Daemonic Negativity. Sacrifice, *Dóxa*, and Discourse in Jan Patočka

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"There are things worth suffering for."
Jan Patočka[1]

I. The Crisis of Discourse: From Aristotelian *Dóxa* to Heideggerian *Gerede*

The philosophy of Jan Patočka emerges as a phenomenological response to the spiritual and political crisis afflicting contemporary European civilization, a crisis that becomes paradigmatically evident in the degradation of public discourse and the consequent closure of an authentic political space. To grasp the radical nature of Patočka's proposal, it is necessary to trace a genealogical path of this discursive pathology, which extends from the classical ideal of the *polis* as a domain of meaningful *speech* to Heidegger's diagnosis of *inauthenticity* in the age of technology. Patočka's proposal draws inspiration from the objective articulated by Husserl in his last major work, The *Crisis of the European Sciences*. As a reaction to

1 Jan Patočka, "What We Can and Cannot Expect from Charta 77", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, 346.

this "crisis" of rationality that accompanied the rise of positivism, Husserl sought a renewal of the spirit that lay at the heart of Western culture: the spirit of reason. Patočka —perhaps Husserl's last disciple— took on the task of continuing and clarifying this line of thought.[2]

The starting point for this analysis lies in the Aristotelian conception of the polis. Far from being a mere aggregation of individuals, the *polis* is for Aristotle the place where human *praxis* reaches its highest expression,[3] a space fundamentally constituted by *lógos*. In this context, and in contrast to Plato, for the Stagirite *dóxa* is not a mere subjective opinion but the connective tissue of the community —the shared and reputable beliefs that form the basis of public deliberation (*endóxa*).[4] Certainly, *dóxa* attains its full validity only through its articulation with *phrónēsis*: that intellectual virtue that enables the citizen to deliberate correctly about what is good and appropriate for life as a whole, seizing the opportune moment (*kairós*) for action.[5] It is this prudential articulation of *dóxa* that gives rise to the establishment of nómos as a guidance toward ends that cannot be reduced to a "technical" capacity (*téchnē*).[6] In this way, Aristotle presents a public sphere in which discourse is intrinsically linked to ethical judgment and communal life —a space in which "speech" and "action" are oriented toward the good life.

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2 Edward F. Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age: Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2002, 2.

3 Aristóteles, *Política*. 1988, 1253a.

4 Aristóteles, *Retórica*. Gredos, Madrid,1990, 1355a.

5 Aristóteles, *Ética a Nicómaco*. Gredos, Madrid, 1985, 1140b.

6 Idem.

Now, the modern condition represents a *pathological* inversion of this ideal. As is well known, Heidegger, in his existential analysis in Being and Time, offers an incisive diagnosis of this decline through his concept of *Gerede* (idle talk).[7] *Gerede* is the improper mode of *Rede* (discourse), the way language manifests in the the ordinary life of the 'one' (*das Man*). In *Gerede*, language becomes uprooted from its grounding in the thing itself (*die Sache selbst*), circulating repetitively and superficially.[8] An apparent understanding spreads, exempting *Dasein* from the necessity of an original appropriation of meaning.[9] Heidegger states that "idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without prior adequacy of the intellect to the thing".[10] This leveled and ambiguous discourse not only closes off the possibility of authentic questioning but also generates a state of uprootedness or lack of grounding (*Bodenlosigkeit*). Paradoxically, this lack of grounding is not experienced as a crisis or insecurity, but as a form of security and self-affirmation: "it is so because it is said so".[11]

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7 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Harper & Row, Nueva York, 1962, 211 (§35): "The expression 'idle talk' is not to be used here in a disparaging sense. Terminologically, it means a positive phenomenon which constitutes the mode of being of the understanding and interpretation of everyday Dasein."

8 Ibid., 212-213 (§35): "Discourse, which is interpretation as it is expressed and spoken, has been torn from the primordial authenticity of the act of understanding... it has been uprooted (entwurzelt)." Own translation.

9 Ibid., 213 (§35): "By remaining in Gerede, Dasein... becomes isolated from its primary and primordial Being-relations toward the world, toward Being-with, and toward its own Being-in". Own translation.

10 Gerede "uproots understanding from its ground" and fosters a comprehension that, by not requiring genuine confrontation with the entity, becomes a barrier to original access. Cfr. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 213 (§35).

11 Ídem: "What is said in speaking as such spreads in ever-widening circles and acquires an authoritative character. Things are as they are because 'one says so' (man sagt es so)... By its very nature, Gerede is a closing-off,

This pathology of discourse is precisely what Patočka identifies as a dóxa without phrónēsis, an automated truth that confuses circulation with validity and procedure with justification. The modern public sphere, dominated by the logic of technical optimization, is stripped of the temporal density of judgment regarding ends, laying the groundwork for the "inhospitality" of the absolute technical world. Patočka understood that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, despite its valuable insight into direct experience, was in many respects inadequate for the task of a "renewal of reason".[12] Husserl remains anchored in Enlightenment thought regarding the notion of "reason" that he seeks to renew. Patočka, on the other hand, proposes a renewal that, while recognizing the intrinsic value of an "ancient" understanding of reason, considers it necessary to revise this notion in light of contemporary critique. This is one of the reasons why the Czech philosopher turns to the work of Heidegger. Heidegger provides him with a thematic exploration that emphasizes the importance of the historical dimension for understanding the temporally situated "being" of the human.[13] In this way, the contemporary crisis can be understood as part of an ontological *trajectory* within the very structure of how language manifests the world and constitutes the public. Patočka's intervention is therefore not a mere call to ethics, but a phenomenological counter-movement seeking to ground a new —truly authentic— mode of public speech.

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since it obstructs any new investigation and any dispute over what has been assumed and transmitted." Own translation.

12 Findlay, *Caring for the Soul*, 3. Patočka considered Husserl's pursuit of a universal philosophy within the Cartesian tradition to be inappropriate for a "renewal" of reason.

13 Idem.

II. The Phenomenology of Existence as Movement

In response to the crisis of discourse and the closure of the political space, Patočka develops a fundamental ontology that serves as a framework for his response. His theory of the three movements of human existence represents a radical critique of the metaphysics of subjectivity, which, in his view, persists both in Husserl's[14] transcendental phenomenology and in Heidegger's existential analysis[15]. Patočka redefines existence itself not as a static thinking substance (*substantia cogitans*), but as *movement*,[16]

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14 Jan Patočka, "Nachwort des Autors zur tschechischen Neuausgabe (1970)", in Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem, cited in James Dodd, *The Heresies of Jan Patočka: Phenomenology, History, and Politics,* Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL, 2023, 37: "We can no longer accept the interpretation of the 'phenomenological reduction' as an absolute reflection that would lead to an absolute and apodictically certain foundation of the world in transcendental subjectivity." Own translation.

15 Jan Patočka, "Cartesianism and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, 321: "We can doubt whether Heidegger's fundamental ontology is also suitable to serve as an ontological projection of a science or sciences of man. [...] Certainly, a fundamental ontology makes possible an understanding of human life both in its fall into inhumanity and in its moral reach; but does what it offers provide a sufficient basis for a philosophy of man in community, in language and custom, in his essential generativity, his tradition, and his historicity?" Own translation. See also, Jan Patočka, cited in James Dodd, The Heresies of Jan Patočka, 65: "It seems that Heidegger's analysis renders his ontology of existence excessively formal; although praxis is the original form of clarity, it never takes into account the fact that original praxis is necessarily, in principle, the activity of a bodily subject, and that embodiment must therefore have an ontological status that cannot be identical to that of the body encountered as present here and now." Own translation.

16 Jan Patočka, "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings,* 277: "Our purpose is to attempt a

based on a radicalization of Aristotelian *kínēsis*[17] and Heideggerian temporality.[18] These movements are not chronological stages[19] nor psychological categories, but dynamic and co-present ontological structures that constitute the human existent's *being-in-the-world*.[20] Patočka seeks to explore the possibilities of human being in a way that is neither speculative nor abstract, but can be "descriptively exhibited."[21]

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philosophy that takes movement as its basic concept and principle." Own translation.

17 Jan Patočka, unpublished manuscript, cited in James Dodd, *The Heresies of Jan Patočka*, 64: "To understand the movement of human existence, we need to radicalize the Aristotelian conception of movement. The possibilities that ground movement do not have a preexisting bearer, no necessary referent that remains statically at its base; rather, all synthesis, all internal interconnection of movement, takes place solely within it." Own translation.

18 This radicalization consists in "filling" the formal structure of Heideggerian temporality with the concrete reality of corporeality. Movement is not merely an abstract temporal projection, but the physical dynamism of a body relating to the world. It is the body that translates the formal structure of Heideggerian "for the sake of" (*worumwillen*) into a concrete task. Cfr. Jan Patočka, "Supplement (1970)" cited in James Dodd, *The Heresies of Jan Patočka:* 153: "What establishes the link between the 'for the sake of' and what follows from it as our concrete task remains unresolved in Heidegger's scheme. I believe that the link resides in the embodiment of life: what I can do is determined by what my corporeality allows me to do, and that must be assumed before all free possibilities." Own translation.

19 Jan Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*. Open Court, Chicago, 1998, 147: "[It is not] a trinity of undifferentiated moments, but rather a trinity of movements in which our life unfolds." Own translation.

20 Idem: "To understand existence as movement means to grasp man as a being in and of the world. He is a being who is not only in the world, as Heidegger says (in the sense of understanding the world), but who is himself part of the world's ongoing process." Own translation.

21 Findlay, *Caring for the Soul,* 36. Patočka appropriates Heideggerian ontology but insists that its constructs can be demonstrated descriptively, grounded in concrete experience.

The first movement of human existence is that of **anchoring–acceptance** (*Verankerung–Annahme*). It is the primordial and pre-reflective mode of being rooted in the world through the body. This movement describes the individual's placement within a family, community, and tradition; it is the being received into the "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*), into the sphere of immediate existence. It is a fundamentally affective movement, oriented toward the past, which establishes the world's habitability by sedimenting habits, expectations, and a pre-rational familiarity with the environment. This movement is tied to "lived corporeality," the notion that human life is a bodily as well as a noetic existence.[22] Without this anchoring, which makes the preservation of life possible, the other movements would be impossible. The second movement is that of **defense–(self-)extension** (*Verteidigung–Selbsterweiterung*). It corresponds to the sphere of labor, production, and self-preservation. This movement organizes life through instrumental reason, technical mediation, and the assumption of social roles and functions. It is the mode of existence characterized by Heidegger's *das Man*, where the human being projects itself into the world through its works in order to secure its subsistence. When this movement becomes absolute or all-encompassing, as occurs in modern technological civilization, it leads to *alienation*, to the total functionalization of existence, and to the domination of the inauthentic discourse of *Gerede*. Life is reduced to the management of resources, losing any orientation toward a totality of meaning. In its absolutized form, this movement embodies the crisis of rationality identified by Husserl, wherein the methods of the exact sciences become the sole legitimate access to reality.[23]

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22 Ibid., 44. "Lived corporeality" is key to Patočka's conception of existence as movement, understanding humans as beings "in and of the world."

23 Ibid., 19. Husserl's critique of scientism begins from the premise that transferring ontological validity to the constructions of science lies at the root of the crisis of Western rationality.

The third movement is that of **breakthrough–truth** (*Durchbruch–Wahrheit*), or "transcendence." This movement represents a radical rupture with the closure and security of the second. It is not a mere continuation, but a "break" (*Erschütterung*) that shakes the existent out of its immersion in functionalized life. It is defined by a state of "uninterrupted problematization" of existence, a critical distancing from what is given that opens the human being to the question of the meaning of the whole. It is the movement of *freedom*, in which existence no longer understands itself from the standpoint of mere survival, but through a confrontation with its own finitude and a responsibility for the whole. This movement, as will be seen, finds its fundamental ethical articulation in *sacrifice*.

The conception of existence as movement is, in itself, a cosmological–ontological thesis. The modes of being described by Patočka are not merely ways in which human beings act, but ways in which existence *is*. Likewise, the instrumentalism of the second movement is an ontological mode, not just a pattern of behavior. Consequently, the passage to the third movement is not a simple change of attitude, but an *ontological event*: a fundamental restructuring of *being-in-the-world* that enables, as will be seen later, a new conception of the political.[24]

III. Sacrifice as Foundational Negativity: the Ethical Articulation of the Third Movement of Existence

The argumentative core of Patočka's practical philosophy lies in his conception of sacrifice, which functions as the ethical articulation of the third movement of existence. Far from being a *nihilistic act*, sacrifice will reveal itself as a "foundational negativity" that gives rise to an authentic existence and a genuine

24 James Dodd, *The Heresies of Jan Patočka*, 21.

political community. To unravel its complexity, it is imperative to analyze the distinction Patočka draws between "sacrifice for something" and "sacrifice for nothing." "Sacrifice for something" remains trapped within the instrumental and economic logic of the second movement. It is an act of exchange: one gives something up in order to obtain something else —whether security, glory, the nation, or a positive ideal. This type of sacrifice, although it may appear heroic, does not break with the calculation of means and ends that defines technological civilization.[25] In contrast, "sacrifice for nothing" is a radical act that renounces this logic entirely. It pursues no positive or objectifiable goal; it is a sacrifice that expects no benefit in return, neither in this world nor in another. It is the giving of one's own life, or one of its dimensions, in the name of that which is most valuable: the whole. A whole that can never be possessed or turned into an object. By transcending all particular content, this act opens existence to a universal horizon of meaning.

This conception of sacrifice functions as a direct critique of modernity and technoscience. The modern technological project, which Heidegger analyzed under the concept of Gestell (enframing), reduces all reality, including human life, to a calculable, manageable resource available for manipulation. Within this framework, life is defined by its utility and its capacity to be secured and prolonged. Sacrifice, as an act irreducible to calculation and to the logic of self-preservation, "represents a persistent presence of something that does not appear in the calculus of the technological world."[26] It is the moment when the existing confronts its own finitude, with the truth that life is not the

25 Ibid., 200. "Traditional" sacrifice, even when cynically employed in propaganda, is invoked to reject the meaninglessness of loss.

26 Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization in Science According to E. Husserl and the Essence of Technology as Danger according to

supreme value, and that "there are things worth suffering for".[27] Resistance to human finitude, in the form of the promise that victory in war will protect us from death, thus becomes a means of justifying ideological domination.[28]

Here the deep connection between Patočka's ethics of sacrifice and Heidegger's critique of inauthentic discourse becomes apparent. *Gerede* operates by creating a false security, a sense of grounding in the "it is said" that conceals the radical *Bodenlosigkeit* —groundlessness— of existence. "Sacrifice for nothing" functions as an ethical–political antidote to this false security. By rejecting all the positive and instrumental foundations offered by the second movement, sacrifice actively embraces the very groundlessness that *Gerede* passively covers. This "nothing" for which one sacrifices is not a nihilistic void, but the negation of the instrumental logic of what is given.[29] By responsibly assuming this abyss, the existent transmutes a

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M. Heidegger: Varna Lectu*re, 1973", in Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, 337.

27 Jan Patočka, "Two Charta 77 Texts", in *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings,* 346. This statement, made in the context of political dissent, reveals the ethical core of his thinking: human life recognizes its dignity when it is oriented toward values that transcend mere survival.

28 Findlay, *Caring for the Soul*, 38. Political ideology, by systematizing life in the name of an idea (such as that mere life is more meaningful than free life), uses resistance to finitude to justify domination.

29 Simas Čelutka, "Politics, Morality and Nothingness: On the Coherence of Jan Patočka's Reflections on Sacrifice," *Metajournal*, 2024. The "sacrifice for nothing" is the awakening of a spirit of problematization and incessant questioning, a power of negativity.

passive condition of *falling*[30] and *inauthenticity*[31] into the active ground of freedom. The negativity of sacrifice does not eliminate groundlessness; rather, it *transforms it into the very terrain from*

30 In the existential analytic of Being and Time, "falling" (*Verfallen*) has no moral or theological connotation, as in the idea of a "fall" from a state of grace. It is an ontological term that describes a fundamental and everyday mode of being of *Dasein* (the being-there, the human existent). Falling is *Dasein's* tendency to become absorbed in the world of its occupations and in "being-with-others" in an inauthentic manner. This state of being is characterized by an immersion in the impersonal "one" or "they" (das Man), where *Dasein* loses its singularity and is guided by public opinion, superficial curiosity, and ambiguity. It is not that *Dasein* ceases to be or becomes separated from itself; rather, falling is a mode of being in which *Dasein* flees from itself and from its own finitude, losing itself in the familiarity and safety of the everyday world. Cfr. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 220 (§38): "In them and in the connectedness of their being, a basic kind of the being of everydayness reveals itself, which we call the entanglement [*Verfallen*] of Dasein. [...] As an authentic potentiality for being a self, Dasein has initially always already fallen away from itself and fallen prey to the "world."

31 For Heidegger, the terms "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) and "inauthenticity" (*Uneigentlichkeit*) are not moral judgments about how one ought to live. They are ontological concepts that describe two fundamental modes of *Dasein's* being. The root of both terms is the German word eigen, which means "own" or "proper to oneself." Thus, the basic distinction is between a mode of being in which *Dasein* is "its own" and a mode in which it is not. Inauthenticity is not an inferior or "false" state, but the everyday and default mode of being of *Dasein*. Authenticity, for its part, is a modification of this everyday state —a "making oneself one's own" that arises from a confrontation with the fundamental structure of one's own existence. Cfr. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 369-370 (§64): "Dasein is authentically itself in the mode of the primordial individuation of reticent resoluteness that expects anxiety of itself. In keeping silent, authentic being-a-self does not keep on saying "I," but rather "is" in reticence the thrown being that it can authentically be. [...] Care does not need a foundation [Fundierung] in a self. Rather, existentiality as a constituent of care provides the ontological constitution of the self-constancy of Dasein to which there belongs, corresponding to the complete structural content of care, the fadical falling prey to unself-constancy."

which responsibility and an authentic political community can arise.

IV. The Politics of *Daimon*: the Solidarity of the Shaken and the Care of the Soul

The political consequences of Patočka's ethics of sacrifice are realized in his concept of the "solidarity of the shaken." This is not a political community founded on a shared identity, a positive program, or an ideology, but on a *common experience of crisis and rupture*. It arises on the "front line," whether that of war or the existential confrontation with a totalitarian power —a place where the illusions of security of the second movement collapse. It is the community of those who have been "shaken" out of their everyday complacency and have confronted the radical problematicity of existence. This solidarity, therefore, is not based on "something" (positive) that its members have in common, but on the *shared loss* of all solid foundation. It is a solidarity built in the midst of persecution and uncertainty.[32]

The political action of this community is described by Patočka as "*daimonic*," in a clear allusion to the Socratic *daimon*. Its function is not to construct positive programs, but, like Socrates' daimon, to speak "in warnings and prohibitions".[33] Its role is fundamentally negative[34] and critical: to resist the closure of meaning, to oppose

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32 Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Open Court, Chicago, 1996, 135.

33 Platón, Apología, 40a-c; 41d. Cfr. Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, 133-136. The reference to the Socratic daimon is explicit and underscores the apotropaic and critical function of this form of politics.

34 Within the framework of Jan Patočka's phenomenological philosophy, the concept of negativity, articulated centrally in his text *Negative Platonism*,

the totalizing force of modern power that seeks to eliminate all problematicity. It acts as an "anti-*Gerede*" political mechanism, constantly reintroducing the question of meaning into the public sphere and breaking the *continuum* of inauthentic consensus. It is a *spiritual authority* that does not impose a new order, but preserves the conditions for deliberation by keeping the question of significance open.[35]

This political vision is rooted in the original reappropriation of the classical heritage undertaken by the Czech philosopher, articulated through the concepts of "negative Platonism"[36] and the "care of the soul"[37] (*epimeleia tēs psychēs*). Patočka's "negative

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constitutes a fundamental category for understanding human existence. Far from connoting a nihilistic stance or a claim about the absence of meaning, negativity represents the ontological capacity of human beings to distance themselves from and disengage with the immediacy of the given world (*die Gegebenheit*). It is not a negation of being, but the condition of possibility for a genuinely free and responsible life. Patočka defines human existence through this capacity to adopt a critical distance toward what is pre-established, whether the facticity of the material world or socio-cultural conventions. This "negation" is a movement of transcendence that interrupts the subject's absorption in unreflective life —the "movement of acceptance"— and opens a space for questioning and the search for meaning. It is, in essence, an act of freedom that "shakes" inherited and unquestioned meanings, forcing the individual to confront the problematic nature of their own existence. The similarity with Socrates' attitude is inescapable.

35 Findlay, *Caring for the Soul,* 85.

36 Cfr. Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism: Reflections Concerning the Rise, the Scope, and the Demise of Metaphysics—and Whether Philosophy Can Survive It", en *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989)

37 For Patočka, the "care of the soul" is the fundamental inheritance of Socratic–Platonic thought and the notion that defines the spiritual essence of Europe. Far from being an ascetic practice or a metaphysical concern for an immaterial substance, the care of the soul is an existential stance: a way of life oriented toward truth and responsibility, opposing

Platonism" represents a crucial methodological innovation that allows him to construct a post-Heideggerian political philosophy on classical foundations. Rather than accepting Heidegger's critique of Plato as the origin of the "forgetfulness of being," Patočka reinterprets the Platonic *chōrismós* —the separation between the sensible world and the world of Ideas—not as an ontological gap between two "supposed" realms of entities, but as the very phenomenological structure of human freedom. This "separation" is the capacity to transcend the immediately given, to distance oneself from the world in order to interrogate it as a whole.[38] In this non-metaphysical reading, the Platonic Idea is no longer a supra-sensible entity, but the "symbol" of this transcendent freedom that allows us to see in what is given "something beyond what is directly contained in the give."[39] Negative Platonism would be a "philosophy purified of metaphysical pretensions."[40]

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a merely biological or unreflective existence. In turn, the care of the soul entails living in a state of constant "problematicity," which involves abandoning the security of pre-established answers and accepting that existence is fundamentally an open question. Patočka identifies Socrates as the paradigmatic figure of this attitude: a man whose entire life was a continual examination of himself and others, demonstrating, as is well known, that an unexamined life is not worth living. Cfr. Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002, 71.

38 Johann P. Arnason, "The Idea of Negative Platonism: Jan Patočka's Critique and Recovery of Metaphysics", *Investigaciones Fenomenológicas* 2004, 4. In Patočka's reinterpretation, the realm of ideas becomes a "symbol" of human freedom, understood as the ability to transcend the world and grasp it as a totalizing horizon.

39 The Platonic Idea, stripped of its character as a supersensible object, becomes "the origin and source of all human objectification". Cfr. Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism", 199. Own translation.

40 Eddo Evink, "The Relevance of Patočka's «Negative Platonism»", in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology: Centenary Papers,* ed. Ivan Chvatík y Erika Abrams. Springer, Dordrecht, 2011, 67. Own translation. Jan Patočka's critique of metaphysics is not a total rejection of the philosophical tradition, but a crucial distinction between classical

The "care of the soul" is, then, the concrete ethical and political praxis of this freedom. It is not a private introspection, but a way of life, modeled on Socratic dialectical activity, consisting in a responsible and constant examination of one's own principles and the common opinions of the *polis*.[41] The care of the soul is the act

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metaphysics and what he calls the metaphysics of modernity or "positive metaphysics." His objection is aimed fundamentally at the latter, which he identifies not so much with an explicit philosophical system, but with the global project of modern science and technology seeking absolute, calculating dominion over the totality of being. Patočka maintains that original metaphysics, that of Plato, arose from the experience of freedom and wonder, from the "problematicity" of existence. It was an open search for meaning. However, over the course of history, this search degenerated into attempts to construct closed systems that claimed to offer a definitive and objective explanation of reality. It is in modernity that this impulse reaches its most dangerous culmination. Modern metaphysics, according to Patočka, is "positive" because it aims to know and dominate the whole through the summation and analysis of its parts. It manifests in science that reduces the world to a set of quantifiable and manipulable objects, losing sight of the horizon of the "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*). This science, despite its anti-metaphysical proclamations, becomes the most radical form of metaphysics by postulating that the only reality is that which can be objectified, measured, and controlled. For Patočka, this project of technical domination is a form of "titanism," a will to power that forgets human finitude and the inexhaustible nature of being. In this sense, his critique aligns with those of Husserl and Heidegger on the crisis of European sciences and the danger of technology (Gestell). Patočka denounces that this modern metaphysics of power and force leads to a "dehumanization," in which human beings themselves become yet another resource to be managed. His proposal of "Negative Platonism" is precisely an attempt to recover the original impulse of philosophy —the care of the soul, life within problematicity— as an antidote to this metaphysics of domination characteristic of the modern era. Cfr. Jan Patočka, "Negative Platonism", 177; Jan Patočka, "The Dangers of Technicization", 331.

41 Cfr. Jan Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 87. Care of the soul "is the attempt to embody what is eternal within time, and within one's own being." It is not a pale intellectualism, but an existential practice.

of *living within problematicity*, of resisting dogmatic certainty, and of keeping open the question of justice and truth.[42] The "solidarity of the shaken" is, in essence, the care of the soul elevated to the form of a political community. It is a politics that denounces the tragedy of divorcing power from truth; that offers no security, but assumes the responsibility of living in exposure, without the refuge of pre-established certainties.[43] In this way, Patočka manages to build a bridge between the Socratic call to justice and contemporary critique of metaphysical foundations, offering a suggestive resource for thinking about politics after the end of metaphysics.[44]

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42 Cfr. Ivan Chvatík, "The Responsibility of the 'Shaken': Jan Patočka and His 'Care for the Soul' in the 'Post-European' World," in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology*, ed. Ivan Chvatík and Erika Abrams, Springer, Cham, 2017, 263.

43 Ibid., 270.

44 Findlay, *Caring for the Soul,* 7.