**The Wrath of Thrasymachus: A Thought on the Politics of Philosophical Praxis based on a Counter-Phenomenological Reinvestigation of the Thrasymachus-Socrates Debate in Plato’s *Republic***

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**Abstract**

The phenomenological vision, particularly, Husserl’s idea of critique as an infinite vocational *theoria* and Patočka’s as an enduring programme, view Platonic logic and Socratic act as *the* paradigms for a normative justification of the idea of universal science and philosophy. In light of that, the Thrasymachus-Socrates debate is interpreted as a case to testify the critical power of philosophy successfully exercised over sophistic tyrannical non-philosophy. This paper criticises the phenomenological idealisation of the Socratic victory as an ethico-teleologically anticipated success of philosophy and rewrites the defeat of Thrasymachus as a political failure in warring with philosophy during which Thrasymachus questions the legitimacy of the act of philosophising to decide its legitimacy and thereby exposes the politics played out in that act.

Keywords: Thrasymachus-Socrates debate, justification, phenomenological idea of critique, Husserl, Patočka, power of speech, politics of philosophy

**Introduction**

Justification [*Begründung*], particularly self-justification [*Selbstrechtfertigung/ Selbstbesinnung*], as something inherent to the meaning and praxis of philosophy as science takes up a decisive part of the motivation of phenomenology from its very beginning with Husserl and is transparently inherited by Patočka. Starting from the same Kantian critical motif, yet unlike Kant, Husserl understands that the justification of science and logic is essentially conditioned by the possibility to see the “ideal essence” of meaning in phenomena or concealed in them. For that, the Platonic sense of Idea identified with “being as such” and “truth as such” plays a key role.[[1]](#footnote-1) That possibility has ultimately evolved in Husserl into the originary capacity of the transcendental subject to bring about meaning in the first place, and has been established as the ability of the caring soul to endure with philosophy as a programme in Patočka, corresponding to the power of *logos* as such. To make self-evidently manifest once and for all the justifying power of reason becomes an urgent phenomenological task. This is why the phenomenological theory of knowledge in the last instance, takes the form of a critique of justifying subjectivity. The philosophical subject is obligated to engage itself in an infinite self-reflection of its primordial capacity to justify truth claims. This is what it means to live a rational life, which is philosophy’s ‘inborn’ ethical duty and *telos* representing the essence of European humanity. Completing the phenomenological task, philosophy exists “authentically”.[[2]](#footnote-2)

“To remember” the meaning of what it is to philosophise on the basis of the original knowability of the Idea as such is the mnemonic formula of the phenomenological critique of justifying reason. The phenomenological imperative to “remember” expresses an urge to “return” to the ultimate genetic origin of all meaning. What is most peculiar about this metaphysico-foundational returning is that it directs us to a definite empirico-historical origin, namely, ancient Greek philosophy. Husserl and Patočka mark ancient Greek philosophy as the archetype of the idea of genuine science and philosophical critique, precisely in that it held the ideal to search for universal meaning as the ultimate gauge for any truth claim and followed the rational life of self-justification. For that reason, Greek philosophy, from which the idea of universal science first sprang, is that toward which future philosophy should always direct itself. ‘Unfortunately’, this Greek spirit has been forgotten in modernity, but is ‘fortunately’ about to be revived thanks to this phenomenological reminiscence; phenomenology is responsible for reconnecting the ‘sick oblivion’ of modern European reason to the nascent philosophical gene of its Greek ancestors. In this sense, the phenomenology of Husserl and Patočka always involves this anamnestic task of the commemoration of Greek Antiquity.

In this line of thought, Plato and Socrates are no longer mere past philosophical authorities, but stand out as the icons of Greek Antiquity, who represent the timeless value of critical rationality. Plato’s dialogues are read as the ideal and normative exemplification of the idea of phenomenological critique, of what philosophy does and ought to do. Plato’s *Republic,* a refined version of the apology of Socrates in the face of the accusation of philosophical activity by the city, has a special phenomenological significance, precisely with respect to the teleological duty of Socrates “having to” deal with sophists and the critical manner in which Socrates dialogues with them. The text serves the phenomenological case according to which the ideal meaning of philosophy and the ethical import of philosophising are most representatively affirmed through Socratic speech acts. Patočka particularly focuses on Socrates’ dialogue with Thrasymachus in Book I as the most symbolic case to bear out the ideal-ethical power of philosophical *logos*, which justifies the victory of philosophy.

I am critical of such phenomenological idealisation of the Socratic act as something through which the success of philosophy over sophistic irrationalism gains legitimacy. This disagreement will be addressed by means of a reconstruction of the Thrasymachus-Socrates debate, not only because this case has already been an object of phenomenological investigation by Patočka, but also and even more so, because, during the debate, Thrasymachus touches upon the central presupposition of Socratic practice, i.e., philosophy’s giving itself the right to truth, which, compared with other dialogues, makes the Thrasymachus case unique. Thrasymachus questions precisely the legitimacy of the Socratic manner of justification, while that is most vigorously idealised by the two noted phenomenologists.

This work thoroughly reinvestigates the case of listening to Thrasymachus’ voice and shows how the Socratic *logos* suffocates the will and space of unphilosophical[[3]](#footnote-3) speech with the dialectical-political interest in setting up and ordering boundaries of being and meaning, and argues henceforth that the failure of Thrasymachus in the *Republic* is first and foremost a political failure; the dialectical critique itself *is* a political act. I will rethink the phenomenological success story of philosophy construed from the sublime power of the philosophical *logos* as a story of politics telling us that Thrasymachus’ succumbing to Socrates rather demonstrates a political motivation of the practice of philosophy and represents the death of the possibility for a different mode of speech, which otherwise could have co-existed in the history of Western thought.

**1. Plato’s Logic as an Ideal-Normative Form of Critique: Husserl**

Husserl attempts, particularly throughout his later works, to rebuild the meaning of scientificity, based not so much on Platonic Idealism as on Plato’s *act* of ‘establishing of logic’*.*

Science in a new sense arises in the first instance from *Plato’s establishing of logic*, as a place for exploring the essential requirements of “genuine” knowledge and “genuine” science and thus discovering norms, in conformity with which a science*consciously aiming at thorough justness***,** a science *consciously justifying*its method and theory by norms, might be built. …Plato’s logic arose from the reaction against the universal denial of science by sophistic scepticism. If scepticism denied the essential possibility of any such thing as “philosophy”, *as science*, then Plato *had to* weigh, and establish by criticism, precisely the *essential possibility* of such a thing. ... his dialectic of pure ideas — .... his theory of science — was called on to make genuine science possible now for the first time ... And preciselyin fulfillingthe*vocation*the Platonic dialectic actually helped*create*sciencesin the pregnant sense.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Husserl wants to point out here that it is throughPlato’s dialectic that science claims itself as something that *aims* at “justness”by aiming at justified knowledge; in other words, the idea of Plato’s dialectic as the first signature for true scientificity is a sign of “justness” as such. What Plato’s dialectic vocationally fulfilled is to have made justification of knowledge a matter of justice and thereby to have made the dialectical act a moral act as such. Precisely on the ground of this structural identification of *epistémé* with *diké,* which is actually taking place throughout the *Republic*, philosophy is *established as* “genuine” science. For Husserl that is the most significant Platonic event.

Husserl reiterates throughout his career that Plato first gave shape to the idea of First Philosophy as the science of absolute origin that secures all paths of knowing from the outset, on the ground of which the hierarchical system of science as a purposive unity of truths is essentially possible.[[5]](#footnote-5) That sense of philosophy was practically set off by the “Socratic reaction against sophistic scepticism” and theoretically outlined by Plato in the form of a universally applicable method. The Socratic-Platonic act is an “ethical-scientific reform” of philosophy to “furnish a fully sufficient justification for each step” of truth-production, which amounts to the first institutional launching of philosophy as a “fundamental critique” of rationality.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Resolutely and consistently for Husserl, scientific life is a life of justification. Self-conscious subjective justification of the justifying ground is a living *ethos* of philosophy *qua* genuine science and its proper lifestyle. The security of scientific objectivity is essentially conditioned by the ultimate justification of the *a priori* transcendental power of scientific reason that is able to justify its truth claims. Justification matters precisely because it *essentially* consists of the very meaning of science as “*theoria.*”Infinite activation and re-activation of such meaning of science is a concrete *vocational* activity of philosophy. Husserl calls it a “universal critique”: a “synthesis” of the Platonic interest in “*theoria”* as the purely unpractical desire for universally valid knowledge of All that is in the totality of human life and the Socratic interest in endless *praxis* to reach that ideal. Critique qua the idea of philosophy as such is since Plato philosophy’s institutional interest.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Such critique, making every incidence of human meaning undergo a purely theoretical reflection, eventually *drives* “to elevate” and “transform” mankind “into a new humanity made capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights”.[[8]](#footnote-8) Husserlian critique in its ideal form is thus always a struggle for the universal meaning of humanity, i.e., “what it is to be human” which takes the form of “who I am, the universally theorising subject”. This ethico-teleological “self-reflection” is the ultimate form and the highest moment of Husserlian critique.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Peculiarly, that self-justification purely driven by an inner teleological necessity is subject to another necessity, namely to identify a specific historical time and place as its real beginning: the Athenian *Polis*. With Husserl, the historical place of Athens undergoes a phenomenological *a*historicisation, by becoming the venue of attestation and orientation for the ideal power which is *a*historical in principle.[[10]](#footnote-10) Precisely through the Husserlian workout of placing historical antiquity within the *a*historical course of philosophical practice, the “twin-star[*Doppelgestirn*] Socrates-Plato”[[11]](#footnote-11) is phenomenologically resurrected into <the scientist [*der Wissenschaftler*] >[[12]](#footnote-12) who, producing and executing a universal norm, reflects on the meaning of himself as the knowing-justifying subject at each step of his refutation of the sophists’ arguments. Along with it, the emergence of philosophy in the West as a particular historical-cultural incidence becomes also an ideal-normative event, already conceiving within itself the teleology to philosophically ‘elevate’ humanity as a whole. Dialectical philosophising is already “an intuitive and *a priori* critique of reason”[[13]](#footnote-13) through which the infinite affirmation of the ideal power of ‘the scientist’ is ceaselessly carried on in the form of the philosopher’s vocation.

**2. Critique as Socratic Practice of the Justification of the *Polis in and* through *Logos*: Patočka**

Inheriting Husserl’s idea of the vocational universal critique, Patočka gives his own definition of critique as a radical break from the past, in the form of questioning the legitimacy of whatever meaning that was formerly accepted. The Husserlian signification of critique as the universal questioning of *All that is*, is re-affirmed in Patočkan language as the universal “shaking of accepted meaning totality”. The “shaking” signifies a comprehensive questioning of every meaning accepted hitherto, not as a negative motion of reason, but as a positive force to secure reason’s ultimate *place* as the shaking I.[[14]](#footnote-14) It becomes a new criterion upon which “who I am,” i.e., “what it is to be human,” is reconfigured. It is precisely the ability ‘to shake’ the truth which brings history a true meaning, liberating it from the detention of the past; history began when human thinking started to put into question the meaning of one’s own being and life in view of the totality of what shows itself, i.e., the “phenomena” as such.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Such a “shaking” is nothing but a new life attitude, namely, philosophising as such; *qua* philosophising it takes on the same Husserlian sense of “justifying.”

This justifying is the philosophical task that concerns us. To find something upon which stands the rest, to find it in such a way that we might build in a solid, unshakable, tapped from the presence of existence itself, way everything that surrounds us, is the *program*.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Going further than Husserl for whom only phenomenology in his era can be the first and ultimate philosophical programme,[[17]](#footnote-17) Patočka argues that philosophy launched itself as a programme already in its beginning as a “purposeful reflective activity”, whose main concern was to justify “what is most enduringly present” as the ultimately foundational truth.[[18]](#footnote-18) The enduring legitimacy of that truth can be claimed precisely because the activity of justification itself is something that endures: the truth is enduringly secured *through* the enduring force of philosophising activity; it is justified *qua* that force. The institutional endurability is what makes philosophy a programme as a systematic profession of critique.

The pure, totally unpractical[[19]](#footnote-19) purpose of that activity is the “care for the soul” which is nothing but the care for the enduring *power* of critical activity. The Platonic soul is cared for in order to become itself; it becomes itself precisely through programmatic training. the Platonic soul is something that must be “trained” to become “what it is not yet and what it can be”[[20]](#footnote-20) under the programmic[[21]](#footnote-21) power to endure. For Patočka it is precisely this interest in the enduring programmic power that makes Socrates the first genuine philosopher. The Philosopher king is on the way of becoming through the running of a dialectical programme.

For such a training, philosophy requires a “room for justification”,[[22]](#footnote-22) where the reflecting souls *speak for* themselves: a philosophical room for *argumentation* where the total shaking up is at work: a *polis* for the *logos* where Socrates can “defend *with new method*s the old,”[[23]](#footnote-23) making sophists question their old method according to which the present city is ruled. They live in the age when the old Athenian principle of freedom is shaken by the new internal tyrannical chaos following the Peloponnesian War. This new world-order represents the ‘lost’ present in which “what endures in constant presence” is absent.[[24]](#footnote-24) Nevertheless, this state of being lost is the right moment when the ‘true’ reflection on ‘who I was’, ‘who I am not’ and ‘who I endure to be forever’, i.e., the shaking up of the whole of the existent, must begin, which is exactly what Socrates does with the room for justification; there, “he shakes up the certainty on the basis of which the city has existed hitherto”[[25]](#footnote-25) and thereby carries out a social responsibility for the era to fight for the recovery of the tradition of Athenian democracy, for which exactly the present of the lost Athenians yearns. Hence the dialectical refutation, the “Socratic revolution,” is itself a moral revolution. With his new *method*, Socrates stands for a “critical radicalism,” standing out at the threshold of history in the aspiration of the change of regimes, wherein lies the true importance of the *Republic* as the “first systematic reflection on the state”.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The Athenian struggle to rebuild the democratic *polis* in post-war desolation and the Socratic struggle to have a room for argumentation have something in common: the “*aretē* of *polemos*”.[[27]](#footnote-27) The room for argumentation is another battlefield. The new method is an art of war. Where such art runs, *polemo*s becomes a virtue; by being engaged in the dialectical war the philosopher is virtuous. With the success of the dialectical revolution, the ruling power of philosophy is instituted to “legitimately” impel the unphilosophical other to act in such a way that they must come through the combat zone of the dialectical *polemo*s in order to make peace with philosophy.[[28]](#footnote-28)

In this way, in Patočka philosophical life – the purely ethical life of the dialectical soul – is *existentially* “grafted” on to a political life – the life of *polemos*; the “caring” of the soul is a programmic command for philosophy to persistently work out the kind of *polis* that a philosopher king rules, where “a person like Socrates does not need to die,”[[29]](#footnote-29) as it is the ‘right kind’ of *polis*. It is the political will of Socrates left to his descendants that his successors should actively and ceaselessly intervene in the outlining of the political system customised for the philosopher’s vocation. Philosophy exists *qua* the will of Socrates.

It is *not* a Patočkan point, however, that the programmic interest in the reflection on the ideal *polis* is a real political interest. On the contrary, having a totally “unpractical” purpose, the unending dialectical constitution of the ideal *polis* shows itself to be an *a*political disinterestedness.[[30]](#footnote-30) Thinking of a philosophy-friendly political system is the manner in which the soul is cared for. Politics is that upon which philosophy practices the caring technique and through which what it is to be philosophical becomes manifest. Following the all-time phenomenological truism, politics as Patočkan soul-caring shows itself as *a*political, just as history shows itself as *a*historical in the consciousness of the “transcendental historicity” in Husserl.[[31]](#footnote-31) Philosophy’s operating of the art of *polemos* for the philosophy-friendly political system and the martyrdom of Socrates for the completion of justification emit a sublime beauty, rather than a political interest.

**3. The Thrasymachus-Socrates Debate**

***3.1 Overview: Thrasymachus as Trauma***

General academic attention toward Thrasymachus is almost exclusively paid to his infamous thesis presented in Book I of the *Republic*, the so-called “immoralist argument” that “justice is the advantage of the stronger [*kreiton*]”.[[32]](#footnote-32) The research focus lies writ large on articulating the meaning of the thesis in terms of its logical coherence and incoherence or on deciding an optimal philosophical-ethical position for Thraymachus, i.e., whether he is an immoralist or a cynic or a relativist or whether he could be someone else, with a common emphasis on his sophistic style and temperament contrasted to Socrates’ dialectical-moral composure .[[33]](#footnote-33)

To any extent, the theatrical reality of Socrates’ difficulty in neatly handling the Thrasymachean challenge makes Thrasymachus look like a burdensome figure.[[34]](#footnote-34) Given that each Sophist is endowed with a deliberately designated role in all of Plato’s dialogues, some efforts are made to incorporate Thrasymachus, who seems to come into conflict with Plato’s stance in a larger textual context, by giving a plausible conjecture on Plato’s ‘big picture’, in which the respective character plays a significant connective role in relation to the rest of the story of the *Republic*.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The obvious intellectual-institutional discomfort and perplexity concerning the Thrasymachus case shows how traumatic this case is within the hermeneutics of the text and of Plato as a whole; it keeps haunting Socrates’ descendants against the backdrop of the thrilling memory of the Triumph of Socrates that the history of philosophy has canonized.

***3.2 Patočkan Investigation: Socrates as a Divine Warrior***

Patočka begins with the conventional classical image of Thrasymachus as a “symbol of tyranny”.[[36]](#footnote-36) Unquestionably rendering the immoralist thesis to be an “insolent and entirely tyrannical opinion,”[[37]](#footnote-37) his interest lies in how the “tyrannical essence” of Thrasymachus’ *logoi* was revealed. For Patočka, the tyrannical essence of Thrasymachus’ speech is not something taken for granted at first, but something that became salient *qua* Socrates’ *accomplishment*; what Socrates did is to construct a confrontational state between the *polis* where justice is secured as a virtue and the *polis* where injustice is sanctioned; by that *work*, it became clear that it is philosophy which endows legitimacy on the former type, while discrediting the latter; *that* is the achievement of philosophy.

Advocating ancient values in the present lost, Socrates, with his new methods, “formulates” paradoxes “implicated in traditional life,”[[38]](#footnote-38) into explicit theses that are refutable. The purpose is to reveal that the speaker himself – the sophist interlocutor – does not grasp the meaning of his own speech and thereby to let him contradict himself. This is the sacred, confidential mission that Socrates is assigned by God. The “Know Thyself” commands to make present the ignorance of the unphilosophical other by revealing the “secret disposition for tyranny”[[39]](#footnote-39) concealed in that otherness.

In this way, philosophy is unified with divinity; that Socrates won is no longer a mere contingent historical fact, but a providential Fate derived from the divinity of Socrates’ mission. A religious faith is the last key for the ultimate justification of the Socratic act, specifically in the Christian faith. The *Republic* itself is the “first purely moral religion” comparable to the Bible.[[40]](#footnote-40) The divine “immortality of the soul” coincides with the immortality of the *meaning* of Socrates who is like a Christian martyr. The Socratic will that one should participate in an infinite dialectical activity is a mode of liquidation of the debt that Socrates’ descendants owed him for not having been able to stop his death, corresponding to the Christian debt of having overlooked the death of Christ.[[41]](#footnote-41)

At this juncture, the figure of Thrasymachus serves as a providential medium through which philosophy attests to its faith and obedience to God’s command. For that sanctified purpose, Socrates – philosophy – has never acted arbitrarily, but deliberately pedagogic purely for Thrasymachus’ sake, in order to make himself acknowledge his own fault; Socrates is “busy just purely refuting” the thesis of Thrasymachus; “against sophist, Socrates is not choosy and calmly uses means equally sophistical,”[[42]](#footnote-42) constantly “examining, all and only examining” his speech with reference to “what is as such,” in distinction from “what appears to be as such,” solely in order to shake the unquestioned sophistic ground.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Insofar as Thrasymachus’ defeat is part of the providential scenario, it is absurd with respect to Socrates to talk about psychological terms, such as fear or anger; all that Socrates does as the messenger of God is a pure practice of the reflective *technē* of the care for the soul, purely methodologically refuting Thrasymachus’ thesis, word by word, only in order to bring down the principle of “what most enduringly is” in the real world, through which his action itself is to be *eidetically* justified. In extreme contrast, Thrasymachus is constantly threatening and blackmailing, venting his uncontrolled temper and his sense of irritation, whenever his *logos* is touched by Socratic examination. Socrates then takes care of Thrasymachus’ irrational aggravation with prudence and moderation, as this is what it means “to care” in the sense of “to tame.”

Meanwhile, the calm development of the Socratic *polemos*, motivated wholly by divine fidelity, answers to the belligerent spirit of real war. Conversing with Thraymachus, Socrates fights against the existing justifying power of the sophistic method in order to appropriate it. He has to win this war to make the divine power of his method permanent.

***3.3 The Husserlian******Investigation: Socrates as the First Phenomenologist***

Husserl does not mention Thrasymachus directly.[[44]](#footnote-44) Hence we can only infer a Husserlian interpretation of the Thrasymachus-Socrates debate from his portraying of Socrates as Plato’s ideal alter ego.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Husserl understands the Socratic *logos* almost exclusively as the capacity to do justification, herein identifying Platonic scientificity. Husserl thinks that the essence of Socratic critique lies in the involvement of subjective “norm-consciousness”,[[46]](#footnote-46) which allows one to trace every step of the justification in order to ascertain the self-evident clarity of meaning and one’s intuitive ability to confirm it. The Platonic idea of the dialectic demands that scientific objectivity should be obtained from the clarification of meaning with reference to the pure idea. In order for that purity to claim absolute normativity, the knowing I should be able to affirm and reaffirm it as something absolutely self-given in insight.[[47]](#footnote-47) This is a mental process through which the knower *lives*: “Thinking theoretically and accomplishing his theoretical work, he *lives* in these processes.”[[48]](#footnote-48) “He” is no one else than Socrates. With his practice, Socrates defends, not so much the scientific objectivity of the idea *per se,* but the capacity of the reasoning subject who subjects every human affair to a universal scientific questioning; he stands for the idea of the life of a philosopher.

Socrates, Husserl assesses, took the sophistic critique of truth that denies the possibility of Platonic science *in toto*, *as* a serious ethical problem impeding the progress toward a philosophical-scientific humanity.[[49]](#footnote-49) Thus Socrates *had to* react: first he refuses to take the sophistic anti-scientific arguments for granted and subjects them to a universal examination. Then he establishes a positive formulation of objective knowledge that is to be justified in the mode of a “lived experience” of the knowing-consciousness.[[50]](#footnote-50) This “Socratic procedure” is “in substance” already a phenomenological “method of clarification.”[[51]](#footnote-51) It is the beginning of a “new *Epoché*”,[[52]](#footnote-52) which promotes the life of philosophising as the most virtuous life; being *“*the scientist”, Socrates plays the “ethical practitioner [*ethische Praktiker*].”[[53]](#footnote-53)

In sum, the job of a philosopher, the manner in which Socrates reacts to sophists, always already yields the victory of philosophy. For Husserl, there is no other story of philosophy than that of winning already. What guarantees and proves the victory of philosophy has nothing to do with whether Socrates actually converted Sophists to philosophers or actually refuted sophists, but rather lies in its teleology. Therefore Socrates is justifying what he is doing by what he is doing, and as this is the reification of the “inner” teleology of humanity’s elevation into a philosophical humanity, Socrates is sure to win.

 The Thrasymachus-Socrates debate can then be understood as a *typos* of the “Socratic reaction against sophistic scepticism”, reifying the teleological fate that the Platonic idea of philosophy unfolds. The Socratic reaction is a primitive mode of Cartesian-transcendental action and the action of the “Greek critique of reason”;[[54]](#footnote-54) an unprecedented ethico-scientific event that anticipates the advent of phenomenology[[55]](#footnote-55) and an event of phenomenological unconcealment. Socrates, for Husserl, is the first phenomenologist.

**4. The Thrasymachus-Socrates Debate: an *Anti*phenomenological Reinvestigation**

***4.1******Act I : Prologue***

In Plato’s *Republic,* Thrasymachus is judged to have *failed* inproving a good argument for injustice in argumentation. The judgement of Thrasymachus’ failure by philosophy precisely as a “failure in argumentation” initiates the science project to build the knowledge of justice *in speech*. Socrates inspires his interlocutors to enter into the philosophical plot by saying, “if we should watch a city coming into being *in speech*, would we also see its justice coming into being, and its injustice?”[[56]](#footnote-56) Alongside the act of founding an ideal *polis*, an insight into its justness itself is to be gained, precisely *in that speech*. So he began to found the city *in speech*. With this argument, Socrates determinedly converts the issue of justice from a matter of defending political justice as the benefit of the just and the harm of the unjust into the matter of scientifically defining “what justice is and where it came from.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

Following the architectonic of the text, the launching of the construction project in Book II should mark the beginning of the justification of philosophy, which had not been achieved in Book I. If Patočka were right, the whole calculation of philosophy, at least up to that point, should have been only to reveal the sophistic irony by way of reusing “equally sophistical means”. Contrary to that, however, the deliberately selected dialectic has been employed from the earliest opening dialogue with Cephalus.

Cephalus’ speech in which different topics such as the just life, being aged and dying, use of wealth, etc. are informally mixed up, is filtered out by Socrates to one formal proposition that “justice is [telling] the truth and giving back what one owes.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Then, after several counterexamples, Socrates refutes the proposition that is already no longer derived from Cephalus’ speech with the statement that “this *isn’t* the *definition* of justice,”[[59]](#footnote-59) as if the original speech of Cephalus had been about defining what justice is. The same goes with Polemarchus’ speech; this is once again disassembled to be reconstructed into one finished sentence that “Justice is doing good to friends and harm to enemies.”[[60]](#footnote-60) Socrates refuted it on the ground of the ambiguity of the boundary between friend and enemy; the criterion was how to discern who *is* a true friend and who *appears* to be such.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Through the two pre-Thrasymachean dialogues, it turns out that the “equally sophistical means” that Patočka mentioned, were in fact the means of the dialectic; both sophists were dismissed as a result of the exercise of dialectic, which pushes one to discern “what is” from “what seemingly is.” Their words were judged as illegitimate on account of the refutation of theses which the original speeches were not in fact proposing. The initial verdict of the failure of each sophistic speech by Socrates is the consequence of the in-advance *vocational play* of philosophy to twist around the issue, any issue, into *essentially* an affair of argumentation based on the dialectical definition and discernment of Being*.* Philosophy in need of defence is set in motion as a rule of defence, as if its legal-administrative authorisation had been completed.

***4.2 Act II: Thrasymachus Roaring Wrath***

Thrasymachus detects these inversions of the order of justification. Having been irritated throughout, Thrasymachus cannot hold on to his temper and finally loses it when Polemarchus’ speech is discarded by Socrates after several modifications. Plato dramatises the first appearance of Thrasymachus as follows:

;when he paused and I said this, he could no longer keep quiet; *hunched up like a wild beast*, he flung himself at us as if *to tear us to pieces*. Then both Polemarchus and I got all *in a flutter from fright*. And he shouted out into our midst and said, “What is this nonsense that has possessed you for long, Socrates? And why do you act like fools making way for one another? If you truly want to know what the just is, don’t only ask and gratify your love of honor by refuting whatever someone answer yourself—you know that it is easier to ask than to answer—but answer yourself and say what you assert the just to be. And see to it you don’t tell me that it is the needful, or the helpful, or the profitable, or the gainful, or the advantageous; but *tell me clearly and precisely what you mean*, for I won’t accept it if you say such inanities.”

I was astounded when I heard him, and, looking at him, I was *frightened*. I think if I had seen him before he saw me, I would have been *speechless*.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Thrasymachus is portrayed consistently by the vivid image of a brute animal, with every expression suggesting violent savageness untamed by philosophy, which affects even the calm philosophical mind with “a flutter from fright” so far that it becomes “speechless.”

While presenting the full speech of Thrasymachus in such a negative mood, maximising the terror of the image, Plato’s vision here is either unable to catch his most decisive attack point or is “intentionally” hiding it under these literary devices. What Thrasymachus vehemently yet intuitively perceives here in the most counter-dialectical language is that the rationality of Socrates’ refutation of the sophists’ arguments is that they all lack a true knowledge of what justice is; hence, in order for Socrates to justify that stance, he must already be in possession of the true knowledge of justice, which would serve as the ground of refutation, which would be the proper logico-normative step; Socrates, however, did not start with a justified assertion of what justice is; therefore, Thrasymachus infers ‘instinctively’ that Socrates *has no right* to declare the unphilosophical *logoi* to be invalid.

Now it is rather Thrasymachus who is using “means equally Socratic” here, though not “calmly,” in order to resist the Socratic method, for it is precisely the Delphic order to assert nothing out of any ungrounded stance. Thrasymachus intimates the raw truth of the Socratic operational mechanism of the dialectic, namely that it claims its right to censor and discriminate between speeches in view of a legitimacy, that it has *given* itself. Himself lacking a foundation, Socrates induces his “foolish” partners to admit that their arguments are refutable, for the reason that they lack a true ground; the object of justification under investigation – the dialectic and the belief in immortality – is being used as the ground for justification. That is the key point at which Thrasymachus roars with rage.

With his “irrational” wrath, Thrasymachus legitimately poses a question as to the legitimacy of the self-given, but never externally justified, right of philosophy to legally rule the social situation of any speech; philosophy is here attacked right at the heart of its very essence. I count this scene as a unique historical record of the first and the last serious “real” strike at the justification of the praxis of philosophy, concretely targeting its *legitimacy*. Yet, his attack is immediately taken by Socrates as a “beast-like” act. Meanwhile, the philosophical *logos* of modesty and wisdom apparently fails to disguise its loathing of the unphilosophical other, along with a frightening fear of them and the consequent ‘mental disturbance’.

***4.3 Act III: Thrasymachus’ Solid Resistance***

As Socrates refrains from answering,[[63]](#footnote-63) Thrasymachus has gone mad once again and says: “Heracles! Here is that habitual irony of Socrates. I knew it, and I predicted to these fellows that you wouldn’t be willing to answer, that you would be ironic and do anything rather than answer if someone asked you something.”[[64]](#footnote-64) But Socrates still refuses to give the *first* account of what justice is; instead he makes up a hypothetical situation where Thrasymachus is a questioner posing the question “what is twelve?” and Socrates himself is to be a respondent.[[65]](#footnote-65) Then Socrates gives the reason why he would not answer:

Hence you know quite well that if you asked someone how much twelve is and in asking told him beforehand, ‘See to it you don’t tell me, you human being, that it is two times six, or three times four, or six times two, or four times three, I won’t accept such nonsense from you’—it was plain to you, I suppose, that no one would answer a man who asks in this way. And if he asked, “Thrasymachus, what do you mean? Shall I answer none of those you mentioned before? Even if it happens to be one of these, shall I say something other than the truth, you surprising man? Or what do you mean?’—what would you say to him in response?[[66]](#footnote-66)

To that replies Thrasymachus: “Very well, … as if this case were similar to the other.”[[67]](#footnote-67) This is the least informative, but most intriguing scene that needs ‘decoding’.[[68]](#footnote-68) By similarity Thrasymachus can mean two kinds: first, it can mean that “what is justice?” is the similar kind of question as “what is twelve?” so that one can expect the answers also to be similar; second, it can mean similarity in terms of the manners in which the two questions are answered.

Socrates seems to imply both: that the manner in which he can respond to Thrasymachus is similar to the manner in which the one questioned “what is twelve?” can reply to its questioner and that the forms of answers to the two questions are similar, assuming that the questions themselves are formally the same. For Socrates, “what is justice?” is framed always already in the dialectical-definitional questioning-form of “what is P?” with P substitutable with anything, either twelve or justice or a dog, so that “what is justice?” should be answered in a similar way that “what is twelve?” is answered both in the same categorical answer-form “P is Q.”

Now the main Thrasymachean point could be that when talking about justice in its true sense, it does not always have to be the case that the subject-matter should involve such a predicating judgement. With the remark seemingly restricting the dialectical freedom of speech, Thrasymachus is rather refusing to accept the dialectical questioning-answering, subject-predicate relation as a universally agreed format; he is returning the dialectically formed question back to Socrates who is its original owner, rejecting the dialectically pre-delineated types of answer and manners of answering provided by Socrates as if they were obligatory. Ironically, therefore, it is Socrates here who strictly interdicts the nondialectical freedom to refuse to get on the track of the dialectical speech mode in the first place.

With all these critical connotations silenced, Socrates simply pins down the point of Thrasymachus’ speech as a preposterous disallowance of his freedom of choice:

“Nothing prevents it from being.” “And even granting that it’s not similar, but looks like it is to the man who is asked, do you think he’ll any the less answer what appears to him, whether we forbid him to or not?”[[69]](#footnote-69)

With this response the situation goes through an astonishing reversal, as if it were Socrates who had been “forcibly” questioned, as if it were Socrates’ speech that had been questioned, as if it were Thrasymachus who had primarily asked Socrates the question “what is justice?”, suppressing the memory that it has been forced precisely into *that* form in *that* manner and *first* delivered to the sophists by Socrates.

*Mysteriously and inexplicably*, Thrasymachus’ unphilosophical brilliance terminates there. As Thrasymachus is unable to tackle Socrates’ move, for example with a prompt counter reply such as, “Nothing permits the case to be similar, either,” the power of his speech starts to decline rapidly. Having failed to make Socrates present his thesis *first*, Thrasymachus got trapped in Socrates’ dialectical ploy without any more tug-of-war and, having become the *first* speaker in this definition game, he offers the “immoralist argument”.

The presentation of this argument is generally marked out as the beginning of the debate. But it is in fact the end of the war: a tragic moment of irony. Thrasymachus who had been ferociously dissenting to the pre-emptive play of the dialectic, disqualifying philosophy’s self-endowment of the right to govern the speech act, finally gives in to philosophy and sacrifices his speech as an offering to the altar of the dialectic. At the very moment when unphilosophical Thrasymachus agreed to present his words in the form of a definition as the *first* presenter, the game was already over.

***4.4 Act IV : Thrasymachus Dismissed Tragically***

Socrates calls an end to the quarrel not with a universal, negative statement, but with a personal opinion: “So I can in no way *agree* with Thrasymachus that the just is the advantage of the stronger.”[[70]](#footnote-70) This ending came with the “promise” that “this we shall consider again at another time.”[[71]](#footnote-71) But “another time” never arrives. Socrates permanently puts off the divine responsibility to provide a ground for the self-justification and instead moves on immediately:

“What Thrasymachus now says is in my own opinion a far bigger thing—he asserts that the life of the unjust man is stronger than that of the just man. What do you choose, Glaucon, and which speech is truer in your opinion?”[[72]](#footnote-72)

This sudden, swift re-setting of the frame of the conversation, with now the pro-philosophical third party, Glaucon, taking over the speech, excluding Thrasymachus, the owner of the original argument, effectuates a smooth implementation of the dialectic and “magically” quietens the latter. Soon arrives the often noticed climax of his defeat: the moment of “Thrasymachus blushing.”

Now Thrasymachus did not agree to all of this so easily as I tell it now, but he dragged his feet and resisted, and he produced a wonderful quantity of sweat, for it was summer. And then I saw what I had not yet seen before—*Thrasymachus blushing*. At all events, when we had come to complete agreement about justice being virtue and wisdom, and injustice both vice and lack of learning, I said, “All right, let that be settled for us; but we did say that injustice is mighty as well. Or don’t you remember, Thrasymachus?”

“I remember,” he said. “But even what you’re saying now doesn’t satisfy me, and I have something to say about it. But if I should speak, I know well that you would say that I am making a public harangue. So, then, either let me say as much as I want; or, if you want to keep on questioning, go ahead and question, and, just as with old wives who tell tales, I shall say to you, ‘All right,’ and I shall nod and shake my head.

“Not, in any case, contrary to your own opinion,” I said.

“To satisfy you,” he said, “since you won’t let me speak. What else do you want?”

“Nothing, by Zeus,” I said, “but if that’s what you are going to do, *go ahead and do it*, and *I’ll ask questions*.”[[73]](#footnote-73)

Etching out Thrasymachus’ blushing “for the first time,” Plato makes the most of the effect of the Socratic method as it succeeds in taming even the most terrifying bestiality, as if Thrasymachus *voluntarily* admitted his fallacy out of “shame” thanks to that very method.[[74]](#footnote-74) But nowhere is there evidence to be found that Thrasymachus blushed because of “shame”, whether rational or moral. For Thrasymachus who had already become a common enemy, it may well have been extremely difficult to maintain the persevering posture in this too philosophy-friendly atmosphere, bearing the weight of public adversity. His blushing could simply have been a basic physiological symptom expected in such circumstance. Otherwise, Thrasymachus here rather clearly expresses his *involuntary*, negative will that, although he still wants to speak, he would no longer participate in this game with the same interest, *unless his mode of speaking is accepted as equally legitimate*. Now that he anticipates that Socrates will never let him speak in the way that he wants to speak, he makes a statement to the effect that he would rather remain quiet than listening to old tales, which is to say that, if he stops talking, it would be because he has been *forced* by the circumstances, not because he admits it to be reasonable.

Having managed to mute the distrustful voice of Thrasymachus, Socrates takes a deliberate political gesture of agreeing with Thrasymachus’ words *per se* in that he will nod and shake his head merely to satisfy Socrates. Finishing his response with the remark “go ahead and do it, and I’ll ask questions,” Socrates openly scorns Thrasymachus, announcing that he no longer considers him a respectful partner in the conversation. As a consequence, the seriousness of Thrasymachus’ satirist sarcasm considering the manner of dialectical argumentation, given in the analogy of old wives’ tale-telling, loses its force and his attempt to resist Socrates’ act, affirming the value of unphilosophical speech, is pathetically derided. More miserably than ever, Thrasymachus consequently really just “nods and shakes” his head, bereft of his voice, he acquiesces to his unspoken dismissal.

**5. The Power of Speech, the Politics of Philosophy and the Socratic *Jus Belli***

In Plato, Being refers to something which is *capable* of being known; knowledge is identified with a power [*dynamis*] to make known Being as that which is *knowable*.[[75]](#footnote-75) The capacity of Being is the power of tautology to make itself known by the very power of knowing-itself. The space for such “itself-being-capable” is speech; Being is *constructible* *in* *speech, as speech* and *through speech*. The discernment of Being takes place *only in speech*, as soon as the dialectic is called upon*.* The power of Being – Truth – is the power of the *logos*. That is the most phenomenological point of the *Republic* that Husserl wants to remember: the *absolute self-justifying power of logos* which presides over the ontologically transcendent and epistemologically transcendental chasm between Being and Appearance.

Husserl translates such Platonic power of *logos* concretely into the power of the speaking subject to speak truth.

The word logos…. has a great many significations, which ... arose from the more original significations of λέγειν – namely: “to lay together,” “to set forth,” … by means of speech.

1. … λόγος … signifies … *speech*, itself …. the propositional thought produced by the speaker for purposes of communication or else for himself. ... Furthermore, … logos points to the *mental act* itself: the predicating, the asserting, or other thinking. …

2. But, particularly where a scientific interest is active, … Logos ... signifies: sometimes *reason* itself, as an ability, and sometimes rational thinking … or thinking directed to a truth given in insight. Logos signifies … the ability to form legitimate concepts.[[76]](#footnote-76)

The speaker is the one who is *able* to produce a justifi*able* speech; what is spoken is truth already justified, because it is truth *simpliciter* given in insight. *Logos* is not merely a speech, but a ‘justifiable speech’. The power of *logos* is the speaker’s essential *ability* to speak what is justifi*able* already. That speech completely governed and controlled by the speaker is the core of the Socratic argument; Socratic argument is a projection of the *legitimatising power* of the speaker onto the speech which is always already the result of an application of the speaker’s norm, and that is exactly what happened during the Thrasymachus-Socrates debate.

Now the essential question for the phenomenological critique, “who I am, the universal theoriser” is to be “who is the speaker.” Within the meaning-power of λόγος, the knowing-justifying I infinitely ascertains this absolute speak*ability* to affirm its governing place as the norm-producing speaker. The Socratic “return to self-evidence”[[77]](#footnote-77) indicates the return to that tautologically justified place of the speaking subject. Such power of *logos* may never make a philosopher king really come true, but it sanctions the right that a dialectician should *rule* the process through which it is decided “who should rule”. What is at issue is not the justice of the ruling of the *polis* by a philosopher king, but the justice of the ruling of a speech by a philosopher as speaker, in which Husserl and Patočka invested all of their phenomenological arguments.

The power of *logos* as such a self-positioning power itself decides valid positionsfor other beings; it is as such the “power of the dialectic” that discerns philosophy from non-philosophy and orders them in a functional *hierarchy* according to the logic of “what *is”.* This point explains how λέγειν – to speak – can mean “to set forth,” i.e., to *place.* That power *disciplines* all arts and sciences, e.g., music, poetry, geometry, gymnastic, mathematics and astronomy, *allotting* themlegitimateplaces for signification, within which each can speak conforming to the norm provided, warning them neither to cross the boundary of, nor to transgress the boundary-making law.[[78]](#footnote-78) This power of the *logos* then insists that its effecting of such *geopolitical* demarcation of beings represents justice. Constructing an ideal *polis* in dialectical speech, philosophy then makes the claim that “to philosophise” means “to do justice.”

Hanna Arendt, taking up the Husserlian-Patočkan sense of critique as an “endless relentless examination,” adopts the very Platonic policy that “ do philosophy” and “ do justice” should coincide.[[79]](#footnote-79) She argues that the significance of Socratic thinking has everything to do with questioning, without the promise to provide definite answers. Socrates works not simply to perplex other people with his questions, but to “infect them with the perplexity” he feels himself[[80]](#footnote-80); he paralyses others by being paralysed himself. Self-paralysing and paralysing others are unified when the other’s perplexity is caused, not by enforcement of the philosopher-answerer, but by the “infection” of the philosopher-questioner. This infectious unity seeking out knowledge as that which is worthy of love represents the highest state of beauty and justice. Thinking is good and beautiful in principle; it excludes evil and ugliness ‘by definition’: “‘do philosophy’ would be incapable of doing evil.”[[81]](#footnote-81) Put otherwise, “not to philosophise”, which equals “not to think” would be capable of evil *originaliter*.

The Arendtian infectious unity demands of the Socratic soul to take care *of* thesophistic soul, while demanding of the sophistic soul to be taken care *by* the Socratic soul; the self-care in one case – the paralysis of Socratic soul – comes from within and its meaning lies in the awakening *of* the other; the self-care in the other case – the paralysis of sophistic soul – comes from without and its meaning lies in the *becoming*-awakened *by* the other.

That relation between the responsibility-for of the philosopher-examiner and the readiness-to-respond of the unphilosophical-questionee represents a relational power-politics inherent to the Socratic programme. The paralysing of the other existentially belongs to my state of being paralysed and this paralysing is proclaimed to be justice. This is an acute political state of affairs, claiming that pure self-reflection is essentially interested in legally *changing* the state of being of others. The self-caring which should be allegedly the most private act is predisposed to speak *for* the legitimacy of otherness. The “infection” is *made,* not on account of a natural force of the good, but by the concrete touch of the Socratic speech act, out of neither consensus nor allowance nor negotiation nor request, but out of the very politico-institutional impetus of the “do-philosophy” formula.

The Arendtian Socrates, together with the Husserlian-Patočkan Socrates, claims the right of being the “first and ultimate” teacher who is never to be perplexed by others, but only self-perplexed, never learning from others, but only self-learned. This teacher may not pretend to know an answer, but makes sure that he *knows* what and how to question. Confessing that he does not know, Socrates claims a distinct knowledge about how to formulate such ignorance into what language and about the manner in which to train the unphilosophical other. The modest, most private self-confession “I know nothing” transforms itself into the haughtiest, most public juridico-normative injunction “know thyself,” the violation of which is immediately judged a moral crime which defiles divinity.

In the end, the city that needs such teachers is the city of the military camp, the best art for which is the art of war.[[82]](#footnote-82) Educating guardians, the philosopher will never lose her job as training to teach, not how to win a war, but how to justify the waging of a war against otherness. Philosophy fights, not for the room for *any* argumentation, but for the room for dialectical argumentation. The art of discriminating between the just ruler and the unjust ruler is identical to the art of assertion and refutation of the propositions of justice and injustice. In order to be incapable of evil, the philosopher-questioner is in a permanent state of warring. The Socratic *jus belli* that identifies “do philosophy” with “do justice” is the essential condition for the possibility of philosophy. Not in order to do philosophy, but in doing philosophy, Socrates does politics. So do Husserl and Patočka, insofar as they maintain that “do phenomenology” is the most adequate and responsible form of “do philosophy.”

**Conclusion: The Political Death of Thrasymachus’ *Logos***

Throughout the entirety of the Socratic dialogues, any “false” arguments of sophists’ can be “righteously” false, only after Socrates re-uttered their speeches in his own terms and re-turned them to the original speaker. The upshot is that the possessor of speech ends up having no right whatsoever in respect to her own speech, of her own “falsity”; the ownership of the owner is suspended until the speech is checked by Socrates’ *care*. The justness indicates, not the rightness of the foundation of a *pro*-philosophical *polis*, but the vocation of philosophy to think out such system, the very claiming of the “righteousness” of that praxis, which represents in fact the kind of justice laid out in the “immoralist argument,” i.e., the justice of power politics. The Thrasymachus case lays bare precisely such politics of Socratic caring that normatively transforms “do philosophy” into “do justice.”

Sophistic scepticism, by dint of its mere presence, speaking in a Schmittian way, is a concrete threat to philosophy’s metaphysical position as the ultimate judge of legitimacy. That sophistry exists as another authority exercising an equally justifying power, *eo ipso* cancels the *raison d’être* of philosophy. Therefore, according to its inner logic, the justification of philosophy necessarily requires a de-legitimatisation of otherness, which prohibits any possible quarrel; Thrasymachus is “socratised” by means of Socrates’ unilateral declaration of friendship.[[83]](#footnote-83) The dialectical caring of the soul is a political speech-taming by way of which the philosophical *uni*-verse, communicable in only one language, is formed, where Thrasymachus’ blushing should never mean anything else than a testimony of the power of the philosophical language. This ironically shows that philosophy is *incapable* of speaking outside of that *uni*verse; philosophy can neither stay calm nor negotiate with the other whose language it cannot decode; philosophy’s potency to speak only one language testifies exactly to its inability to hear other languages.

The Thrasymachus case exposes such structural inability of the philosophical *nous* not to even begin a speech beyond the limit of the dialectic, to be wilfully incommunicable in a situation where beings and words resist being discerned according to the dialectical rule. That is why, contrary to Patočka’s interpretation, Socrates failed in keeping his “philosophical composure” with Thrasymachus, the strongest but equally poorest unphilosophical other who actually made Socrates shudder. The calmness of philosophy began to work only when Thrasymachus was no longer a threat; following this event, from Book II to X, we witness a non-stop solo race of philosophy, with every sophist submissively affirming the rights of philosophical rationality. That is the reality of Platonic reciprocity which Patočka misses and mourns, as a peaceful “discussion of philosophy with unphilosophy.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

There is no such reciprocal *exchange* in Plato’s drama, however; there is only philosophy’s political appropriation of the space of Thrasymachean speech. The immortality of the Socratic *nous* derives from the political and dialectical “murder” of the Thrasymachean soul. We have no clue as to how we can find out the “truth” of how such “peaceful agreement” about the universal enactment of Socratic language arose; the Platonic*-*phenomenological story of ethical taming is silent about this; it has been buried with the dismissal of Thrasymachus. The unspoken dismissal of Thrasymachus and the leading of the phenomenological idealisation of Socrates indicate a permanent shutdown of a fair story as to the nondialectical desires and shouting that Thrasymachus had once manifested most impressively and most tragically, and of the history of telling such a story.

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1. See Husserl, ‘Prolegomena,’ in *Logical Investigation* *I*, 11-161. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The ethico-teleological idealisation of European philosophical reason is a distinct theoretical feature of later Husserl; it is exhaustively summed up in the *Crisis* and ‘Vienna Lecture.’ The same spirit essentially dominates Patočka, too. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Treating philosophy as a “mode of speech”, by “unphilosophical” I indicate a state of “not being philosophical,” not following philosophical instruction as to how to speak legitimately. However, what I want to express should not be confused with Patočka’s intention, when he uses “unphilosophy” (*Plato and Europe*, 129) referring to an alterity of philosophy, as something to be philosophically tamed; nor with the Husserlian sentiment when he mentions “unphilsophic”(FTL, 13) in the sense of “not genuine” and “nonphilosophy” (*Crisis*, 14-5) as an enemy or an evil to be eradicated. My expression shares nothing with Laruelle’s Nonphilosophy as a proper concept, either, with which Laruelle attempts to “democratically” extend and modify the limit of the justifying power of philosophy to (modern) science, without negating philosophy, precisely out of the same or even reinforced Husserlian metaphysical motivation for absolute transcendental foundation (Laruelle, *Principle of Non-philosophy*, esp. 37-77). On the other hand, “antiphilosophy” could not be an alternative term to convey well the spirit of this paper, either, since it has become a professional term within the specific historical-intellectual milieu of Western philosophy, from Lacan, Badiou, Žižeck, to Groys most recently, appealing to a specific argumentative-judgmental position vis-à-vis philosophy as either a reactionary, revolutionary or reformist position, etc. Keeping a definite distance from all those phenomenological, ‘modern’ and/or ‘postmodern’ specifications as to “unphilosophy,” “nonphilosophy” and “antiphilosophy,” my “unphilosophical”, basically adjectivally, illuminates a natural or phenomenal un-relation to philosophy implying “not feeling obliged,” “not wanting” to be with the phenomenologically advocated philosophical – Socratic – mode of speaking or “not being relevant to” it, without presupposing a pre-emptive hostility to or a negation of philosophy; it carries a sentiment of not consenting to philosophy’s judgement that “not being philosophical” is either an evil or a pathos. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Husserl, *Formal Transcendental Logic,* 1-2, my emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Husserl, *First Philosophy,* 3-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid, 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Husserl, ‘Vienna Lecture’, 280-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid, 283 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Husserl, *Crisis*, § 6, §15; ‘Vienna Lecture’, 297-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The necessary recruitment of temporal reality to justify timeless presence of ideality is a peculiar Husserlian element ever since the notion of “categorial intuition” (*Logical Investigation II*, §§ 40-8), which Adorno criticises as “the paradoxical apex” in Husserl’s thought. (Adorno, *Against Epistemology,* 200-1) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Husserl, First Philosophy, 8; Erste Philosophie, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 40; *Erste Philosophie,* 38. The brackets are Husserl’s own. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Patočka, ‘Second Essay’ in *Heretical Essays,* 27-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See ibid*,* 53-77; *Plato and Europe*, 71-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Patočka. *Plato and Europe*, 75, my italics. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Husserl, ‘Philosophy as Rigorous Science’, 71-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Patočka. *Plato and Europe*, 75-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid, 88. The phenomenological “unpracticality” imports always nonempirical purity of the nature and motif of the philosophising. And precisely *as* that, it addresses Kantian pure practicality as an expression of purely rationally grounded morality; the same goes with Husserl. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. With “programmic,” in distinction from “programmatic,” I intend to stress the meaning of the phrase: “being originated from and related to the enduring essence of a program.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Patočka, *Heretical Essays,* 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 84. Original italics. Both Husserl and Patočka consider Socratic method and Platonic method as synthetically one and the same, confounding in it Socratic *elenchus* and Platonic dialectic together. This may be a problem, given the wide spectrum of scholarly opinions including disagreements in terms of how to define and delimit Socratic method and *elenchus*. See Scott ed., *Does Socrates Have a Method.,*1-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 82-4. The turbulent political history of Athens after the Persian War plays a necessary background for Patočka’s depiction of Socratic speech act as a revolution. Strauss also takes the contemporary political history of Athens as a decisive clue to unravel the dialogue structure of the *Republic* text.(See *City and Man*, 62ff) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid., 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Patočka, Heretical Essays, 43; [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. For a focused discussion of *polemos*, see particularly ibid, 40-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. While Patočka is critical about Husserl’ *a*historical “disinterestedness” from the Heidegerrian “historicist” perspective (*Heretical Essays*, 45-6) in understanding the genesis of philosophy, his purification of philosophising activity makes the caring an essentially disinterested activity in the same manner. Patočka endorses Husserl’s *a*historicism with his historicism that is precisely a mode to affirm philosophy’s meaning-giving power over history and with his understanding of politics as a pure object of philosophising, not as its lively character. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See Husserl, ‘Origin of Geometry’, in *Crisis,* 353-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Plato, *Republic*, 339a4. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. In distinction to the common, simply negative evaluation of Thrasymachus as an irrational immoralist, Chappel (‘Virtues of Thrasymachus’, 1993) and White (‘Thrasymachus the Diplomat’, 1995) argue that the Thrasymachean thesis descriptively addresses a practically functioning mode of human flourishing. Stauffer (‘Thrasymachus’ Attachment to Justice?’, 2009) and Hansen (‘Thrasymachus and His Attachment to Justice’, 2015) even argue that Thrasymachus’ criticism of justice is itself attached to “some real-world type” of justice. Along with the view that Socrates did not successfully refute Thrasymachus’ thesis at least in a strictly logical sense (Strauss, *City and Man*, 50-138; Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*, 9-24; Sparshott, ‘Socrates and Thrasymachus’, 1966; Nicholson, ‘Unravelling Thrasymachus’ Arguments’, 1974; Flew, ‘Responding to Plato’s Thrasymachus’, 1995), many recent studies assert Socratic success in regard to a moral superiority and efficacy of his method (See Bloom’s essay, in *Republic*, 325-37; Wedgwood, ‘Coherence of Thrasymachus’, 2010; Zuckert, ‘Why Socrates and Thrasymachus become Friends’, 2010; Moore, ‘Why Does Thrasymachus Blush?’, 2015; Anderson, ‘Thrasymachus Sophistic Account of Justice’, 2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Compare the emotional intellectual ease that Socrates displays in dealing with Callicles in *Gorgias*, which he never shows with Thrasymachus. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For example, Nicholson (1974) argues that Thrasymachus’ immoralist argument eventually conforms to Plato’s theory of justice delved out throughout the *Republic*. Reeve argues that Plato has Thrasymachus play an “inverted Socrates” (*Philosopher-Kings*, 13) from a deep pedagogic aim to manifest philosophy’s self-critique and Welton (‘Thrasymachus vs. Socrates’, 2006) analyses the debate in light of Plato’s theory of Form overarching the whole text. Stauffer (2009) and Hansen (2015), too, more or less subscribe the ‘big picture’ theory. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. In Strauss’ reading, e.g., Thrasymachus is playing an angry tyrannical city. *City and Man*, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Patočka. *Plato and Europe*, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid., 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid., 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid., 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid., 111 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. To be precise, this is incorrect, for Socrates himself blurs, whether purposively or mistakenly, the distinction between “what is just” and “what appears to be just” (*Republic*, 349d-350c). See Strauss, *City and Man*, 82-4; Hansen (2015), 361. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Husserl’s understanding of Socrates is mostly based on *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*, not excluding the *Republic.* See, *First Philosophy*, 9-11, 60-61; *Crisis,* 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. De Santis’ most recent study (‘On Husserl’s Socrates’, 2019) is perhaps the ‘first’ most focused analysis of Husserl’s recapitulation of Socrates in light of the phenomenological conceptualisation of rationality and critique. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Husserl, ‘Science of Reality’, in *Crisis*, 303 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 9-10, 14, 34; Husserl’s own theory of evidence as subjective intuitive consciousness of original “*Selbst-Da*”(‘Origin of Geometry,’ in *Crisis,* 356) essentially navigates his interpretation of Socrates. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid, 7-9, 33-5, 60-2; *Crisis*, 76-7; ‘Science of Reality’, in *Crisis*, 301-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Husserl, *Ideas III*, 86 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Husserl, First Philosophy, 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., 11; *Erste Philosophie*, 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. De Santis (2019), 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. “Did not Greek antiquity necessarily already feel a need for such a science of subjectivity—a science of the subjectivity that, under the title “consciousness,” accomplishes conscious unities?” Husserl, *First Philosophy*, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Plato, *Republic*, 369a5-6, my emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid., 358e2. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., 331c, modified [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid., 331d2, my emphases [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., 332d6. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid., 341c. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., 336b5-d7, my emphases [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Plato, *Republic*, 336e-337a. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid., 337a3-6. Remarkably, Thrasymachus here swears on oaths to Heracles, a mortal son of Zeus, the symbol of the lack of intelligence and prudence, of utmost physical potency and temperance, instead of Zeus, the authority of Socratic truth, the immortal supremacy of all judgements. As Socrates’ leading becomes clear, Thrasymachus no longer calls Heracles; Zeus reigns every speech. Whether it is Plato’s deliberate plot or not, this simple vocation shows how philosophy already concludes about Thrasymachus. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid., 337b. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., 337a7-c2. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ibid., 337 c3. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. The only focused discussion on this line I’ve found is Welton’s (2006). Welton, however, focuses exclusively on the mathematical analogy *per se* to show how significant mathematics is to Plato’s theory of Form. But I think that mathematics is really not the point here. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Plato, *Republic*, 337c4-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid., 347d7-8, my emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid.*,* 347e1. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ibid*,* 347e1-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Ibid., 350c11-e10, my emphases. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. This is an almost unanimous interpretation. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid, 477a-c. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Husserl, *Formal Transcendental Logic*, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Husserl, ‘Science of Reality’, in *Crisis*, 302 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Plato, *Republic*, 433a-e, 532d-534a, 604c-605c. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, 166-79 [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid., 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ibid., 179 [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Plato, *Republic*, 372e-376c [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. “Don’t make a quarrel between Thrasymachus and me when we’ve just become friends.” ibid, 498c9-d1. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)