

ESSAYS – BEITRÄGE

I. Crime and Crisis

Temporality and kairicity in experiencing crises

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Abstract: The theory of kairicity helps us understand the epistemological value of exactitude, and its ontological expression through the Aristotelian watchword of entelechy, that is, the transient history both of exactitude itself and of intentional consciousness.

The term *crisis* can be assigned etymologically to a Proto-Indo-European root *(s)ker- from which are derived, in Greek, the verb κείρω, “cut” (with its aorist passive ἐκάθην), κουρά, “haircut”, the connected adjective καίριος “incisive, decisive” and the abstract noun καιρός [kairos], “favourable opportunity”. The noun καιρός was watered down in Hellenistic times to mean simply (as for example in the Gospels) “a period of time”. In the classical age, by contrast, it denoted “the decisive distinction between two separate sections of a single process”. In similar fashion, when seen in epistemological terms, “crisis” evolved to mean “a decision regarding the difference between true and false (just and unjust)”, and the noun implied a tool for making this decision, a “criterion”, this being a norm following which the judge (κριτής) came to a specific decision.

We should not overlook the fact that, at the stage in question, there existed a strong etymological correlation between the Latin noun *crimen* and the Indo-European group of terms already mentioned, with the idea of “a sharp separation from a norm”. It is interesting to compare the term *dommage* in French and the Modern Greek κριμα, “a pity!”, each of these implying a prior negative judgment.

There is a powerful dialectical relationship between a discontinuity

within a continuity and a continuity within a discontinuity. This opposition is resolved through the transcontinuity inherent in the *crisis*. Every instance of *crisis* can in fact be represented in graphic form as a *curve*. The curve originates from specific preliminary indications, reaches its summit or *acme* –again a Greek term– only to fade away, giving birth in the process to an apparently new situation that is, in fact, only the continuation of an evolution, long in the preparing, towards a final result. The term which Aristotle employs for this result is ἐντελέχεια [entelechy] (*Physics*, Θ' 5, 257 b 7; *Metaph.*, Θ' 8, 1050 a 23).

Since it has this strong structure, a *crisis* that is on its way is not difficult to foresee, even if consciousness often pretends to have been given no warning about impending calamity. The denial of *crisis* is already in itself, in the strict sense, a *crisis* –a tentative shot at providing society as a whole with seemingly impartial judgment. Nevertheless, there will always be some exceptional minds, some sages, who are already well aware and conscious of exactly what is taking place, as a matter of their own experience of important factual aspects. So we should bear in mind that the entelechy of a specific *crisis* may on occasion be dramatically influenced by the entelechy of some *crisis* that is parallel with it, or even opposite to it. Furthermore, to be aware of such a situation without condemning it, is a *crimen*, the equivalent of a punishable offence. From this point of view, no *crisis* is to be tolerated, and getting at the truth –which we can redefine as “precision” or “exactitude” – should be our immediate or gradual objective.

The intentional consciousness ought thus to be continuously on the watch to take advantage of the opportunities offered to it in the course of reality's flux. It ought indeed to be seeking such moments well in advance. And so kairicity, the doctrine of *kairos*, reveals itself to be both subjective and objective, for it opposes itself to mere temporality in that it marks awaited opportunities within the normative event flow, except for complications attached to prior events. To sum up. The theory of kairicity helps us to understand the epistemological value of exactitude and its ontological expression through the Aristotelian watchword of entelechy, that is, the transient history both of exactitude itself and of

intentional consciousness.

Selected reading from the author's bibliography:

Thought and Error (Athens, Vayonakis, 1961)

Mental Functions (Athens, Vayonakis, 1965)

Phenomenology of Values (Athens University Press, 1967, 1981)

Conformisme et déformation (Paris, Vrin, 1978)

Philosophy of Kairicity (Athens, Kardamitsa, 1984)

Kairos: la mise et l' enjeu (Paris, Vrin, 1991)

Variations sur le thème du kairos (Paris, Vrin, 2012)

La conscience intentionnée (Athènes, Académie, 2015)

