

# IPW LECTURES

## Phronesis and Materialism: Practical Judgment and Agonism

Lecturer: **Dimitris Vardoulakis**  
(Western Sydney University)

Moderation: Oliver Marchart (IPW | Universität Wien)

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Konferenzraum IPW, NIG, 2. Stock  
Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien

### Abstract:

It is a commonplace to turn to Book 6 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* to find out what the ancient Greeks thought about practical judgment or phronesis. There is good reason for this: Aristotle's is the lengthiest account of phronesis. We regularly fail to note, however, the importance of phronesis in epicureanism. I first explore how Epicurus's conception of phronesis differs from Aristotle's. I also indicate how Epicurus's conception influences political discourse in early modernity in materialists such as Machiavelli and Spinoza. Then I explain how practical judgment is indispensable for an agonistic politics. Finally, I delineate how the exclusion of Epicurus's conception of phronesis in early twentieth century, for instance by Heidegger, results in the invention of a politics beyond instrumentality and calculation as a way of repressing the materialism of practical judgment.

**Dimitris Vardoulakis** is the deputy chair of Philosophy at Western Sydney University. He is the author of *The Doppelgänger: Literature's Philosophy* (2010), *Sovereignty and its Other: Toward the Dejustification of Violence* (2013), *Freedom from the Free Will: On Kafka's Laughter* (2016), *Stasis Before the State: Nine Theses on Agonistic Democracy* (2018), and *Authority and Utility: On Spinoza's Epicureanism* (forthcoming in 2020). He is the director of "Thinking Out Loud: The Sydney Lectures in Philosophy and Society," and the co-editor of the book series "Incitements" (Edinburgh University Press).