

ON CRISIS. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Leszek Kopciuch

There are several reasons to ask yet again the question about the condition of culture, both in its contemporary form and in the context of its historical developments, whether in reference to cultural (political, social, economic, local, national, global or otherwise) processes or in the sense of the theoretical awareness of these (in philosophy or other domains of critical thought).

Firstly, contemporary diagnoses often point to the diverse crises which are currently being experienced. There is the economic crisis, the monetary crisis, the bank one, the political one, the crisis of democracy, of liberalism, of values, of Christianity, of the European Union, and even a crisis of humanity. Secondly, there is a conviction in Europe that the current situation has many aspects where the standard of life has risen to levels higher than in the past, and thus evidences clear progress. Suffice it to mention the unimaginable success of modern technology or medicine. Thirdly, however, we cannot overlook that progress and crisis alike are evident in many aspects of human life. The destruction of natural environment has been the dark side of technological progress. The success of medicine, affording us greater possibilities of intervention in the human body, has at the same time led us to question the ethical limits of such interventions, beyond which lies the crisis of the human being and his or her humanity.

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And fourthly, many crises, just like many aspects of progress and development, do not happen on their own accord, without our agency. Realising this means that the question about progress and crisis becomes eminently practical. For the point is not only to understand crisis and progress, be able to perceive them, diagnose their causes and workings, but to be able to prevent the crises and foster the progress.

The texts in the thematic part of this issue of “Culture and Values” approach these issues in diverse ways and from disparate perspectives. Several are based on papers given at the conference “From the Idea of progress to the idea of crisis” held in Lublin in January 2014, others have been prepared independently of the conference.

The first article, “An attempt at a Typology of Catastrophic Thought” by Leszek Gawor, essays to catalogue cultural attitudes towards crises and catastrophes. Witold P. Glinkowski’s text “A Crisis of Humanity – a Threat or an Opportunity?” discusses the character of the so-called crisis of humanity and queries its practical meaning. In his text “The Disappearance of Metaphysical Feelings as a Cause of the Crisis of Culture”, Jacek Breczko interprets the contemporary condition of culture with recourse to the pivotal categories of S. I. Witkiewicz’s philosophy. Alicja Wesołowska’s article “Husserl’s Understanding of Crisis and Transcendental Phenomenology” reconstructs and analyses Husserl’s views on the crisis of Europe, in particular those expounded in “The crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology”. Zbigniew Pietrzak’s reflections in his article “The Human Being and the Environment” are distinct in character. He departs from the views of Jean Dorst and goes on to try to apply them to phenomena in the contemporary world. Kamil Szymański’s article “Transhumanism” completes the section containing the reflections on crisis. Szymański attempts to present the key theses of a recent thought paradigm which claims that we are most likely facing the end of the human being, soon to be replaced by the transhuman and the posthuman, beings created thanks to new revolutionary technological capacities. The above list clearly shows that crises can be discussed in diverse contexts and ways.

translated by

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