'sacrifice' that Deleuze and Guattari recognise in Spinoza, and perhaps what encouraged them to go as far as to call Spinoza "the prince" and "Christ of philosophers" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 60).

It starts to become apparent that the factor which Deleuze finds interesting in both philosophers is their critique towards transcendence (as an ἀρχή [*archē*]), universal values and their engagement with an understanding of modes of existence in an affirmative, active and joyful way. In Deleuze's words "Spinoza believed in joy and vision (2001: 14)." "He projects an image of the positive, affirmative life, which stands in opposition to the semblances that men are content with (2001: 16)." What Deleuze means by this statement is that humans, for Spinoza, became entrenched to the primacy of certain moral values and commandments. Ultimately, this condition led humans to become content with the habit of considering these 'semblances' as unquestionable and 'eternal.' Hence, they ended up leading their lives uncritical of these 'semblances,' and to that extent, they become the perfect obedient subjects to any form of transcendent authority.

Similarly, Deleuze remarks that Nietzsche illustrated 'the philosopher of the future' as someone who united life and thought through creation and 'recollection' of "that has been essentially forgotten" (2005: 60). In that sense, "modes of life inspire ways of thinking; modes of thinking create ways of living. Life *activates* thought, and thought, in turn, *affirms* life" (Deleuze 2005: 60). The 'play' of life and thought suggests 'a critical life.' That is a life which is not satisfied with what Deleuze called 'semblances' but, instead, it is a life that aims at constant creation through inspiration that motivates a constant 'thinking otherwise.' In other words, such a life is affirmative because is not satisfied with a mere contemplation of 'fixed' values and ideas, but it is defined by an active thought that finds its inspiration within an equally active mode of living. Consequently, such a way of contemplating life in terms of joy and affirmation manifests a connection, or even a tautology, in the way that both Spinoza and Nietzsche talk about the notion of a mode of being. Nonetheless,

this connection is not yet enough to point towards a system of ethics. In other words, we have to ask: what exactly do Nietzsche and Spinoza's positions on the issue of life have to do with the distinction between ethics and morality? The answer can be potentially found in what Deleuze identifies as the starting point for his morality/ethics distinction and a common ground between Nietzsche and Spinoza, namely, their abhorrence for transcendent, moral values. Here, it is important to stress that Nietzsche and Spinoza's critique of transcendence "is not merely theoretical or speculative – exposing its fictional or illusory status – but rather practical and ethical," thus their importance of understanding better Deleuze's practical philosophy is paramount (Smith 2007: 68).

2. *Against Ressentiment*: Deleuze's Reading of Nietzsche

Nietzsche offers a devastating critique of Christianity and the Judaeo-Christian tradition more broadly. What can be called his central claim for that critique is the fact that for him, the Christian world is akin to 'a spread of disease' that led to the ultimate decadence to all aspects of life and led to the domination of 'weak' and 'feeble' values – everything that is against his conceptualisation of 'a proud' way of existing and of "philosophising with a hammer (Nietzsche 1998: xvi)."[7] Thus, in his own words, "Christian faith has meant sacrifice: the sacrifice of freedom, pride, spiritual self-confidence; it has meant subjugation and self-derision, self-mutilation (Nietzsche 2008: 44, aphorism 46)." But which one is the main aspect of Judaeo-Christian tradition that makes it symptomatic of decadence? For Nietzsche, such a triumph of the slaves is a process which is facilitated by the values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Subsequently, this process towards the dominance of slave morality begins with 'revolt of the slaves,' something Nietzsche identifies with the emerging influence and ultimate triumph of the Judaeo-Christian tradition over what he conceives as the noble values of the Ancient World (Nietzsche 2008: 83, aphorism 195). As such, according to Nietzsche, the creation – in a negative sense – of morality occurs with a *slave revolt in morals* and the consequent *reversal of values*.

This process began, when the slaves, 'plebeians' or 'the herd,' for Nietzsche, managed to "depose the Masters" and consequently "the morality of the common people has triumphed" (Nietzsche 2017: 19). But what exactly is the problem with that? A simple answer would be 'a hatred for life.' The 'creative,' 'joyful' aspect of life is replaced by *bad conscience* (or guilt)[8] and *ressentiment*. For

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7   Nietzsche's hammer can be read as a "diagnostic tool" that aims to 'hit' with force any so-called values and to that extent to destroy any of them that are 'hollow' and thus to manifest their decadent state.

8   The issue of guilt is strongly evident in Spinoza as well and Deleuze's reading of him. Deleuze (2001: 23) suggests that guilt is extremely self-destructive. More specifically he asks: "How can one keep from destroying oneself through guilt …?" An answer to that may suggest that the transcendent commandments on 'the Divine' are internalised in the form of 'masochistic,' 'repressive' constraints that we imposed upon our own selves.

Nietzsche, the moment that the *ressentiment* of slavish beings – those "who deny the proper response for action [and instead] they compensate [this lack] with imaginary revenge" – becomes creative, albeit in merely reactionary, negative sense, it gives birth to all these moral, transcendent values (Nietzsche 2017: 20). What characterises these values according to Nietzsche is their tendency to say 'no' "on principle to everything that is 'outside,' 'other,' 'non-self' and this 'no' is its creative deed" (Nietzsche 2017: 20). As a result, a reversal of values takes place, by virtue of the need of the slave to define itself through a vicarious relation to an outside, to an opposite – *evaluation* of the slave's self gives way to judgment of the outside. In other words, the slave morality relies on an exoteric principle in order to define itself, and as such it gives primacy to negation over affirmation. In Michael Hardt's words:

> The slave mentality says "you are evil, therefore I am good," whereas the master mentality says "I am good, therefore you are evil" (2006: x).

To that extent, while in the first instance the negation of an outside, opposite being affirms the slave's self, in the second one the affirmation of the master's self-negates that of the slave. But one should not read these examples as merely a reversal of a current state of affairs, i.e. that the master simply affirms themselves at a particular moment and this is the end of the matter. The primacy of affirmation is a pure call for a way of existing based on constant creation. Deleuze renders this point clear by reading the Nietzschean eternal return as a predominantly ethical principle. To that extent, as Deleuze illustrates, the maxim "*whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return*" acquires an unprecedented gravity (Deleuze 2006: 68). The eternal return performs a selective process, in the sense that "the thought of the eternal return eliminates from willing everything which falls outside the eternal return, it makes willing a creation, it brings about the equation '*willing = creating*" (Deleuze 2006: 69). By this Deleuze wants to suggest that the ethical stand of eternal return presupposes that by willing the eternal return of something we are willing as a *whole* and as such there is an affirmative and joyful element in willing, which to that extent becomes synonymous with creating. Hence, every encounter in life is taken in a 'light' spirit and it is evaluated in accordance with the way we affect it and it affects us and it is not judged based on external conditions. However, with the triumph of slave morality, the forces of reaction prevail over the active ones, and as such, in Deleuze's words:

> Good and evil are new values, but how strangely these values are created! They are created by reversing good and bad. They are not created by acting but by holding back from acting, not by affirming, but by beginning with denial. This is why they are called un-created, divine, transcendent, superior to life. But think of what these values hide, of their mode of creation. They hide an extraordinary

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The sense of guilt is one of the main manifestations of this internalisation of transcendence (e.g. in the form of the 'Superego').

hatred, a hatred for life, a hatred for all that is active and affirmative in life. No moral values would survive for a single instant if they were separated from the premises of which they are the conclusion. And, more profoundly, no religious values are separable from this hatred and revenge from which they draw the consequences. The positivity of religion is only apparent: they conclude that the wretched, the poor, the weak, the slaves, are the good since the strong are 'evil' and 'damned.' They have invented the good wretch, the good weakling: there is no better revenge against the strong and happy (2006: 122).

This statement sums up perfectly the problem of moral values as transcendent foundations and the problem of a mode of existing which is faithful to primary principles and hierarchies. This is manifested through the use the word 'un-created.' Moral values are 'un-created' because they are to be thought of as the unquestionable foundations of 'the Truth' of every existence. The very fact that they are not created by anyone (e.g. just like the predominant Judaeo-Christian notion of God, who is a-genealogical) suggests that they cannot be modified or be the subject of any critique. Hence, to that extent they become the very opposite of an active, or 'ethical' mode of living that is characterised by a constant mode of creation. Such an ethical life, then, will never be satisfied with any mode of existing which is imposed from above, in the form of such moral values but it will always seek new ways of affirming itself.

3. Spinoza: Deleuze's Joyful Teacher

Spinoza's thought can be summed up as an assault on the traditional and hierarchical Judaeo-Christian religious tradition and a conception of God as a transcendent Being. Drawn to the most tolerant and liberal circles of Amsterdam, Spinoza started to question the "Jewish-Christian dogmas of the divinity of Scripture, the election of Israel, and the popular ideas of the Hereafter (Feldman 1992: 3)." As a result, Spinoza and his circle followed a different path and "began to propound a more philosophical, or naturalistic, conception of God and religion (Feldman 1992: 3)." Such a path ultimately led Spinoza to reject both the teachings of the Scripture in Christianity but also Judaism, a religion that he was born into (Deleuze 2001: 6–7). As he states, in his *Treatise of Theology and Politics*:

> Scripture is not to teach any matters of high-level intellectual theory ·but rather to present what I have called its *summa* or 'top teaching', namely the injunction to love God above all else and to love one's neighbour as oneself·. Given that this is its purpose, we can easily judge that all Scripture requires from men is *obedience*, and that what it condemns is not ignorance but *stubborn resistance* (Spinoza 2017: 108).

This rejection, almost an anti-religious stand (Balibar 2008: 7), significantly shaped his philosophical thought, and had a great impact on the philosopher's life.

Spinoza drew an intimate picture of what 'doing philosophy' meant for him, a picture which goes beyond the strict boundaries of the disciplinary

meaning of the term. For him philosophy was not only a science but 'a way of life' and as such, a philosophical inquiry was not something to be taken up without shaping throughout the philosopher's *ethos*. Spinoza remained true to this quest – a quest for *his* truth and not for the Truth – and for that he had to make sacrifices, demanded by his faithfulness to this notion of 'philosophy as life.' Indeed, his philosophical ideas and his general lifestyle would lead to a trial led by rabbis, who condemned him of heresy and ultimately to his excommunication (Deleuze 2001: 5–7). Spinoza, unmoved by the events, remained firm in his ideas and he paid for this by being banished from Amsterdam because he was considered "a menace to all piety and morals, whether Jewish or Christian" (Feldman 1992: 3).

The immanent philosophical system of Spinoza influenced like none other the philosophical thought of Deleuze, especially the latter's understanding of what an immanent philosophy is. Deleuze understands an immanent mode of thought as a 'weapon' or 'antidote' for doing away with the dominant transcendent tradition of Western thought. Unsurprisingly, then, it is in his reading of Spinoza that Deleuze identifies that this critique of transcendence can also point towards a critique of eternal values and morality. Deleuze's reading of Spinoza helps him to supplement his ideas on the issue, drawn by his earlier readings of Nietzsche, and ultimately leads him to make a distinction between moral values and ethics. Spinoza's philosophy is to be thought of as "a philosophy of life" (Deleuze 2001: 26). As such, it is, at least on that issue, very close to Nietzschean thought, which, as stated above, is also based on a notion of 'joy' and is critical of transcendence. Spinoza's philosophy, says Deleuze, "consists precisely in denouncing all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life … Life becomes "poisoned" when it is infused and judged accordingly based on categories of "Good and Evil, of blame and merit, of sin and redemption" (Deleuze 2001: 260). The emergence of moral ideas, of final ends, of a God who acts as a judge and punishes accordingly are nothing more than illusions (*illusion of values*), due to our *inadequate ideas* – that is, "ideas that are confused and mutilated, effects separated from their real causes" (Deleuze 2001: 23). These inadequate ideas lead us to confuse bad encounters for morally prohibited and evil acts. This is the point for Deleuze, via the medium of Spinoza, that moral values emerge. So, for example, when parents say to their children 'don't eat this' children can confuse that as a prohibition. What actually happens though is that the coming-together of the children and the food is simply an encounter between two bodies "which are not compatible" (Deleuze 2001: 22). As a result, one or two of them will be affected by the other in a way that is *bad*, but it is merely bad just for itself. In order to explain this, Deleuze makes a distinction between the transcendent, moral idea of Good and Evil on the one hand, and the immanent, ethical notion of good and bad on the other. In the first case, that of Good and Evil, the definition of something as 'good' and as 'evil' takes place through the judgment of transcendent values, of so-called 'eternal truths.' In the second, 'good' and 'bad' define an encounter between bodies in nature, "a composition." In this

vein, something is defined as good when the two bodies that are combined "form a more powerful whole" (Deleuze 2001: 18, 23). Thus, it is good because it extends the power of the body, its ability to act. A bad encounter takes place when the encounter of the two bodies results in the decomposition of one or the two, leading to the decrease of its power. As a result, the distinction between good and bad is based solely on an *evaluation* of a particular, singular encounter. Consequently, I would say that while the Good and Evil distinction manifests a transcendent universal, an unquestioned Truth, the good and bad distinction is more of a singular outcome in a particular encounter.[9]

At this point, we arrive at the aforementioned distinction between ethics and morality according to Deleuze. When we think of the encounter as a composition of two bodies, we evaluate "the capacity [of bodies, ideas, beings] to be affected" (Deleuze 2001: 26). The evaluation relies solely on immanent modes and thus it is characterised by a horizontally. On the other hand, operating through a vertical relation, "morality always refers existence to transcendent values" (Deleuze 2001: 2003). Hence, "morality is the judgment of God, the *system of Judgment*" (Deleuze 2001: 23). Through this analysis, it now becomes clear what Deleuze meant by the claim that morality is "a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values (this is good, that's bad...)" while on the other hand, "ethics is a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved" (Deleuze 1995: 100).

To sum up, a Deleuzian ethology could be characterised as an attempt to "define bodies, animals, or humans by the affects they are capable of [...]. Ethology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterise each thing" (Deleuze 2001: 125). In other words, it is a matter of evaluating the capability of a body to increase or decrease its power when it encounters another. This evaluation of the encounter, as stated above, is solely based on the capability of these bodies to affect or be affected and, thus, external moral values do not dictate and do not judge by any means the quality of the 'coming together' of the two bodies. It is in this way that immanent ethics are characterised by 'joy,' 'affirmation' and 'experimentation.' Thus, they do not have anything to do with transcendent moral values, prohibitions, restrictions and lack of movement and passivity.

But what is the *practical* element of such a distinction? Or in other words, how does this have an impact on 'real life' encounters? An indication lies in Deleuze's distinction between the three personas of *ressentiment*, or the three personas that generate, sustain and turn *ad infinitum* 'the wheels' of domination and relations of transcendence and morality. These three personas are 'the slave,' 'the tyrant' and 'the priest.' The slave is the person with sad passions,

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9   The distinction is manifested in a better way in the Greek translation of *Practical Philosophy*. The Greek translator makes a distinction between Καλό [Kalo] και Κακό [Kako] (meaning Good and Evil or Bad), as universal categories, irrespective of the particular encounters, and καλό [για εμένα] και κακό [για εμένα] (meaning 'good for me and bad for me') (Deleuze 1996: 38).

with bad consciousness and negativity in Nietzschean terms. The tyrant takes advantage of the sad passions of the first, imposing their rule and domination over the slave. Finally, the priest "is saddened by the human condition and by human passions in general" (Deleuze 2001: 25); as such, he manifests a hatred for the worldly life, contempt and vanity. For the priest, the kingdom of God is the final destination of the human, the absolute end and eternal truth. Is this not precisely, how our masters operate today? Is it not the case, that the sovereign, the state, and the powerful of the world take advantage of sad passions as *fear* or *guilt* imposing their rule?[10] Usually, the help from the priest is paramount. The priest, even in a so-called secular milieu, promises redemption by asking for sacrifice(s) (Newman 2018: 11). Furthermore, the priest pacifies and keeps people in order by advising patience, obedience and acceptance. But, as Anton Schütz states:

> if God is the immanent cause of all things, as Spinoza holds he is, then thanking God or praying to God or invoking God, or any other transaction involving God, appears as a pretty silly past pastime, but much worse must be said of letting one's own or other humans' lives be subjected to God's will, governed by god-appointed governors, or based on obedience to God's name (2011: 196).

Is not the promise for redemption and the merits of life 'a hatred for life' *par excellence*? A detachment and a freezing of movement and experimentation that leads to the ultimate impotence and servitude. It is, then, for these reasons that I call Deleuzian ethics 'an-archic,' in the sense that they refuse to be subjected to any primary cause or a primary foundation, an ἀρχή [*archē*], and the commandments of 'a higher' Being which 'judges' and dictates an 'un-creative' life. Hence, at this point, it becomes clear how a notion of an immanent thought – and to that extent, the notion of Deleuze's immanent thought – is linked to an ethics as opposed to transcendent morality. In addition, we have seen how this distinction (of ethics and morality) is a matter of a *lived philosophy*, as a creative manner that, potentially, inspires new modes of existing.

Conclusion

Admittedly, then, there is an *'an-archic'* element when we refer to Deleuzian ethics, in the sense that they do not rely on any form of hierarchy and authority of 'higher' Being or value to be defined or to be judged. An ethical way of

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10 It is striking how today the re-emergence of (neo)Fascism and (neo)Nazism operates through the cultivation of fear for difference, the 'other.' Furthermore, the operation of guilt is very effective in the new forms of 'imperialism,' in our 'neoliberal era' through an extremely successful mechanism of using an indefinite 'debt' as the ultimate 'weapon' for ruling over the states or persons, by presenting their debt as the ultimate guilt that must be repaid. See also how 'the state' presents itself as the outright, 'benevolent' entity that demands contributions from the indebted and egotistic citizens as 'a sacrifice.' This demand is justified because the citizens are, fundamentally, guilty *a priori* for their so-called 'egotistic nature.' For such view see Slavoj Žižek (2012: 113–114).

living, in the Deleuzian sense of the term, will not turn to higher values to 'shape' its ways of existing according to the command of such values. It is rather, as Deleuze states, a matter of forming 'a style of life' according to 'optional rules.' On the contrary, as we have seen, an idea of morality is manifested as a 'universal,' 'transcendent' set of rules and constraints. In that sense, a call for ethics may be seen as a way out of these claims and rules that are dictated by a notion of morality, as it is illustrated by Deleuze. But here we need to ask; what could this way out be, or what is the *moral* of ethics and morality distinction? In other words, what could be the impact of it in broader terms? A potential answer to these questions may be given if we consider the condition of our age.

Even in our so-called 'secular,' (post)modern age, we are yet to be freed from the 'shadows' of a transcendent morality. Instead, what we witness is a rise of the calls for 'higher' principles, such as 'the nation,' 'race,' 'the state' and so forth. At the same time, any effective resistance to these, often, nationalistic, even fascistic tendencies, is almost impossible to be found. This is, potentially, linked to the problem of morality, in the sense that any motion of resistance acts through a transcendent framework, invoking moral values, such as principles of human rights, the Law, democracy or justice. This is, often, done in a 'banal' way which is completely detached from life and the specificity of each case and thus these forms of resistance remain significantly ineffective. On the other hand, what Deleuze defines as ethics, possibly, leads towards a new way of creative thinking and living in an ethical, expressive way that could do away from dogmas and hierarchies. It is thus, a potential 'line of flight' out of the nihilism caused by dogmas and certainties, towards an *ethos* that embraces an *an-archic* potentiality that calls for experimentation.

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Hristos Marneros

Ka *an-arhičnom* etosu

Apstrakt

Francuski filozof Žil Delez nikada nije izjavio da namerava da napiše ili stvori delo etike ili moralne filozofije, barem ne u tradicionalnom smislu izraza koji se koristi za opisivanje „žanra" filozofske discipline. Međutim, ovaj rad pokazuje da dublje čitanje otkriva da Delezovova filozofska misao manifestuje *etos* koji nas poziva da razmislimo o mogućnosti stvaranja načina postojanja koji je duboko *an-arhičan* (bez ἀρχή [*archē*]), u smislu da se protivi svakom obliku dogmatizma i/ili hijerarhije. Drugim rečima, suprotstavlja se pojmu „osnova" ili porekla – ἀρχή [*archē*]. Ispitivanje ovog *an-arhičnog etosa* se manifestuje kroz Delezovu razliku između etike i morala, kao i kroz njegovo čitanje dela dvojice njegovih glavnih filozofskih prethodnika, Fridriha Ničea i Baruha Spinoze.

Ključne reči: Žil Delez, Fridrih Niče, Baruh Spinoza, *an-arhija*, etika, moral.